Get hired using Hire-A-Redbird

- Find and apply for full- and part-time jobs and internships
- Sign up for on-campus interviews with employers from a variety of industries
- Upload resumes for recruiters to find you
- View upcoming career and networking events
- Schedule appointments with your career advisor and much more

FREE TO ILLINOIS STATE STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

HireARedbird.IllinoisState.edu

For more information, contact the Career Center at (309) 438-2200 or CareerCenter@IllinoisState.edu.
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Illinois State University Career Center and College Recruitment Media express their gratitude to the advertisers listed above for their generous support of the Career Resource Guide.
KEYS TO ACADEMIC and CAREER SUCCESS

STAGE 1: EXPLORE

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
- Always strive for academic success.
- Attend and actively participate in classes and get to know your professors.
- Meet with your academic advisor and faculty to discuss major requirements and your academic goals.
- Participate in and contribute to department based introductory classes.
- Explore your academic and career interests online. Contact the Career Center for help.
- Attend available tutoring sessions and workshops as needed.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
- Develop your transferable skills, such as writing, communication, or public speaking. Seek a part-time job, internship, or other experiences to build your current skill set.

EXPERIENCES AND INVOLVEMENT
- Explore student organizations, volunteer, and serve in leadership or civic engagement opportunities.
- Attend academic, career, and campus events.

NETWORKING
- Conduct an informational interview with professionals in your areas of interest.

STAGE 2: EXPAND

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
- Create an academic plan with your academic advisor and faculty.
- Meet with your career advisor to identify career opportunities that align with your interests.
- Explore options to study abroad.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
- Refine writing, communication, analytical and other transferable skills through coursework and involvement opportunities.

EXPERIENCES AND INVOLVEMENT
- Obtain a leadership role in an organization.
- Attend academic, career, and campus events.
- Apply to internships at HireARedbird.IllinoisState.edu.

NETWORKING
- Get to know faculty.
- Conduct a job shadow with a professional in your area of interest.
- Create LinkedIn and Hire-A-Redbird profiles. Visit the Career Center to learn how.

STAGE 3: EXECUTE

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
- Inquire about earning academic credit for an internship or research opportunity in your department.
- Evaluate the status of your academic and career plans.
- Ask faculty to serve as references as applicable to your career goals.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
- Leverage your acquired writing, communication, analytical, and other transferable skills.

EXPERIENCES AND INVOLVEMENT
- Relate your internship experience to your coursework and career preparation.

NETWORKING
- Meet with a career advisor and faculty to discuss job search strategies.
- Establish a professional social media presence.
- Continue to build your network at academic, career, and campus events.

STAGE 4: EMBARK

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
- Research specific academic and career opportunities (i.e., job search, graduate school, etc.).
- Meet with your career advisor to implement job search strategies.
- Apply to graduate programs or jobs that align with your goals.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
- Update and finalize your resume and related professional documents to include your transferable skills.

EXPERIENCES AND INVOLVEMENT
- Attend academic, career, and campus events.

NETWORKING
- Network with faculty.
- Maximize your professional networks (i.e., LinkedIn, professionals, etc.).
Chapter 1: Making the Career Center Work for You

Many students go through all four years of college without ever setting foot in their school’s career center. Yet, outside of the academic realm, job seekers will pay hundreds, even thousands, of dollars for the very same services that are included free with the cost of tuition. The mission of the Career Center is to assist students with developing, evaluating, and/or implementing career, education, and employment decisions. Don’t overlook this opportunity; it could mean passing up the job of a lifetime.

Take advantage of the useful Career Center services and resources, including:

Career advisement—Professional career advisors work with students to develop job search skills and strategies to help them successfully find and apply for potential internships, full-time career opportunities, and graduate or professional school.

Career assessment—Students undecided on a major or career can get help with identifying majors and careers that best match their skills and interests using career exploration assessment tools including FOCUS, an online self-assessment tool available on the Career Center website and the Strong Interest Inventory.

Internships/professional practice—Students receive assistance with identifying employers for one or more credit-generating, academic/career related, paid/unpaid work experiences.

Career events—The Career Center hosts fairs and programs throughout the year on a variety of career development topics and job search strategies to connect students and alumni with employers and recruiters.

Classroom presentations and workshops—The Career Center hosts a number of presentations and workshops to educate students on career-related topics and job search strategies.

Job posting system—Visit Hire-A-Redbird to post or view job vacancies, on-campus interviews, career fair information, and more.

Cultural Career Network—Includes networking and career events with employers seeking diverse candidates.

Alumni career events—Helps alumni refine their job search skills and provides opportunities to network with employers.

Free resume paper and business cards—Illinois State University students can print out their resume onto complimentary resume paper at the Career Center or request a set of free business cards to use at career fairs and interviews.

Social networking—In an effort to help students connect with employers and provide free career development tips and information, students can connect with the Career Center on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Free access to Skype and private interview rooms—These are available at the Career Center with advanced reservation.

How to Choose a Major

First, think about what YOU want. This is YOUR choice and it will initially help determine YOUR path in life. Choosing a major can be a complicated, anxiety-invoking experience, but it doesn’t have to be. Consider that some students:

• Select a major because they want to use it to prepare for a specific job, career, or industry.
• Select a job, career, or industry and then choose the major that will best meet their career goals.
• Select a major because they enjoy it but never intend to directly use it in a future career. Many jobs are open to students regardless of major. Any major can be a springboard to graduate or professional school.

At Illinois State University, we have several resources that can assist you in your decision to declare a major. Below are a few tools and strategies we suggest you investigate:

• Visit Illinois State’s illinoisstate.edu/majors website to learn about yourself, explore major and career options, and learn when and how to apply to a given major.
• Take a career assessment offered through the Career Center to learn more about yourself and possible major or career options.
• Network with professors, advisors, professionals, friends, and relatives—as well as Alumni Relations—to better research careers and majors.
• Use FOCUS, an online self-guided career and educational planning tool, to assist you in identifying your interests, values, personality, skills, and leisure activities.
• Make an appointment with your career advisor to discuss your options. Contact the Career Center at (309) 438-2200.
Chapter 2: Developing Your Professional Toolkit

Resume Basics

The resume is a key marketing tool that helps build your personal brand and markets you to an employer. It is a vital part of the job search, providing important details of your qualifications, background, and what you can offer an employer—all in a concise format.

What to Include

Brainstorm your experiences that relate most to the skill set needed for your career field or the job you are applying for. Some of these experiences may be drawn from:

- Education
- Employment
- Community service and volunteer work
- Course enrollment or projects
- Outside activities
- Professional development events/memberships
- Internships
- Honors
- Student organization involvement

Style & Formatting Tips

- Font: Choose an easy-to-read black font in 10-12 point size.
- Format: Present information in reverse chronological order: most current first. Stay consistent in the way you present your experiences.
- Image: Customize your resume to each job or application purpose. A “one resume fits all” approach will not be most effective.
- Layout: Use bullets, bold text, italics, and capitalization sparingly to call attention to the most important information.
- Length: For undergraduate students and recent college graduates, it is advised to have a full one-page resume.
- Paper: Use 8.5” x 11” resume-quality paper in a neutral color to print your resume, cover letter, and references page.
- Professionalism: Eliminate all typos and misspellings by having multiple individuals proofread your resume.
- Spacing: Use margins of 0.5” to 1” on all sides with appropriate—but not excessive—spacing.
- Templates: Avoid resume templates as they tend to be difficult to edit and do not easily allow for changes as your resume evolves with your experiences.

Heading & Section Tips

Sample Headings & Sections

Below is a list of possible headings you could use in your resume if you have applicable experience. The possibilities are endless for heading titles as long as they highlight specific skills and experiences!

- Education
- Objective/Career Summary
- Relevant Coursework
- Work Experience
- Related Experience
- Clinical Experience
- Observation Hours
- Internships/Externships
- Activities/Leadership Experience
- Academic Honors/Awards
- Community Service/Volunteer Work
- Skills & Certifications
- Military Service
- Languages
- Professional Development/Memberships/Affiliations
- Technical Knowledge or Skills

Writing Bullet Points

Unlike other professional writing, resumes require writing about your experiences and skills in concise bullet points—not in paragraphs or complete sentences. These should highlight the skills you gained from each experience more so than just listing a duty or task you completed. Here are some tips to help you write strong bullet points:

- Start each bullet point with an action verb (see page 8 in this publication), then add details.
- If you are still in the role or experience listed, use present tense. If including something from the past, use past tense.
- List bullet points in order of importance that you want an employer to see.
- Look at a job posting or description for “qualifications and job duties” to match your bullet points to what the position is asking for. Be sure to use language in your bullet points that you see listed in the posting or description!
- Quantify your bullet points if applicable (e.g., specify how many employees you trained, how much you increased attendance, or how much of a budget you managed).

Improving Bullet Points

Here are a few examples of bullet points that have been improved using the tips above:

Before: Worked the cash register
After: Provided customer service in an efficient and courteous manner and handled financial transactions with accuracy

Before: Helped with various marketing projects
After: Assisted marketing chair on a campus-wide campaign to promote Homecoming event to 15,000 students and alumni

Before: Took care of children at daycare
After: Created developmentally-appropriate activities for five special needs children
# Resume Basics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you are thinking of using this word:</th>
<th>Consider using this word instead:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Led</td>
<td>Conducted, Directed, Guided, Headed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped</td>
<td>Assisted, Contributed, Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put together</td>
<td>Arranged, Collected, Compiled, Coordinated, Organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made sure</td>
<td>Approved, Assured, Corrected, Ensured, Verified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept track</td>
<td>Managed, Monitored, Recorded, Scheduled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Resume Checklist

Before you finalize your resume, use this checklist to ensure it is ready to go!

**Is your resume...**

- ✔ Spelling and grammar error-free?
- ✔ Devoid of personal pronouns (e.g., I, we, me, my)?
- ✔ A good reflection of how your skills and experiences relate to the job?
- ✔ One full page?

## How to Avoid the Rejection Email

### 7 Things You Need to Know About Applicant Tracking Systems

When you apply for a job online, you are most likely using a system known as an Applicant Tracking System (ATS). These technical systems are used by Human Resource departments to track and evaluate the numerous candidate resumes and cover letters that come into an organization. The following tips will ensure that your application materials include the necessary keywords and content to pass through the portal and be seen by a potential employer.

1. **Avoid Resume Templates**

   The layout and formatting included on resume templates can cause errors with applicant tracking systems. Avoid using stock resume templates and create your resume as a regular Microsoft Word document with simple formatting.

2. **Simple Formatting**

   Use simple formatting in your resume and resist the temptation to add a border or shading to the background of your resume. Create section headers such as “Summary of Qualifications,” “Education,” “Related Work Experience,” and more to signify where the information is located on your resume. Incorporate bolded fonts or add underlining to introduce a new section. The standard for a college student or recent college graduate seeking full-time employment is a one-page resume.

3. **Clean Fonts**

   Choose a sans serif font for your resume for a crisp, clean, easy-to-read look. Popular sans serif choices include Calibri, Arial, and Tahoma.

4. **Use Keywords**

   Applicant Tracking Systems score resumes based on keywords. The system assigns a value to each resume, assessing the qualifications and skills against what is contained in the job description. Resumes that score the highest are passed along to a recruiter or a hiring manager for further review. Carefully read each job description before you apply and identify the primary qualifications and skills. Highlight the ones that you possess and include those key phrases and words in your resume.

5. **Document Header & Footer**

   Do not place your contact information in the document’s header or footer. It is tempting to consider this to ensure that these details appear on each page of your resume, but doing so will cause an error in the system.

6. **Dates**

   Make sure to list the years of employment for every previous job or, more specifically, the month and year of both arrival and departure dates. Applicant Tracking Systems do not pick up semester information. Since the business world operates on a 12-month calendar, showing employment dates that correspond within this context will provide a more relatable resume for potential employers. Justify all dates to the right of your document for visual clarity.

7. **Images, Charts & Graphs**

   Let your experience and qualifications shine without the distraction of graphics. Do not include headshots, charts of proficiency levels, or graphs in your resume, as these are not standard practice and they can cause errors in tracking systems.

---

Gala Jackson, M.Ed. is a Millennial Expert & Career Management Consultant with InterviewSnob, a career consulting boutique for millennials. Connect with Gala @interviewsnob and check out her website at [www.interviewsnob.com](http://www.interviewsnob.com)
### Action Words

**Communication/ people skills**
- Addressed
- Arbitrated
- Articulated
- Clarified
- Communicated
- Condensed
- Consulted
- Conveyed
- Corresponded
- Defined
- Directed
- Drafted
- Elicited
- Explained
- Formulated
- Incorporated
- Interacted
- Interviewed
- Joined
- Lectured
- Marketed
- Mediated
- Moderated
- Observed
- Participated
- Presented
- Proposed
- Reconciled
- Referred
- Reported
- Responded
- Specified
- Suggested
- Synthesized
- Wrote

**Data/financial skills**
- Administered
- Allocated
- Appraised
- Audited
- Budgeted
- Computed
- Corrected
- Developed
- Forecasted
- Marketed
- Netted
- Projected
- Prepared
- Programmed
- Reconciled
- Researched
- Retrieved

**Helping skills**
- Adapted
- Arranged
- Assisted
- Coached
- Contributed
- Counseled
- Diagnosed
- Encouraged
- Expedited
- Familiarized
- Guided
- Insured
- Invited
- Negotiated
- Reorganized
- Resolved
- Supplied
- Volunteer

**Management/leadership skills**
- Administered
- Appointed
- Assigned
- Authorized
- Considered
- Contracted
- Converted
- Decided
- Developed
- Eliminated
- Enforced
- Established
- Generated
- Headed
- Hosted
- Incorporated

**Organizational skills**
- Approved
- Catalogued
- Charted
- Coded
- Compiled
- Corresponded
- Executed
- Generated
- Inspected
- Maintained
- Obtained
- Prepared
- Provided
- Recorded
- Resolved
- Scheduled
- Submitted
- Standardized
- Updated
- Verified

**Research skills**
- Analyzed
- Collected
- Conducted
- Detected
- Diagnosed
- Examined
- Explored
- Formulated
- Inspected
- Invented
- Located
- Organized
-Reviewed
- Solved
- Surveyed
- Tested

**Teaching skills**
- Adapted
- Assisted
- Assembled
- Calculated
- Collected
- Converted
- Designed
- Developed
- Fabricated
- Installed
- Operated
- Printed
- Rectified
- Remodeled
- Replaced
- Solved
- Standardized
- Upgraded

**Technical skills**
- Advised
- Clarified
- Communicated
- Coordinated
- Cooperated
- Corrected
- Developed
- Encouraged
- Explained
- Focused
- Individualized
- Instructed
- Motivated
- Persuaded
- Recruited
- Taught
- Tested
- Transmitted
- Tutored

**Creative skills**
- Adapted
- Combined
- Conceptualized
- Created
- Designed
- Directed
- Drew
- Established
- Formulated
- Founded
- Instituted
- Introduced
- Modeled
- Originated
- Revised
- Shaped

**Data/financial skills**
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- Verified

**Research skills**
- Analyzed
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- Tested

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- Directed
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- Formulated
- Founded
- Instituted
- Introduced
- Modeled
- Originated
- Revised
- Shaped
Cover Letter Content and Structure

A Cover Letter

- Accompanies your resume and is sent in response to specific job vacancy postings
- Introduces you and explains why you are the most suitable candidate for the job and organization
- Emphasizes what you can offer the employer, not what the employer can or should offer you
- Demonstrates that your qualifications fit the requirements of the position
- Provides examples of skills, abilities, and top qualities
- Shows you have researched the position and organization
- Demonstrates your writing ability

Create a unique letter for each job application to relate relevant accomplishments.

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. _____:

If you do not know or wish to assume the contact’s gender, you may use the person’s full name: Dear Angel Jones. Always try to find the name of a specific contact person. If this information is not provided in the job description, call the organization and ask who is in charge of hiring or who supervises that particular department. Ensure that you have the correct spelling of the individual’s name. If you are applying through an online application system and no contact is provided, perform an exhaustive search of the organization’s website to locate a direct contact or call the organization. If these efforts prove to be unsuccessful, substitute one of the following: Dear Human Resources Professional, Dear Hiring Manager, Dear Search Committee Chairperson, etc.

Opening paragraph: Why you are writing? Are you applying for a specific position? Do you want to know if specific types of positions are—or will be—available? Mention how you learned about the position or organization. If referred by a faculty member, relative, or employee, note his or her name here.

Second and consecutive paragraphs (body of the letter): Why are you interested in and qualified for the position and/or organization? Avoid lengthy paragraphs of more than five or six lines. Keep your sentences simple and to the point, but vary your sentence style. Outline your qualifications, strengths, accomplishments, and the benefits you can offer the organization. If you are applying for a specific position, identify keywords/phrases in the job description and relate your skills to what they are looking for. (For example, if the position requires good customer service skills: “I have had more than four years of experience in customer service and was selected to train several new employees on...”) You may want to refer to your resume in this or the closing paragraph.

Closing paragraph: Close asking for a response. It may be as simple as “I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my qualifications and interest in the position.” You might repeat your contact information for emphasis. Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration of your application materials.

Sincerely,

Sign your name here

Type your name
123 XYZ Drive  
Your Town, IL 12345  
(123) 456-7890  
psmith@IllinoisState.edu  

February 7, 20XX  

Ms. Angel Jones  
Manager of Human Resources  
Beck’s Public Relations Inc.  
1234 State Street  
Chicago, IL 12345  

Dear Ms. Jones:  

I am writing to apply for the position of Human Resources Assistant in your Training and Development Office. I found this position in the Illinois State University Career Center Hire-A-Redbird system.  

My education in human resources and my recent internship at ABC Publishing House have provided me with the experience and confidence necessary to succeed in training and development. I noticed in the job description that you are looking for a professional with experience in technical writing. My time at ABC was spent developing the web-based training manual for the professional staff to use when training new employees on customer service. ABC was recently awarded the coveted “City of Chicago Customer Service Company of the Year” by the Chicago Chamber of Commerce. I am very pleased to have been a part of that effort.  

I am particularly impressed by the company philosophy noted on the website of “dedication to professional excellence through continued professional education.” I agree with this idea and have embraced several professional development opportunities in the field myself. Most recently, I participated in the Society for Human Resource Management Annual Conference. In addition to providing opportunities for others to improve, I would look forward to my own continuing professional development at Beck’s Public Relations Inc.  

Thank you for considering me as a candidate for this position. I eagerly anticipate hearing from you in the near future about the prospect of an interview.  

Sincerely,  

Pat Smith
If you’re wondering what skills you have that would interest a potential employer, you are not alone. Many college seniors feel that four (or more) years of college haven’t sufficiently prepared them to begin work after graduation. Like these students, you may have carefully reviewed your work history (along with your campus and civic involvement) and still have a difficult time seeing how the skills you learned in college will transfer to the workplace.

Keep in mind you’ve been acquiring skills since childhood. Whether learning the value of teamwork by playing sports, developing editing skills working on your high school newspaper, or learning to effectively manage time while completing your coursework, each of your experiences has laid the groundwork for building additional skills.

What Are Transferable Skills?
A transferable skill is a “portable skill” that you deliberately (or inadvertently, if you haven’t identified them yet) take with you to other life experiences.

Your transferable skills are often:
• acquired through a class (e.g., an English major who learns technical writing)
• acquired through experience (e.g., a student government representative who develops strong motivation and consensus building skills)

Transferable skills supplement your degree. They provide an employer concrete evidence of your readiness and qualification for a position. Identifying your transferable skills and communicating them to potential employers will greatly increase your success during the job search.

Remember that it is impossible to complete college without acquiring transferable skills. Campus and community activities, class projects and assignments, athletic activities, internships and summer/part-time jobs have all provided you with countless experiences where you’ve acquired a range of skills—many that now come so naturally, you don’t think twice about.

Identifying Transferable Skills
Transferable skills are desired by employers from a variety of industries. In the field of career services, a new concept is that of career clusters. Career clusters are the grouping of occupations into broad industries based on commonalities. You can consider applying your transferable skills when identifying positions within a career cluster. Potential career clusters include: healthcare, business and communication, education and social services, and any other set of fields that serve intersectional industries.

### Candidate Skills and Qualities Most Important to Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/quality</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work in a team structure</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make decisions and solve problems</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to obtain and process information</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to analyze quantitative data</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical knowledge related to the job</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency with computer software programs</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to create and/or edit written reports</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to sell or influence others</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Point Scale
1 = Not at all important
2 = Not very important
3 = Somewhat important
4 = Very important
5 = Extremely important

Source: Job Outlook 2016 National Association of Colleges and Employers
A curriculum vitae is biographical information about one’s educational and professional background. The origin of the term is Latin and means “the course of one’s life or career.” Individuals with a Ph.D., M.D., J.D., M.A., M.S., M.F.A., or M.S.W. often use vitae, as well as some individuals with a B.A., B.S., and/or professional experience. The document is used primarily for educational institutions, applications for professional (academic or administrative) positions, admissions to a professional- or graduate-level program, and/or for professional positions in which advanced levels of education and experience are required. Most B.A. and B.S. graduates in business, industry, government, and education (K–12) positions do not require a CV.

A two-page resume is not a vitae, though two pages can constitute a vitae. It is not just the length of the document but the specific information within it that creates this difference.

There is no one way to construct a vitae nor one way to format it, but there are a few standard guidelines. The document should be

• Well-organized
• Intuitive
• Error-free

**Name and Contact Information**
This should be on the first page; the following pages should include name and page number in the same header or footer location throughout the document. There is no need to type “ vitae” on the first page.

**Professional/Career/Vocational/Research Objectives**
A brief sentence stating general goals or paragraph sharing both short- and long-term goals.

**Education**
List the names of universities, colleges, and professional schools attended in reverse chronological order, with the most recent or important first. Include degrees awarded and in-progress, diplomas, certificates, dates of graduation and/or attendance, major, minor, emphasis, and concentration details. Include strong GPA(s), where appropriate.

**Thesis/Dissertation Abstract**
A summary of a thesis or dissertation, full title, and date of completion are helpful in conveying specialized knowledge gained from advanced degrees. Consult with an academic advisor regarding appropriate wording of this statement. Some disciplines (such as chemistry or psychology) have specific editorial formats for abstracts.

**Honors/Achievements/Awards**
List and describe departmental, athletic, and dean’s awards; scholarships and fellowships; and community and professional awards in reverse chronological order or order of importance. Briefly describe why you received the award.

**Coursework**
List courses in groups, with course titles and descriptions where appropriate. Do not list course numbers or abbreviations.

**Research Interest(s)**
Be as specific as possible regarding the description and scope of your research interest(s).

**Research and/or Laboratory Experience**
Provide detailed descriptions of experience and the ways in which this fits into a profession or a laboratory’s ongoing research. Give the title of each project and information concerning its actual or potential publication. List the names and titles of professors or supervisors.

**Teaching Interests and Experience**
Describe teaching, tutoring, and group learning experience. Include whether or not you have written the syllabi, what texts were used, and the level of the class instructed (freshman, sophomore, graduate level, etc.).

**Instrumentation Experience**
Include computer hardware, photographic, and/or audio-visual programs with which you have technical competency. Include equipment model numbers where appropriate.

**Special Skills**
List foreign and computer languages, computer software (and edition or version information, where pertinent), leadership, organizational, and analytical skills.

**Publications/Presentations/Works-in-Progress**
These include works authored or coauthored with faculty or other colleagues. Provide appropriate bibliographic descriptions (list unpublished manuscripts only if they are being considered for publication). Artists and musicians should provide descriptions of works-in-progress. Provide detailed descriptions of presentations, particularly those on behalf of academic societies and professional associations. List title, organization name, location, and date by reverse chronological order.

**Professional Associations/Learned/Scientific Societies**
Include role, level of involvement, offices held, and group membership duration. Some examples include the American Chemical Society, Modern Language Association, and American Psychological Association.

**Work Experience**
This can include full-time, part-time, internship, volunteer, summer, and on-campus experience—listed together or separated by type. You may also separate by order of importance. Include the job title as designated by the company, the company or organization name, location (city and state), type of organization, dates, job duties and responsibilities, and promotions.

**Community Service**
List civic memberships, volunteerism, and each role, level of involvement, and office held.

**Background**
This is a space to include information for graduate and professional school applications (e.g., prolonged residence abroad and/or unusual educational work experiences). Do not include information on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, or political preference.

**Co-curricular Activities**
List all campus programs and may include role, level of involvement, and offices held.

**Interests**
List related, professionally-applicable avocations where appropriate.

**Travel**
Include descriptions and length of visits for extensive domestic or international travel where applicable to coursework or specific research.

**References/Recommendations**
References should be those willing to be contacted without direct communication from you and are completely optional.
Thank-You Letter Overview

When Are Thank-you Letters Appropriate?
Thank-you letters are appropriate after the following occasions:

- After every job interview; including in-person, digital, and phone interviews.
- After every informational interview or networking meeting.
- After someone has helped you with your job search process through direct referral, recommendation, offered contact information, or critical review of application materials.

Why Should You Send a Thank-you Letter?
You should send thank-you letters for the following reasons:

- To reaffirm your interest in the company, employer, or industry.
- To jog the interviewer’s memory and to remind him/her of your interview.
- To mention something that you may have omitted during the interview.
- To illustrate that you are courteous and professional.

What is the Purpose of the Letter, and What Should it Include?
Thank-you letters should:

- Express gratitude for the opportunity to interview or job search assistance.
- Mention aspects of the interview that were of particular interest and potentially continue further conversation about them.
- Provide an opportunity to add something relevant that you may not have mentioned during the interview.
- Be short, concise, and to the point.

How Should a Thank-you Letter Be Sent?
You should judge how to send a thank-you letter (e.g., email or post) by your previous communications with the employer. For example, if the employer has contacted you via email, feel free to send your thank-you note the same way. If you expect to receive the job decision quickly, you should send your thank-you note immediately. Your thank-you note should always be sent within 24 hours of your interview. Whether you send a handwritten or emailed thank-you note, it should always be formal and professional. A handwritten thank-you note can make you stand out from the other candidates in a positive way.

Reprinted with permission from Columbia University’s 2012-2013 Career Planning Guide.

Sample: Thank-you Letter

123 ABC Drive
My Town, IL 6XXXX
(309) 555-1234
my name@IllinoisState.edu

Mr. Alex David Wayne
Apfel Incorporated
222 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022

November 1, 2013

Dear Mr. Wayne,

It was a pleasure meeting with you yesterday. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you about the marketing analyst position at Apfel Incorporated. I am enthusiastic about the position and believe that my skills and interests are a strong match for the company. As we discussed, while interning at American Marketing Company, I completed a project that is similar in nature to the work that I would be doing at your company. Developing new business presentations for sports initiatives was my greatest accomplishment at American Marketing Company, and I believe that I could make a valuable contribution to Apfel.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 309-555-1234. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mark Hamilton

Note: If your thank-you note is sent via email, the address heading is not necessary.
Chapter 3: Starting Your Job Search

Tapping the Hidden Job Market

Studies have shown that only 15 percent of available jobs are ever advertised. The process of finding a job takes much more than merely perusing the online job boards. By employing a number of methods, you dramatically increase your chances of finding the work you want. Some techniques you can use include:

Networking. Probably the most effective way to meet potential employers and learn about possible jobs is to tap into your personal network of contacts. You might think it’s too early to have professional contacts, but think about everyone you know—family members and their friends/co-workers, professors, past employers, neighbors, and even long-standing professional relationships, such as your dentist or doctor. Don’t be afraid to inform them of your career interests and let them know that you are looking for work. They will likely be happy to help and refer you to any professionals they think can be of assistance. Attend meetings of professional associations and become an active member.

Informational interviewing. This approach allows you to learn more about your field by setting up interviews with professionals. The purpose of these interviews is to meet professionals, gather information, investigate career options, obtain advice on job search techniques, and get referrals to other professionals. When setting up these interviews, either by phone or letter, make it clear to the employer that you have no job expectations and are seeking information only. This technique also familiarizes you to employers, and you may be remembered when a company has a vacant position.

Temporary work. As more companies employ the services of temporary or contract workers, new graduates are discovering that such work is a good opportunity to gain experience in their fields. Temporary workers can explore various jobs and get an inside look at different companies without the commitment of a permanent job. Often, if a company decides to make a position permanent, these “temps” are given first consideration if they have made a good impression.

Electronic job search. Companies post job listings on websites to which students can directly respond by sending their resumes and cover letters.

Persistence is the key to cracking the hidden job market. When you utilize the above tools, your network base will naturally expand, and your search will become easier. Employers will appreciate your resourcefulness—and view you as a viable candidate.

Job Search Tips for Special Populations

Students with Disabilities

- Focus on your ABILITIES rather than your disabilities:
  - On your resume, disclose skills related to navigating disability such as your ability to read Braille or sign fluently in ASL
  - Identify involvement in organizations for individuals with disabilities, especially if you hold a leadership role
  - Don’t be afraid to discuss your disability with the employer:
  - On your employment application, you are not required to disclose your disability, but consider writing “will discuss” when completing sections requesting disclosure or job accommodations
  - Before the interview, if special accommodations are needed, make sure to inform the employer of your disability so that arrangements can be made
  - During the interview, educate the employer about your disability and how you will still successfully fulfill your assignments—emphasize your creativity in developing alternative approaches to completing tasks
  - When a job is offered, disclose your disability if accommodations in the workplace are necessary so that the employer can plan accordingly to ensure your mutual success
- Utilize all your resources, including:
  - Disability-specific associations such as the Arthritis Foundation, American Council of the Blind, and the National Center on Employment of the Deaf
  - Placement services offering assistance to disabled persons such as state vocational rehabilitation agencies, the U.S. employment service, independent living centers, and committees on employment of people with disabilities
  - Specialized job search engines
    - www.gettinghired.com
    - www.jobaccess.org

International Students

- Focus on unique skills that other students may not have, such as foreign languages and global or diverse experience
- For more information on visa statuses, please go to the Office of International Studies, Fell Hall 308
- Specialized job search engines
  - www.internationalstudent.com/jobsearch
  - www.rileyguide.com/internat.html

LGBTQ+

- Informing the employer of your sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression is your discretion—do not feel pressured to disclose details regarding your personal life
- Focus on your skill set, qualifications, and interest in the job
- Be yourself and assess each employment opportunity and culture individually
- Schedule an appointment with the Career Center if you need support navigating a career opportunity

Adapted and reprinted with permission from Purdue University’s 2012-2013 Career Planning Handbook.
# Job Search Strategies

There are many ways to look for a job, some that may suit your needs more effectively than others. Below are some of the most popular ways to do so, as well as helpful hints and the pros and cons of each method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Tools, Pros, Cons, and Helpful Hints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERNET</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> Access to the web and a digital copy of your resume. <strong>Pros:</strong> Actual job openings. Many employers use a wide variety of job listing services. Many listings have free to low-cost access. Worldwide geographic reach. <strong>Cons:</strong> Competition grows as internet usage increases. Multiple listings—one position posted on several sites—can give the illusion of more options than actually exist. <strong>Hints:</strong> Use the web frequently as websites and the information they contain can change quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NETWORKING</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> List of contacts, resumes, and business attire. <strong>Pros:</strong> May learn of unadvertised openings. May result in a courtesy interview. May provide information to direct your search. <strong>Cons:</strong> A contact in itself is not enough to guarantee a job. You may exhaust all leads without finding employment. Quite time-consuming. <strong>Hints:</strong> Follow through on all leads. Continue to broaden your network of contacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL MEDIA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> Access to the internet, social media accounts, and a digital copy of your resume. <strong>Pros:</strong> Access to a wide variety of employers, contacts, and current job openings. <strong>Cons:</strong> Employers can view your information or images. Maintain a professional profile, or use a separate account for connecting to employers. <strong>Hints:</strong> Follow your favorite companies. Show off your education and skills. Display an appropriate photo. Perform a search on your name to review your internet presence and clean up the results if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ON-CAMPUS RECRUITING</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> Scheduling interviews, employer literature, resumes, and business attire. <strong>Pros:</strong> Primary source of companies’ recruitment for technical and business positions. <strong>Cons:</strong> Less effective method for non-technical or non-business candidates. <strong>Hints:</strong> Use the interview schedule as a way to identify possible employers, even if you don’t get to interview on campus with those employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TARGETED MAILING</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> List of well-researched companies, tailored cover letters, and resumes. <strong>Pros:</strong> Better approach than mass-mailing. Investment of time and effort should merit reciprocal response from employers. <strong>Cons:</strong> Requires a significant investment of time in researching companies and writing cover letters as well as following up with contacts. <strong>Hints:</strong> Try to find out who is in charge of the area in which you want to work and send your materials to that person specifically. Great method when used in conjunction with networking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IN-PERSON VISIT</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> Business attire, company address list, and resumes. <strong>Pros:</strong> Another way to monitor the job market and get your qualifications to the attention of employers. <strong>Cons:</strong> May involve a fee. Often more helpful to those in technical or specialized fields. May not learn of the status of your materials. <strong>Hints:</strong> Research the companies prior to your visit. Ask for a specific person within the applicable department of interest or about a particular type of job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESUME REFERRAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> Registration form supplied by service. <strong>Pros:</strong> Another way to monitor the job market and get your qualifications to the attention of employers. <strong>Cons:</strong> May involve a fee. Often more helpful to those in technical or specialized fields. May not learn of the status of your materials. <strong>Hints:</strong> Only use in conjunction with other job search strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> Resumes and business attire. <strong>Pros:</strong> Fee-paid jobs for graduates in technical fields or those with marketable experience. <strong>Cons:</strong> May be less help to non-technical/inexperienced graduates. Be wary if you, instead of the employer, have to pay a fee. <strong>Hints:</strong> Identify agencies that specialize in your field. Make frequent contact with your counselor to obtain better service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WANT ADS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools:</strong> Newspapers, journals, newsletters, trade magazines, cover letters, and resumes. <strong>Pros:</strong> Involves minimal investment of time in identifying companies. Resume and cover letter are sent for actual job openings. <strong>Cons:</strong> Resume and cover letter will compete with greater number of others. Ad usage follows job market trends and is least effective in times of economic downturn. <strong>Hints:</strong> Use as a meter on the job market in a certain career field. Try to get your materials in as early as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted and reprinted with permission from Career Services, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.*

*Hire-A-Redbird, Illinois State's job vacancy board, is available free to students and alumni at HireARedbird.IllinoisState.edu.*
Ten Best Ways to Go Online...and Get the Job

Almost 40 percent of HR managers predict resumes will soon be replaced by social-networking profiles. Even today, to get the attention of recruiters, graduates have to establish a highly visible online presence. Most students are comfortable using technology to connect with family and friends, but unsure about how to use it in a professional context.

1. Check Out Major Job Boards
Technology is great, so as a job seeker it is appealingly straight-forward to search for employment opportunities on the Internet. “Digital job search is attractive to young people because they’re tech-savvy,” said J.T. O’Donnell of CareerHMO.com.

While a broad internet search—including searching major job boards—may be one aspect of your job search, it is prudent to consider avenues beyond this approach. The most effective job search incorporates diversified sources and interactive strategies to access job opportunities and make contact with employers.

2. Online Job Search Engines
A better bet is a search engine that delivers job listings directly to you. O’Donnell recommends linkup.com. “They focus on company websites so there are fewer duplicate, stale, or fishy listings. You can also set up alerts to contact you if one of their 22,000+ companies posts a new opening.”

It may be that Google is now becoming the primary (unofficial) job search engine. Job hunters can search (or set up automatic alerts) for job titles, companies, cities, states, and get lists of postings that match their terms.

3. Compare Company Cultures Online
Want to get the real scoop on what it’s like to work at your dream company? Check out glassdoor.com, which rates companies similar to how Yelp rates consumer services. “They accept anonymous information on companies,” says O’Donnell. “They post salary ranges for jobs, feedback ratings on leadership, and information on the interview process.”

4. Write Your Resume in Digital Format
“80 percent of all companies are using ATS [applicant-tracking systems that scan and digitize your application documents], so keywords are key,” says O’Donnell.

There’s a way to circumvent this challenge. Reverse-engineer several job descriptions. First, highlight the repeating keywords (e.g., “Microsoft Office Suite,” not “motivated self-starter”), and incorporate them into your resume for an ATS software-friendly, search-engine-optimized resume!

5. Embrace LinkedIn
Think of LinkedIn as your resume...on steroids. Fill out your profile completely, but once it’s complete, reach out to specific individuals—the people most likely to hire you or help you get hired. “Search the database just like recruiters do; by job titles, companies, and professions. Search for people who are in jobs one, two, or three levels above your target job,” says Martin Yate, author of Knock ‘em Dead, the Ultimate Job Search Guide.

6. Tweet, Tweet
Twitter is a favorite method for recruiters to get a quick look at who you are and how you think. It’s fairly easy to micro-blog, too. Share your career-related news or retweet nuggets of interest to people in your field.

O’Donnell says Twitter is one of her favorite ways to contact hard-to-meet people. “Username, I’d really like to connect with you on Twitter,” she’ll ask. “And they’re likely to do it because it’s only a 140-character commitment. Later, you can tweet, ‘would you mind if I connect with you on LinkedIn?’ It’s low-risk for them so you’ll see a higher rate of return.”

7. Email Etiquette
Most job seekers go through two to six exchanges with recruiters between the time they email “We got your resume” and when they sit in the interview chair, according to Tim Sanders, author of Love is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends. Stalking a recruiter with too-frequent emails should be avoided. Don’t text a recruiter either, he warns. Texting a stranger might come across as overly familiar.

8. Broadcast on Facebook
Even though Facebook is usually thought of as a purely social platform, it can be useful during a job search. “I’d do a post to my network of friends, family and other contacts,” says Sanders, “rather than contacting strangers.” For instance: “I am on the hunt to find a job at [company] because of X. Does anyone know anybody at [company]? That X has to be believable, such as, I think they make the best products in the industry.”

It’s good to repost a variation of that request every few days. (“You’re reaching only about 10 percent of your friends’ feeds at any time,” Sanders says.)

9. A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words
Your digital footprint often precedes you, so it’s a good idea to periodically review your online identity. Enlist another set of eyes, too, for another perspective.

“I helped my niece with her profile,” says Peggy Klaus, author of BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It. “I opened up her Facebook page and saw her in a picture with a hookah. She said, ‘Aunt Peg, it’s only tobacco!’ And I said, ‘I don’t care! To people of my generation, a hookah means pot.’” Klaus recommends a professional pose, conservative attire, and, if possible, studio-professional photography.

10. Polish Your Online Image
“Don’t show or say anything online that you wouldn’t want your mother or boss to see,” Klaus warns.

Make sure your email address is professional and adjust your privacy settings accordingly. “Watch your grammar and spelling, don’t be silly or edgy, and stay away from political commentary (unless that’s appropriate for the job or industry),” Klaus advises. Employers value good written communication skills.

Written by Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues and other business topics from her home in Portland, Ore.
Don’t Forget the Small Companies

Is a Small Company Right for You?
Generally, any business with 200 or fewer employees is considered a small company. In a small company:

- Employees receive more individual responsibility not limited by job titles or descriptions
- Ideas and suggestions are often given more attention
- Career advancement and salary increases may be rapid in periods of growth
- There may be less job security due to the high rate of small business failure
- There is opportunity to be involved in the creation or growth of something great
- Employees are involved in the entire organization rather than one narrow department
- There may be eligibility for stock options and profit sharing
- There may be less bureaucracy, but also less feedback
- Successes and faults are more visible
- Starting salaries and benefits may vary more dramatically
- A dominant leader can control the entire organization, creating an environment of political gamesmanship or a healthy, happy culture everyone benefits from
- You must be able to work effectively with everyone in the organization

Are You Right for a Small Company?
Because most small companies do not have extensive training programs, they look for certain traits in potential employees. You will do well in a small company if you are:

- Self-motivated
- A generalist with complementary skills
- A good oral and written communicator
- Enthusiastic
- A risk-taker
- A quick learner
- Responsible with your time and priorities

There are fewer limitations, and it’s up to you to make the best or worst of that freedom. A small business often has a strong company culture. Learn that company’s culture; it will help you on your way up the corporate ladder.

Finding a Job in a Small Company
One of the biggest hurdles to finding a job in a small business is contacting a hiring manager. Good timing is critical. The sporadic growth of many small companies can mean equally dynamic job openings, so networking is essential. A small business tends to fill its labor needs informally through personal contacts and recommendations from employees.

The sporadic growth of many small companies can mean equally dynamic job openings, so networking is essential.

Once you have someone’s attention, you must demonstrate what you can offer their company. How do you find the information necessary to do that? Try these techniques:

- Contact the chamber of commerce in the area you would like to work. Get the names of growing companies in the industry of your choice. Peruse the membership directory for leads.
- Participate in the local chapter of professional trade associations related to your career. Send prospective employers a cover letter and resume, then follow up with a phone call.
- Read trade publications, business journals, and area newspapers for leads. Again, follow up.
- Speak with small business lenders such as bankers, venture capitalists, and small business investment companies listed in directories at local libraries.

If you haven’t graduated yet, offer to work for your company of choice as an intern. This will give you valuable experience, and—if you do well—there’s a greater chance that a job will be waiting for you on graduation day.

Adapted with permission from the Career Resource Manual of the University of California, Davis.

A small business often has a strong company culture. Learn that company’s culture; it will help you on your way up the corporate ladder.
Networking events are your opportunity to meet directly with employers from a variety of organizations, learn about their companies, gather information, and find out their hiring processes. To achieve these goals, you need a plan of action to ensure you use your time effectively and maximize your interactions with employers. Follow these steps:

Before

Research employers: Learn in advance about the employers who will be attending an event. For example, the list of registered employers attending an Illinois State University career fair will be posted on the Career Center website prior to each fair and can be viewed on the Career Center app as well. Develop a prioritized list of employers who you are interested in so your visit will be expedient and focused. Visit the website of each employer to research important company information. Take notes!

Identify your targets: Based on your research, prioritize the organizations on your list and determine who to meet first. This will help you make the best use of your time.

Prepare a 30-second commercial: Interaction with employers is limited, so maximize your time with them by promoting yourself in an appropriate way to ultimately answer the questions “why should we hire you?”:

- 5 seconds—Greeting: “Hello, my name is ______”
- 5 seconds—Educational Background: “I’m majoring in (or I’m graduating in May with a degree in) ____,” perhaps including an area of concentration or your minor.
- 5-10 seconds—Description of interest: “I am especially interested in _____ opportunity with your company/organization because of my experience _____,” which can include mention of a related internship, summer job or class, or research project.
- 5-10 seconds—Strengths and accomplishments related to your job target: Whatever highlights or strengths you select, use your own words. Convey your message naturally, without sounding rehearsed.
- 5-10 seconds—Summary or goal statement: Reasons you would be a good fit for the position or organization. Show you have researched the company thoroughly by sharing a personal career goal that aligns with the mission statement of that specific institution.

30-Second Commercial Example

Review the sample below. Using the information above, prepare and practice a brief 30- to 60-second commercial or introduction to use when meeting employer representatives.

Hello, my name is _____________. I am currently a junior, majoring in communication and working part-time as a supervisor at my university’s Student Fitness Center. This role has enhanced my communication, management, and leadership skills. In addition, I had an internship over the summer with ABC Company where I worked in a team environment on a variety of marketing and website development projects. I recently read an article about your company’s plans for business growth in the Northeast, and I’m interested in learning more.

Note: Practice your introduction with a friend or career advisor so it sounds conversational and spontaneous.

During

Be professional and polite: Professional business attire is expected and sets the tone for your interaction with employers. Approach the employers with confidence and reasonable assertiveness. Smile as you meet with representatives and remember your manners.

Use your time well: When it’s your turn to speak, use your “commercial” to introduce yourself. Have relevant questions reflecting your knowledge about the employer, which will reflect your interest. Ask for a business card to follow up on prospective leads.

After the Networking Event

- If applying for a job, complete the online process as soon as possible. Many employers require completed digital applications to proceed to a formal interview.
- Send a thank-you letter or email within 24 hours to employers who interest you. In each message, remind your new contact where you met them and reiterate your interest in them, their company, or a position discussed.

Consult a career advisor: Consult the Career Center staff for a resume review and interview preparation. General resume critique sessions and mock interviews are offered each semester. Bring several resumes printed on high-quality resume paper when attending networking events.
Informational Interview

Why Set Up an Informational Interview?
Another helpful strategy during your career information search is to conduct informational interviews with professionals who are working in occupations you may be interested in pursuing as a career path. Through the informational interview you can learn about an industry or specific company, typical and atypical career paths, and current job opportunities. An informational interview is equally helpful for students who are undecided about a major, for students who have chosen their major and want to identify how that major translates into viable career paths, and students who are nearing graduation and conducting further research about particular employment opportunities.

How Do I Set Up an Informational Interview?
- Identify an employer or organization you would like to research and find the contact information of the supervisor in the specific department in which you’re interested.
- State that you are a student at Illinois State University and would like to conduct an informational interview to find out more about the organization and/or a specific position.
- Assure the individual you will be brief and respectful.

How Do I Prepare for an Informational Interview?
- If conducting your interview in person, dress professionally and conduct yourself as if you were interviewing for a job.
- If conducting the interview via phone, be sure to have a reliable and stable phone connection. Eliminate all distractions and background noise, sit on the edge of the chair or stand during the interview, have your notes in front of you for reference, and have the employer’s website up in front of you, if possible.
- Research the organization’s website by:
  - Finding out what the employer does or produces and who their target audience is
  - Carefully reading the mission and vision statements
  - Determining what the organization’s goals and accomplishments have been over the past one to three years
- Prepare relevant questions based on the organization and types of current career positions listed on their website.

What Questions Should I Ask in the Interview?
- Would you describe some typical entry-level positions within the organization or industry?
- What educational and work experience is the company looking for in a qualified candidate?
- What are some of the job expectations of a new hire?
- What are some of the characteristics of your job that you see as benefits? What do you like most about your job?
- What challenges do people in this position or industry face?
- What types of training programs or opportunities exist for new hires?
- Are there any job shadowing, internship, or summer work opportunities? How would I apply for these?

Don’t Forget to Write a Thank-You Letter
Following up an informational interview by thanking the interviewer can be the start of a networking opportunity that could lead you to other possible positions in the field. Be sure to mail your thank-you letter within 24 hours of the interview.

Sample: Networking Email Message
The content below can also be used as talking points when on the phone:

Dear Ms. DeGarmo,

Dr. Jesse Fell, Professor of Psychology at Illinois State University, suggested that I contact you. He mentioned that as an alumnus you would be in an excellent position to provide information that might assist me in making a career decision.

As a psychology student at Illinois State, I am exploring career paths. Counseling research and human resources both sound interesting, but I want to enter my final year of schooling with a clear sense of direction. I would like to learn about your personal career path and educational background in the interest of better understanding the day-to-day activities of a counselor.

Would you be willing to briefly meet or speak on the phone with me regarding this important matter? Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
Reggie Redbird
Work Your Network
Developing a Noticeable LinkedIn Profile

Technology has revolutionized the hiring process. In 2003, LinkedIn introduced an online business networking platform that gave candidates and recruiters unprecedented access to over 332 million users across the globe, making the search for the right job and the right candidate much more efficient. As a current or recent graduate, you may be unsure about how to best use LinkedIn. Is it like Facebook? What information should be in my profile? How do I use it to network or find a job?

Is LinkedIn Like Facebook?
LinkedIn isn’t like Facebook. LinkedIn isn’t about personal details, like what you did last weekend. While you have a profile and a profile picture, the focus is business. This platform is where you showcase your educational background, relevant experience, volunteer experience, skills, knowledge of your desired industry, interaction with other business professionals, and communicate your “value proposition” to employers.

What Should Be Included In My Profile?
A polished LinkedIn profile is the crux of successful online networking. Consider your profile your first impression to a global online business community. While that can feel a bit intimidating, don’t overthink it. It’s easy to create a profile you can be proud to share with other professionals. To help you get started, using the following tips for constructing a professional profile beyond just your work experience.

1. Headshot
LinkedIn profiles that have a headshot are more likely to be viewed by recruiters. Unlike your Facebook picture, your LinkedIn picture should be business-oriented. Your profile picture should be a preview of what it would be like to see you come in for an interview. Look professional and smile. Keep in mind that selfies are strictly prohibited if you want to land the job!

2. Keyword-Rich Headline
The second most important piece of your profile is the headline. This is an opportunity to announce to the global business community who you are or seek to become. Use this prime real estate to your advantage by incorporating keywords from your desired job or industry.

3. Summary
The summary section is your 30-second elevator pitch. Use this section to introduce yourself and highlight significant skills, qualifications, and interests in your desired field. Be sure to communicate passion and enthusiasm for the industry and work you seek.

4. Education
The education section is the place to list your full degree, indicate your institution, and graduation or anticipated graduation date. Be sure to include any minors, study abroad experiences, and certificate programs related to the degree.

5. Language
Share that you have the ability to speak a second language; include the language and proficiency level. Highlighting this information can give you a competitive advantage over other candidates.

6. Samples of Your Work
LinkedIn offers a great feature for users to upload samples of their work. Showcasing presentations, research projects, senior capstone assignments, and portfolio pieces add value and credibility to your profile.

7. Volunteer Experience
Employers take note of volunteer experience. Be sure to include the name of the organization, your role within it, and length of involvement. Also include details such as fundraising results, event coordination, and management experience. Your volunteerism, in many cases, can be as valuable as work experience, especially if it is related to your desired industry.

8. Awards and Honors
Highlight any awards and honors received during your collegiate academic career including nonacademic awards received for community or civic engagement. List the full name of the award (avoid acronyms), awarding organization or department, and the year the award was received.

9. Select Your Skills
Identify your top industry-specific, technical, and general skills. Adding this information to your profile will allow others to endorse your skill set, giving you instant credibility. A solid list of at least 8-10 skills demonstrates value and capability.

10. Share Your Interests
Disclosing your personal interests and hobbies can help demonstrate your work-life balance. Personal interests can sometimes score a few extra “top candidate” points, but be sure to avoid sharing too much personal information. Remember, the LinkedIn profile is a platform for professionals.

How Do I Network To Land The Job?
Now that you have completed your profile, land the job by using these top features to start connecting with other professionals:

Customize the Invitation to Connect
Every time you send a message to connect with someone on LinkedIn, customize the text. Share who you are, why you want to connect, and how you found or know the individual. For example, If you met them in-person, tell them where you met and when.

Alumni Connections Feature
LinkedIn offers users a dynamic tool that connects individuals who share the same alma mater. Search for alumni who are practicing in your desired field, have the same degree, or attended your institution during a specific time period. Many individuals are happy to assist their fellow alumni with career advice and even hire alums. Don’t forget to showcase your school pride in that customized invitation to connect!

Follow Companies, Join Groups, and Connect with Recruiters
Start following your dream companies on LinkedIn and join industry-specific groups. Be the first to know about company news and job postings. As you start following companies, make note of who is posting updates and job announcements. Use those clues to connect with recruiters and company leaders.

Share Content
Position yourself as a knowledgeable resource. Share interesting industry or work productivity articles. Comment on posts shared by others in your network. Reinforce your professional brand by sharing your knowledge and perspectives.

Gala Jackson, M.Ed. is a Millennial Expert & Career Management Consultant with InterviewSnob, a career consulting boutique for millennials. Connect with Gala @ interviewsnob.com and check out her website at www.interviewsnob.com
Professional Etiquette

Your academic knowledge and skills may be spectacular, but do you have the social skills needed to be successful in the workplace? Good professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company. Not knowing proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job, and jeopardize both personal and business relationships.

Meeting and Greeting

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Terry Cobb, owner of HR-Employment Solutions, emphasizes the importance of making a good first impression—beginning with the handshake. A firm shake, he says, indicates to employers that you’re confident. A weak handshake sends the message that you’re not interested in nor qualified for the job. Dave Owenby, human resources manager for both North and South Carolina at Sherwin Williams, believes, “Good social skills include having a firm handshake, smiling, making eye contact, and closing the meeting with a handshake.”

The following basic rules will help you get ahead in the workplace:

- Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Provide information in making introductions—you are responsible for keeping the conversation going. “Joe, please meet Ms. Crawford, CEO at American Enterprise, Inc., in Cleveland.” “Mr. Jones, this is Kate Smith, a Senior majoring in computer information systems at Northwestern University.”
- Unless given permission, always address someone by his or her title and last name.
- Practice a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.

Dining

Shirley Willey, owner of Etiquette & Company, reports that roughly 80 percent of second interviews involve a business meal. Cobb remembers one candidate who had passed his initial interview with flying colors. Because the second interview was scheduled close to noon, Cobb decided to conduct the interview over lunch. Initially, the candidate was still in “interview mode” and maintained his professionalism. After a while, however; he became more relaxed—and that’s when the candidate’s real personality began to show. He had terrible table manners, made several off-color remarks, and spoke negatively about previous employers. Needless to say, Cobb was unimpressed and the candidate did not get the job.

Remember that an interview is always an interview, regardless of how relaxed or informal the setting. Anything that is said or done will be considered by the interviewer, cautions Cobb.

In order to make a good impression during a lunch or dinner interview, make sure you:

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host or hostess indicates the seating arrangement.
- Place your napkin in your lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a talking business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Keep your hands in your lap unless you are using them to eat.
- Practice proper posture and sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Try to eat at the same pace as everyone else.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place your napkin on your chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Place your napkin beside your plate at the end of the meal.
- Push your chair under the table when excusing yourself.

Eating

Follow these simple rules for eating and drinking:

- Start eating with the implement that is furthest away from your plate. You may have two spoons and two forks. The spoon furthest from your plate is a soup spoon. The fork furthest away is a salad fork unless you have three forks—one being much smaller—this would be a seafood or appetizer fork. The dessert fork or spoon is usually above the plate.
- Dip soup away from you and sip from the side of the spoon.
- Keep your hands in your lap unless you are using them to eat.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Try to eat at the same pace as everyone else.
- Place your napkin beside your plate at the end of the meal.
- Push your chair under the table when excusing yourself.

The interviewer will usually take care of the bill and the tip. Be prepared, however, if this doesn’t happen and have small bills ready to pay your part—including the tip. Never make an issue of the check.

Social skills can make or break your career. Employees have to exhibit a certain level of professionalism and etiquette in their regular work day—particularly in positions where they come in contact with clients. Be one step ahead—practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.

Written by Jennie Hunter, retired professor at Western Carolina University.
Gain Experience With Internships

There are few better ways to gain professional experience and build your resume than through an internship. Internships are professionally-supervised work or service experiences that provide intentional learning goals and reflect actively on your education. In addition, internships offer opportunities to determine if a job or industry is a good fit for your future career. Employers will use internships as a way to gain a firsthand look at prospective employees.

Quick Facts About Internships

- Internships can also be a part of a learning plan that is developed individually.
- An important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or volunteer work is that an intentional “learning agenda” related to your academic field is structured into the experience.
- Learning activities common to most internships include: objectives, observation, reflection, evaluation, and assessment.
- An effort is made to establish a reasonable balance between the intern’s learning goals and the specific work required by an organization.
- Duration: typically 14-16 weeks.
- Generally a one-time experience.
- May be part-time or full-time.
- May be paid or unpaid.
- Internships promote academic, career, and/or personal development.

Professional Practice

At Illinois State University, many academic programs will require internships as part of the curriculum. These experiences are called “professional practice.” Professional practice courses are designated by numbers 198, 298, 398, 498, and 598. Tuition and fees are assessed in the usual manner for all credit earned in internship experiences. Discuss your major requirements with your academic advisor, internship coordinator, and the Career Center.

For more information about internships and professional practice, contact the Career Center internship manager at (309) 438-2200 or visit CareerCenter.IllinoisState.edu.
Dealing With Stress in the Job Search

Searching for a job after college can be an extremely stressful endeavor. All of the elements of the job search—researching employers, perfecting and targeting your resume, writing cover letters, preparing for interviews—take time. As a soon-to-be graduate finishing up your last year of school, your time is limited. Every student and each job search is different. However, no matter your major, degree, or employment aspirations, there are steps you can take to make the necessary task of finding a job easier to navigate.

Put Your Job Search in Perspective
College Seniors about to enter the job market can be broadly placed into two camps: those who know exactly what they want to do after college and those who have no clue. Both types of students often bring added pressure to the job search process that is—for the most part—self-inflicted.

Students from the first group set their sights high during the job search. They know what their dream job is and anything less will be a disappointment. However, very rarely will a student fresh out of college be able to step into a position that fits their definition of the ideal job.

Occasionally, students are able to move into their idea of a perfect job right out of college, but they must be careful not to feel frustrated if this isn’t their reality. Often, they will have to climb the career ladder a few rungs until they arrive at a job they truly want. Accepting this fact will take away some of the initial job search pressure.

For students who are unsure of what career to pursue after college, the idea of looking for a job can be even more stressful. Not knowing what type of job or career to pursue is a common anxiety among recent college graduates. The process of looking for a job can actually alleviate this concern by shifting a student’s focus to what they can control.

Make Sure You Are Ready
Many students approaching college graduation simply are not ready to enter the job market. These students may decide to travel, do volunteer work, or simply take time off to decompress before pursuing a full-time career. Other students may seek a graduate degree or even a second bachelor’s degree before entering the job market. There is nothing wrong with delaying your job search so long as you do it for the right reasons.

Escaping the job search by entering into the process of applying to graduate schools when this is not a considered decision can be a mistake. If you feel you’re ready to pursue employment, don’t hesitate to do so. Students who decide to delay their job search may lose certain advantages, including access to college job fairs, career services, on-campus interviews, and other amenities that higher education provides. If you’re ready to start your career, this is the time to do it.

Get Moving and Keep Moving
Most college students are well-acquainted with procrastination. Pulling an “all-nighter” to cram for a test or write a term paper has almost become a rite of passage in academia. When it comes time to look for work, students tend to procrastinate for various reasons: fear of failure (“what if nobody hires me”), perfectionism (“I need to find the perfect job”), lack of information (“where do I start”), distractions (“I need time to go out with my friends”), and the sheer size of the task before them (“I’ll never find the time to get this all done”).

Looking for a job is a big task, and while you may have been able to learn a semester’s worth of chemistry the night before a final, you’re not going to be able to cram the job search into the week before graduation. The single best thing you can do to relieve job search stress is to simply get started.

Students need to think of looking for a job as a process, something they need to work on every week—if not every day. Don’t apply for one job at a time and await the result; actively pursue multiple jobs until you accept an offer.

Have Reachable Goals
Since finding and securing a job is such an involved process, students need to break it up into attainable goals. Make sure you write these down and note as you accomplish them.

Deal With Interview Anxiety
For many students, going to a job interview is the most stressful part of the entire employment process. Preparation is key to easing apprehension. Acquaint yourself with everything you can about the employer and available position offered, and know what skills, experience, and ideas you can demonstrate to that employer, showing your viable candidacy. Be prepared to answer common questions that employers ask, as well as other questions that are related specifically to your field of study and the position for which you are applying.

It is a wise practice to also prepare a list of questions to ask the employer during your interview. Intelligent questions show you have prepared to discuss both the position offered and the company as a whole. Lastly, make sure you complete a mock interview. By practicing your interview answers in front of a friend or a career counselor, you will be able to hone your skills and minimize nervous energy.

Last Words of Advice
Think positively. Uncertainty can have a motivating effect. Keep moving toward your goals. When you feel your stress level getting out of hand, take a break. Any type of physical activity is a great way to relieve stress. If your stress level remains elevated, focus on something else. A few days away from a problem may bring you closer to the solution.

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind., from interviews with career center directors Dr. Jeff Garis (Pennsylvania State University) and Deidre Sepp (Marist College).
Chapter 4: You Landed the Interview...Now What?

What Happens During the Interview?

The interviewing process can be scary if you don’t know what to expect. Interviews fit a general pattern: while each interview will differ, all will have a beginning, middle, and conclusion.

Expect an interview to last 30 minutes, though some may run longer. A typical structure is as follows:

- Five minutes—small talk
- Fifteen minutes—a mutual discussion of your background and credentials as they relate to the needs of the employer
- Five minutes—the interviewer asks you for questions
- Five minutes—conclusion of interview

As you can see, there is not much time to demonstrate your skills and interest. The employer may try to do most of the talking. When you respond to questions or ask your own, your statements should be concise and organized without being too brief.

Before You Even Say Hello

An interview starts before you are formally seated opposite your interviewer. The recruiter begins to evaluate you the moment you are identified. You are expected to shake the recruiter’s hand upon being introduced. Don’t be afraid to extend your hand first, as this shows assertiveness.

It’s a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early. You can use this time to compose yourself. Counting to ten slowly or wiping your hands on a handkerchief to keep them dry can help take your mind off the meeting and focus your nervous energy.

Small Talk

Many recruiters will begin the interview with small talk. Topics may range from the weather to sports and will rarely focus on anything that brings attention to your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated.

Recruiters are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may judge how well you communicate on an informal basis, which means you must be able to engage in topics beyond your professional skill set.

The Recruiter Has the Floor

The main part of the interview starts when the recruiter begins discussing their organization. If the recruiter uses vague language regarding the position and you want more specific information, ask questions. Be sure you have a clear understanding of the job and the company.

As the interviewer begins to inquire about your qualifications, be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that could be construed as negative: a low grade point average, a lack of participation in extracurricular activities, or limited related work experience. It is your duty to convince the recruiter that positive attributes can be drawn from these points. A low GPA might reflect having to fully support yourself through college, and though your related work experience may need development, many transferable skills and abilities show you to be a loyal and valuable employee.

Many times recruiters will ask why you chose the major you did or what your career aspirations are. These questions are designed to determine your goals. Employers seek people who have direction and motivation. Your investment and intent can be demonstrated by your answers to these seemingly innocent-sounding questions.

Your Turn to Ask Questions

When the recruiter asks, “Now, do you have any questions?” it’s important to have a few ready. Dr. C. Randall Powell, author of Career Planning Today, offers some excellent strategies for dealing with this issue. He suggests tailoring your questions to those that will elicit positive responses from the employer. Your queries should emphasize your interest in and knowledge of the organization beyond a cursory awareness to be convincing.

By asking intelligent and considered questions, you show the employer you are serious about their organization and desire more information. This also indicates to the recruiter that you have thoroughly examined the employment opportunity.

The Close Counts, Too

The interview isn’t over until you leave the building. In fact, the conclusion often only lasts five minutes and is just as critical as the other parts. During this time, the recruiter continues to assess your overall performance.

It is important to remain enthusiastic and courteous. Often, the end of an interview is indicated when the recruiter stands up. If you feel the interview has reached its conclusion, however, feel free to stand first.

Shake the recruiter’s hand and thank him or her for considering you as a candidate. Being forthright is a quality that most employers will respect, indicating that you feel you have presented your case and the decision is now up to the employer.

Expect the Unexpected

During the interview, you may be asked some unusual questions. Don’t be too surprised; many times these questions are asked simply to see how you react.

Surprise questions can range from, “Tell me a joke” to “What time period would you like to have lived in?” These are not the kind of interactions for which you can prepare in advance. Your reaction time and the quality of response you give will be evaluated by the
employer, but there’s no way to anticipate such an exchange. While these questions are not always asked, they are intended to engage your reactions to stress and pressure. Take a moment to process what’s being requested, but offer a natural response.

**Evaluations Made by Recruiters**

The employer will evaluate your entire interview. Erwin S. Stanton, author of *Successful Personnel Recruiting and Selection*, indicates some standard observations made by recruiters during an interview include:

1. The mental alertness and responsiveness of the job candidate.
2. The applicant’s ability to infer appropriately during the course of the interview.
3. The applicant’s demonstration of a degree of intellectual depth when communicating.
4. The candidate’s use of judgment and common sense regarding life decisions.
5. The applicant’s capacity to problem-solve.
6. The candidate’s ability to navigate unexpected stresses and pressure.

**Dressing for the Interview**

Depending on your style, whether you’re drawn to the latest trends in the club scene or simply embrace “college senior casual,” a job interview may be cause for some drastic wardrobe adjustments.

In most business or technical job interviews, when considering your appearance, conservatism and conformity are in order.

While many companies have adopted a more casual dress code, don’t try to set new standards in the interview. When in doubt, dressing more conservatively is the prudent alternative to trendiness. A suit is often a safe choice.

Here are some guidelines:

- Two-piece matched suit separates are always appropriate. Don’t forget to open the tacked vents at the back of the jacket if the suit is new.
- Skirt-suits with bottom hems falling between 2” above or below the knee or a business pantsuit are acceptable in navy, blue, tan, gray, burgundy, black, or beige. Solid colors or conservative prints are most professional.
- Long-sleeved dress shirts in white or light blue are a strong choice even during warmer summer months. A tailored blouse with a conservative neckline that coordinates nicely with your suit in white, off-white, or another neutral color are also appropriate.
- Choose solid colors and tightly-woven fabrics.
- If you wear pants, they should be sharply creased and tailored, not overly-fitted or flowing.
- Bright ties bring focus to the face, but a simple pattern is best for an initial interview.
- Make sure your tie, when knotted, comes to the middle of your belt buckle.
- Everything about your ensemble should be clean, well-pressed, and professional.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- Cover visible body art with clothing if possible.
- Remove visible body piercings including nose, eyebrow, or multiple earrings in one ear. Small stud earrings are preferable to oversized earrings that tend to have a lot of movement, which can be distracting.
- Use perfume or colognes sparingly.
- Hair should be clean, trimmed, and combed or styled.
- Facial hair should be neat and clean.
- Fingernails should be neat, clean, trimmed, and not excessively long. Conservative nail polish colors are a good choice—avoid unusual colors, such as green, blue, or lavender.
- Do not chew gum, candy, or carry cigarettes.

**Taking a Casual Approach**

“Office casual” has become increasingly accepted as the mode of dress in contemporary work environments. The rules, however, for casual attire are subject to tremendous company-to-company variance. At some, “casual day” is a Friday-only observance, where the dress code is slightly relaxed—a sports coat and slacks or a sweater. At others, especially entrepreneurial computer companies, shorts and sandals are accepted every day.

The safest fashion rule for new employees is to dress comparably to your most conservatively attired co-worker. As a new hire, respecting the established dress code is important.

**Fashion Arrests**

- Do not wear denim jeans or shorts unless the vast majority of others do.
- Do not dress provocatively—longer hems and higher necklines are always the best professional options.
- “Casual” doesn’t mean “sloppy”—your clothes should always be free of stains, holes, and excessive wear.
- Athleisure and workout garments belong at the gym.

**Play It Safe**

- Chinos or corduroy slacks are usually appropriate.
- Buy the best that your budget will allow when it comes to formal business attire.
- If you will be seeing clients, dress appropriately for their workplace, not yours.
- Most department and specialty stores have a section devoted to office attire—a visit to your local shopping mall may offer some great options.
Ten Rules of Interviewing

Before stepping into an interview, be sure to practice, practice, practice. A job-seeker going to a job interview without preparing is like an actor performing on opening night without rehearsing.

To help with the interview process, keep the following ten rules in mind:

1. **Keep your answers brief and concise.** Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question. Tape yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question.

2. **Include concrete, quantifiable data.** Interviewees tend to talk in generalities. Unfortunately, generalities often fail to convince interviewers that the applicant has assets. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths.

3. **Repeat your key strengths three times.** It’s essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company’s or department’s goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths they will be remembered and—if supported with quantifiable accomplishments—they will more likely be believed.

4. **Prepare five or more success stories.** In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets. Reflect on past jobs and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully.

5. **Put yourself on their team.** Ally yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer’s name and products or services. For example, “As a member of __________, I would carefully analyze the __________ and __________.” Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful not to say anything that could potentially offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.

6. **Image is often as important as content.** What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say. Studies have shown that 65 percent of the conveyed message is nonverbal: gestures, physical appearance, and attire are highly influential during job interviews.

7. **Ask questions.** The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you plan how you would answer an interviewer’s questions, write out specific questions you want to ask them in return and look for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Avoid discussing benefits or salary. The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match of skills, values, and goals.

8. **Maintain a conversational flow.** By consciously maintaining a conversational flow—a dialogue instead of a monologue—you will be perceived more positively. Use feedback questions at the end of your answers, body language, and voice intonation to create a conversational interchange between you and the interviewer.

9. **Research the company, product lines, and competitors.** Research will provide important data to refer to during the interview and contextual information to help you decide whether you’re interested in the company culture.

10. **Keep an interview journal.** As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar. Review your presentation. Keep a journal of your attitude and the way you answered the questions. Did you ask questions to get the information you needed? What might you do differently next time? Prepare and send a brief thank-you letter. Restate your skills and stress what you can do for the company.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, a career services professional from New Mexico.

In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets.

In Summary
Because of its importance, interviewing requires advance preparation. Only you will be able to positively affect the outcome. You must be able to compete successfully for the job you want. In order to do that, be certain you have considered the kind of job you want, why you want it, and how you qualify for it. You must also consider pragmatics: is the job currently attainable for your skill set and experience?

Recognize what employers want in their candidates. They want “can-do” and “will-do” employees. Identify and use the following factors to your benefit as you develop your sales presentation. In evaluating candidates, employers consider the following traits:

- **Ability**
- **Character**
- **Loyalty**
- **Initiative**
- **Personality**
- **Communication skills**
- **Work record**
- **Recommendations**
- **Extracurricular activities during educational tenure**
- **Impressions made during the interview**
Interview Information
Questions Most Commonly Asked

The most frequently asked question in any interview is “Tell me about yourself.” How will you respond?

Goals: Personal and Professional
- What are your short-term career objectives? What are your long-term career objectives? When and why did you establish these goals?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are the most important rewards you anticipate in a career?
- What qualities do you admire most in others?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?

Skills and Abilities
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you do for fun?
- If you were describing yourself, what five words would you use?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What is the most important lesson you have ever received in or out of an educational environment?
- What frustrates you the most? What was your greatest disappointment?
- Tell me about a difficult decision you had to make. How did you navigate it?
- What kinds of people do you find difficult to work with? How do you usually deal with conflict?
- Give me an example of a problem you solved and how you solved it.

Education
- Tell me how you chose your major. Why did you select the college or university you attended?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- Which academic subjects did you enjoy the most? Why?
- Do you think your grades are a comprehensive indication of your academic achievement?
- What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
- How have your education and/or training prepared you for this job?
- Do you have plans for continued study or an advanced degree?

Most Recent Position
- What are your key responsibilities or objectives in your current or most recent position?
- Describe a typical day in your most recent job.
- What have been your major accomplishments while in this position?
- What impact have these accomplishments had on the organization?
- What aspects of your current position do you enjoy most? What aspects did you enjoy the least? Why?
- What aspects of your supervisor’s management style or philosophy do you appreciate? Which would you change? Why?
- If we talked to your current supervisor, references, or coworkers, how would they describe your performance?
- Why do you wish to leave your current position? What factors have led to this decision?

General Work Experience
- Tell me about your past work experience.
- Of the positions you have held, which did you enjoy the most? Which did you enjoy the least? Why?
- What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
- How do you work under pressure?
- Describe the kind of supervisor you like to work for.
- What have you learned in previous jobs that you can transfer to this job?
- Tell me about the most challenging or interesting job you have had. How have other positions you’ve held compared?
- Describe an innovative change you implemented in your last job.
- Using specific examples, how do you contribute toward an atmosphere of teamwork?

Questions About the Target Job
- How qualified do you feel to perform this position? Why?
- With which aspects of the position do you feel most comfortable? Which aspects seem least comfortable? Why?
- What would you look for if you were hiring a person for this job?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why are you interested in this position? What about this job appeals to you most?
- What do you know about this company? What about our company interests you most?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- For which part or parts of this position would you need additional training?
- Are you willing to travel? Do you have a geographical preference? Why? Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?

Management Effectiveness
(For use in supervisory positions)
- Describe your management style.
- Describe your leadership style. How do you motivate others?
- How would you go about establishing rapport with your staff?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength as a manager? What do you perceive to be your greatest shortcoming? Why?
- How do you delegate responsibility? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a rewarding supervisory experience you had.
- Tell me about a negative supervisory experience, the reasons surrounding it, and how you moved forward through that challenge.
- How would your staff describe you?
Interview With Confidence Worksheet

Two types of questions you are likely to be asked in a job or internship interview include, “Tell me about yourself,” and a behavioral query, such as, “Tell me about a time you worked on a team.” With the former question, the employer is looking for you to articulate your interest in the position and industry—and to offer information about relevant skills and experience you bring to the position. With the latter question, the employer seeks your perspective on your behavior or handling of a specific situation, understanding past behavior predicts future behavior. In preparing to answer both questions, it is important to spend time reflecting on your experiences and be able to articulate not only what you did, but also how these experiences influenced your career direction, workplace behavior, and occupational attitude.

Tell Me About Yourself
For this question, consider an answer that provides some relevant background information about your interest in the field or position, in addition to your experience. This could be a brief story about events that have shaped your motivation to pursue the opportunity for which you are interviewing. Draw upon your answers to all or some of the questions below to craft a complete response.

How did you become interested in this industry or job function? What classes, internships, books, or other engagements piqued your interest in this field?
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
What have you done in this field to pursue or explore this interest? Alternatively, what solidified your initial curiosity?
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
What experiences and accomplishments have given you the skills the employer is looking for? These may include activities, leadership, internships, jobs, or volunteer opportunities you’ve taken part in.
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Why is this position of interest to you?
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Behavioral Questions
Behavioral questions usually start with “Tell me about a time when...” or “Give me an example of a time or experience when...”. The interviewer is looking for a concrete example that demonstrates a specific skill or quality that will make you an asset to their team. It is very important to provide particulars rather than to speak in generalities.

It is useful to think of the answer to this kind of question as a story with a specific structure that relays not only the experience, but also what you learned from it. One way to structure your story is captured by the mnemonic “STAR”, which stands for: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

**Situation:** What was the situation, problem, conflict, or challenge you were facing?

**Task:** What task(s) did you identify to respond to this situation or solve the problem?

**Action:** What action did you take?

**Results:** What lessons did you learn, what skills did you gain, and/or what qualities did you develop through this experience that will help you contribute to the prospective employer’s team in the position for which you are interviewing?

Remember that an employer wants to know if you have certain transferable skills and qualities that will help you be effective in the job.
Activity: Read through the job description of a position you are interviewing for or interested in. Identify all the skills and qualities they are seeking, usually in the responsibilities and qualifications sections. For each skill and quality you list, think of two concrete examples from your past experience that demonstrate them effectively. Examples can come from internships, school activities, volunteer work, and even personal hobbies. Using the worksheet below, construct your narrative answers following the STAR structure.

Situation • Task • Action • Results

Job competency you want to demonstrate: ____________________________________________________________

Situation: ____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

Task: _________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

Action(s):
1. _________________________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________________________
   • Specific verbs or phrases you can use to pinpoint your job competencies:
   1. _______________________________________________________________________________________
   2. _______________________________________________________________________________________
   3. _______________________________________________________________________________________

Result(s): __________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Application (what did you learn from this experience?): ____________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Are there any relevant quantifiable details? Are there any relevant contextual details? __________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Adapted and reprinted with permission from Columbia University’s 2012-2013 Career Planning Guide.
Handling Illegal Questions

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you, the job candidate. An employer’s questions—whether on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process—must be related to the job you’re seeking. For the employer, the focus must be: “What do I need to know to decide whether this person can perform the functions of this job?”

If Asked an Illegal Question, You Have Three Options:

- You can answer the question—you’re free to do so, if you wish. However, if you choose to answer an illegal question, remember you are giving information that isn’t related to the job; in fact, you might be giving the “wrong” answer, which could harm your chances of getting the job.
- You can refuse to answer the question, which is well within your rights. Unfortunately, depending on how you phrase your refusal, you run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational—hardly words an employer would use to describe the “ideal” candidate.
- You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For example, the interviewer may ask, “Are you a U.S. citizen?” or “What country are you from?” This is an illegal question. You can respond with, “I am authorized to work in the United States.” Similarly, the interviewer might ask, “Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel for the job?” An appropriate answer would be, “I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires.”

Updated with information from Claudia Allen, writer and editor at the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Available at: directemployers.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illegal Questions</th>
<th>Legal Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National origin/Citizenship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are you a U.S. citizen?</td>
<td>Are you authorized to work in the United States?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where were you or your parents born?</td>
<td>What language do you read, speak, or write fluently? (This question is acceptable if the ability is relevant to the performance of the job.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is your native tongue?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How old are you?</td>
<td>Are you over the age of 18?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When did you graduate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What’s your birth date?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital/Family status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What’s your marital status?</td>
<td>Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With whom do you live?</td>
<td>Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you plan to have a family? When?</td>
<td>Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How many kids do you have?</td>
<td>(These questions are acceptable assuming they are asked of all applicants for the job.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are your childcare arrangements?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?</td>
<td>List any professional or trade groups or other organizations you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How tall are you?</td>
<td>Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as this is part of the job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How much do you weigh?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- (Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential for the safe performance of the job.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you have any disabilities?</td>
<td>Will you need an accommodation to participate in the recruiting process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are you colorblind?</td>
<td>Are you able to perform the essential functions for this job? (This question is acceptable if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Please complete the following medical history.</td>
<td>Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them with dates of occurrence.</td>
<td>As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential. Medical and/or safety personnel may be informed about necessary job accommodations, dependent on exam results.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What was the date of your last physical exam?</td>
<td>What is your attendance record?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How’s your family’s health?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- When did you lose your eyesight? How?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Do you take prescription drugs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Do you see a psychiatrist?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Do you have any genetic diseases?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you ever been arrested?</td>
<td>Have you ever been convicted of ______? (The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If you’ve been in the military, were you honorably discharged?</td>
<td>In what branch of the armed forces did you serve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What type of training or education did you receive in the military?</td>
<td>What type of training or education did you receive in the military?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you go to church?</td>
<td>Can you work on Saturdays or Sundays? (If this is relevant to the job, it is acceptable to ask.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is your religious affiliation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What religious holidays will you take off work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kaplan, Rochelle. “Handling Illegal Questions.” NACE Job Choices magazine. 2007
Questions for Employers

The employer should provide an opportunity for you to ask questions at or near the end of the interview. Some advice to consider:

• Always prepare questions to ask before the interview.
• Some of the questions may be answered during the course of the interview, before you are offered the opportunity to ask. If so, you can simply state, “I was very interested in knowing about… but my questions were already addressed during the interview.” You could ask for additional clarification if applicable.
• Do not ask questions that are clearly answered on the employer’s website or in any literature provided by the employer in advance.
• Do not ask about salary or benefit issues until the employer raises those subjects.
• Do not ask a question unless you are interested in the answer.

If you have trouble developing questions, consider the following:

• What opportunities are offered for personal and professional growth?
• What is a realistic time frame for advancement?
• How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
• What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?
• What makes your firm different from its competitors?
• How would you describe your corporation’s personality and management style?
• What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this position?
• What kind of work can I expect to be doing the first year?
• How would you describe the work environment?
• Why do you enjoy working for this company?
• How important does upper management consider the function of this department or position?
• Could you explain your organizational structure?

Advice From the Experts

Interviewing Tips From On-Campus Recruiters

Research organizations in advance of interviews—Since most on-campus interviews are relatively short, it is important that you use this time to sell yourself to an employer. Don’t waste this opportunity by spending too much time on issues that could have been answered by surfing the company’s website. Displaying your knowledge about a potential employer will greatly enhance your chances of interview success.

Define your career goals and the opportunities you want—One of the keys to making a successful sale is product knowledge. In the case of job interviews, that product is you. You need to perform a thorough self-evaluation well in advance of your interviews. Know what your strengths, weaknesses, skills, and abilities are and be prepared to discuss them during the interview.

Be enthusiastic and sincere during your interviews—It is important for you to convey a genuine sense of interest during the interview. You must appear eager and flexible, but not too rehearsed. Don’t fixate on being nervous. Even seasoned pros can be anxious. Above all, never be late for an interview appointment.

Be honest—Don’t claim interest in an employer if you do not actually intend to work for that organization. Don’t lie on your resume or during the interview. While you should never draw attention to your weaknesses, don’t attempt to hide a shortcoming by being untruthful. Learn how to deal with both perceived and real weaknesses before your interviews by talking to a campus career services professional and reading information on job interviewing techniques.

Be realistic—Carefully evaluate what an employer has to offer you—and what you have to offer the employer. Don’t accept a position that isn’t suited to you simply because you need employment. Though most entry-level salaries have been on the rise, keep your starting salary expectations modest. If the starting salary quoted seems inordinately low, but you are particularly interested in the position, you may be able to negotiate a wage increase at an earlier review time.

Some of this material is adapted from Recruiting Trends by L. Patrick Scheetz, Ph.D., Collegiate Employment Research Institute. © Michigan State University.
Job Offer and Salary Negotiation

The Negotiation Process

Step 1. Receiving the offer
This may occur on the phone or in written form.

- Remember to be enthusiastic and gracious no matter what the details of the offer may be. An appropriate response, “I am delighted you have extended me this offer.”
- Request all terms in writing so you have as many details as possible to consider.
- Understand when they expect you to get back with them. Don’t allow yourself to be rushed into giving an immediate answer. Take time to thoroughly research the details of the offer and contemplate your response. A professional way to handle pressure is, “I’m sure you understand this is a major decision for me and I want to have time to think it through carefully.”
- Know who to call back for more information.
- Thank them for the offer: “Thank you so much for calling and presenting me with this opportunity. I look forward to discussing with you further after I have had time to consider it.”

Step 2. Evaluating the offer
This is the time for you to reflect on the things that are important to you in a career.

- Review your values and career goals and determine if this is a company you would like to work for.
- Determine the minimum you would need to make this job offer acceptable. Weigh trade-offs you would be willing to make, such as better medical leave in conjunction with a lower salary.
- Do as much research as possible to create the rationale you intend to use to support your request for salary or benefit increases.
- Prepare an agenda for your next conversation with the employer so you will appear confident and knowledgeable.
- Do not negotiate more than two or three major issues.

Step 3. Negotiation
Now it is time to call the employer back and discuss your decision. You can also use this time to negotiate salary and benefits.

- Approach this matter in a conversational manner. This is a discussion where both you and the employer have the opportunity to talk and be heard.
- Don’t expect a resolution during this step, as it is simply an information exchange. It is likely that the company will have to get back to you with the answers to your questions, especially if they intend to revise their offer.
- An appropriate leading statement would be, “I really appreciate your offer and have spent time thinking about it. I have a few questions and concerns that will help me make my decision.”
- Be direct and listen carefully to the information that is given. State your question first, then listen.
- Be honest. Don’t suggest that you have other offers if you don’t.
- This is the time to find out how flexible they are with their offer. Some companies are not allowed to negotiate, which will be obvious in their responses to your questions.
- Show you have done your research and justify your requests as confidently as you can. Close the conversation with courtesy: “Thank you for taking the time to listen to my requests and concerns. I look forward to hearing back from you.”
-

Step 4. Company response
Again, be as courteous as possible: “Thank you very much for the information. I really appreciate your getting back to me so quickly.”

If the revised offer is not what you expected, feel free to state that fact: “What you offer is not what I was hoping for, but I certainly understand.” “Could you tell me why ______?” or “That will help me a lot in my decision, thank you,” are all appropriate responses.

- Let the company know when you will get back to them. Be gracious. You have already taken time to think about the offer and company, so aim to respond within one or two days: “I need another day to think about the offer. Thank you for your patience as I make my final deliberation.”

Step 5. Your decision

- If possible, you should accept the position in-person instead of through email or voicemail.
- If you are accepting, you want to do so as soon as possible to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the opportunity. Taking a long time to respond indicates to an employer you are not serious about the position even if you genuinely are.
- If you are declining the offer, do so respectfully, courteously, and in a timely manner. You do not want to tarnish your rapport with the company. You also do not want to negatively impact the company’s impression of your school for the sake of future students: “This was a difficult choice, but I have decided I will not be accepting your offer. I was impressed by the people I met and truly appreciate that you have extended me this opportunity.”

Negotiating
Evaluate the benefits offered by the company, as they are often one-third of the total compensation value and may be negotiable. Important benefits to consider include:

- Cafeteria plans
- Medical or dependent reimbursement plans
- Pension or 401(k) programs
- Medical, dental, and vision insurances
- Profit sharing or employee stock plan
- Signing bonuses
- Stock options or performance bonuses
- Life or disability insurances
- Promotion and raise schedules
- Vacation, sick, and personal time off
- Flexible hours or telecommuting options
- Tuition reimbursement
- Company assets, including use of a car, desktop or laptop, or cell phone
- Health club memberships
- Relocation expenses

- Negotiate based on the cost of living in the city in which you will be living and working. Many internet sites can provide you with this information.
- Study salaries of comparable jobs within similar companies. Knowing your market value will strengthen your negotiating position.
- In evaluating offers, consider your potential title, opportunity for advancement, company reputation and culture, and ability to work with supervisory staff.
- Do not accept any offer on the spot. Show interest, but ask for time to think it over. Refrain from disclosing your need to discuss the job offer with your family. Always get the offer in writing.
- Contact companies with whom you’ve interviewed. Give them a chance to match or better the competing offer.

Understanding Company Benefits

What kinds of benefits can you expect at your first job out of college? That depends. Not all benefits programs are created equal, and most have certain rules, limitations, and exclusions—particularly regarding health plans. Though some employers provide complete coverage with no out-of-pocket expense to workers, most company plans now require the employee to pay part of the benefits expense, often in the form of payroll deductions. This cost is usually reasonable in comparison to paying the full bill yourself. The benefits described below will give you a general overview of what many companies offer to their employees:

- **Medical insurance.** This is the most basic—and most important—benefit you can receive. Health coverage limits an employee’s financial liability in the event of illness or injury.
- **Disability insurance.** This insurance provides an income to the employee in the event of a long-term disability.
- **Life insurance.** This insurance provides a benefit payment to family members in the event of the employee’s death. The benefit of having life insurance changes throughout your life as you either gain more personal assets or gain more dependents. This benefit can be re-evaluated when you are considering a career change or have a review scheduled with your current employer.
- **Dental insurance.** This insurance provides basic dental coverage. Though many people agree that dental insurance is overpriced (you’ll seldom get more than your premiums back in the form of benefits), you’ll be covered for cleanings, scalings, and x-rays.
- **Prescription drug plans.** This benefit can save you a significant amount of money, particularly if you require medicine for an ongoing condition. Typically, the employee pays a fixed co-payment for each prescription.
- **Vision insurance.** This insurance provides a benefit to help defray the cost of eye exams and corrective lenses or contacts.
- **Retirement plans.** These plans were once funded entirely by employers but have been largely replaced by 401(k) retirement savings programs, which are funded by the employee. Often, employers match the investment of the employee to some degree. These matching contributions have limits and plans vary from company to company. In many companies, there is a specified waiting period before new employees can participate.
- **Flexible spending accounts.** These plans allow you to set aside untaxed dollars to pay for dependent care and unreimbursed medical expenses.
- **Tuition reimbursement.** This benefit is particularly valuable to employees seeking further education or training while working in their chosen field.
- **Vacation time.** Most companies will offer paid vacation time to employees. The number of paid days you receive is usually determined by how long you’ve been with the company.
- **Sick time.** This is paid leave in the event of illness.

Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.
Chapter 5: Preparing for Graduate School

Is Graduate School Right for You?

At some point in your college career, you must decide what you would like to do after graduation—and that includes whether or not you want to continue your formal education. If you’re trying to determine whether graduate school is a good fit for you, here are some points to consider that will help you make a thoughtful decision.

1. Should I consider going to graduate school?
   Going to graduate school might be a good idea if you…
   - want to be a professor, lawyer, doctor, investment banker, or work in any profession that requires a post-secondary education.
   - wish to develop additional expertise in a particular subject or field to maximize your future earning potential and opportunities for career advancement.
   - are deeply interested in a particular subject and wish to study it in-depth—AND have the time and financial resources to devote to further education.

   Going to graduate school might not be a good idea if you…
   - are trying to delay your entry into the “real world” with real responsibilities and real bills.
   - are unsure of your career goals.
   - aren’t prepared to devote the time and work needed to succeed.
   - want to stay in school longer to avoid a poor job market.

2. Is it better to work first or attend graduate school immediately after I complete my undergraduate degree?
   Work first if…
   - you would like to get some real-world career experience before investing thousands of dollars in a graduate degree.
   - the graduate school of your choice prefers work experience—most MBA and some Ph.D. programs require this.
   - you cannot afford to go to graduate school now and you haven’t applied for any scholarships, grants, fellowships, or assistantships, which can often pay for a portion of your education.

   Go to graduate school now if…
   - you are absolutely sure you want to be a college professor, doctor, or work in another profession that mandates additional schooling and need a graduate degree to pursue that specific occupation.
   - you have been awarded grants, fellowships, scholarships, or assistantships that will help pay for your education.
   - you’re concerned that once you start earning a professional salary, you won’t be able to return to the more meager sensibilities of a student-at-large.
   - your study habits and mental abilities are at their peak and you worry whether you can maintain the discipline and motivation to write papers and study for exams in a few years.

3. How will I pay for tuition, books, fees, and living expenses?
   - Family: You’ve likely asked for their support in the past—if they are still willing and able to assist you, this is a sensible matter to discuss with them.
   - Student Loans: Even if you’ve taken out loans in the past, an additional $50,000-$75,000 may be a prudent investment in your future.
   - Fellowships and Scholarships: A free education is always the best option. You need a high GPA, good GRE/GMAT/LSAT/MCAT scores, and the commitment to search out every potential source of aid to have the best probability to cover your expenses.
   - Teaching and Research Assistantships: Many assistantships include tuition waivers and a monthly stipend. This is a good way to get paid for continuing to advance your education.
   - Employer Sponsorship: Some companies pay for you to continue your education. They usually expect you to work for them after you complete your degree for a contracted period of time so they can recoup their investment.

4. What are the pros and cons of going to graduate school full-time vs. part-time?
   The benefits of attending graduate school full-time include:
   - potential to complete your degree more quickly.
   - you can fully commit your intellectual, physical, and emotional energy to your education.

   The benefits of attending graduate school part-time include:
   - work income will help pay for your education.
   - you can take a manageable course load.
   - you can juggle familial responsibilities while completing your degree.
   - you can work in the function, industry, or career of your choice while continuing your education.
   - your employer may pay for part (or all) of your graduate degree.

5. Assuming I want to go to graduate school in the near future, what should I do now?
   a. Identify your true strengths, interests, and values to help you discover what is right for you.
   b. Maintain strong grades and sign up for—and prepare to take—required standardized tests for programs you’re interested in.
   c. Talk to faculty, friends, and family who have gone to graduate school to get their perspective about the differences between being an undergraduate and a graduate student.
   d. Talk to faculty, friends, and family who are in your targeted profession to get a realistic sense of the career path and the challenges associated with the work they do.
   e. Investigate creative ways to finance your education. By planning ahead, you may be able to reduce your debt.
   f. Research graduate schools to help you find your best complement.
   g. Investigate the admissions process and current student body profile of your targeted schools to evaluate your probability for admission.
   h. APPLY! Remember, you can’t get in unless you submit your application.

Written by Roslyn J. Bradford.
## Graduate/Professional School Timeline

### Junior Year
- Attend Career Center Graduate School Workshops.
- Research graduate program options and requirements that align with your interests.
- Call or email schools that have programs you may be interested in.
- Research and register for appropriate graduate admissions tests.
- Consult study books and begin taking free practice tests.
- Create a first draft of your personal statement to use when applying.

### May-August
- Take required graduate tests and request that your scores be sent to the appropriate schools. If you have not registered for these tests yet, register and prepare for them now.
- Visit prospective campuses and talk to students and faculty involved in the programs you are interested in.
- Identify faculty and professionals to ask for recommendation letters.

### Senior Year

#### August-October
- Attend Career Center Graduate School Workshops.
- Take required graduate admission tests if you have not already done so. Completing this task six months before earliest application deadline is ideal as it takes four weeks for official scores to arrive at your designated schools.
- Get organized and create a separate file for each institution you are applying to.
- Edit your personal statement by consulting with writing experts and faculty.
- Request faculty—including those at the Career Center and/or professionals—write letters of recommendation.
- Research and apply for financial assistance.

#### November-December
- Order official transcripts from the Registrar’s Office and request they be sent to your schools of choice.
- Finalize your personal statement.
- Edit, complete, and submit your application materials in advance of all deadlines.
- Apply for financial aid opportunities, including scholarships and graduate assistantships.

#### January-March
- Contact schools to confirm receipt of applications and completion of files.
- Visit schools of interest to narrow your search.
- Finalize all financial aid paperwork and complete FAFSA.
- Schedule all admissions interviews and prepare questions for each school to gain more information about their programs.

#### April-May
- Research acceptances to verify your choice.
- Mail acceptance materials to the program of your choice and notify all other schools of your decision.
- Submit all required paperwork and payments to the chosen institution.
- Make living arrangements.
- Write thank-you notes including an update on your search status to those who wrote recommendation letters on your behalf.
### Writing Your Graduate School Personal Statement: 10 Easy Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Task Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | Answer the questions that are asked  
- Find questions in each application that are somewhat similar.  
- Write a unique answer for each question—don’t use the same statement for all applications. |
| 2    | Tell a story  
- Think in terms of demonstrating through concrete quantifiable experience.  
- Make your statement fresh, lively, and different to make yourself memorable to the search committee. |
| 3    | Be specific  
- Support your statements with specific examples or reasons.  
- Highlight your desire to obtain your prospective career in a logical manner by describing a specific experience in your statement that led you to this choice. |
| 4    | Find an angle  
- Make your story interesting. Drawing your audience in is vital. |
| 5    | Concentrate on your opening paragraph  
- Get and retain the reader’s attention in the opening paragraph. This paragraph is the framework for the rest of the statement. |
| 6    | Tell what you know  
- Details are important. Use the language professionals are familiar with to convey your knowledge of the field.  
- Refer to experiences such as work, research, courses, and professional readings. Explain why you are suited for the opportunity you seek. |
| 7    | Don’t include some subjects  
- Avoid references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier.  
- Avoid potentially controversial subjects, including religious or political issues. |
| 8    | Do some research  
- Identify and capitalize on the attributes that set your choice apart from other universities or programs. Mention the values these characteristics have on your interest in attending this particular school. |
| 9    | Write professionally  
- Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay carefully.  
- Express yourself clearly and concisely.  
- Adhere to stated word limits. |
| 10   | Avoid clichés  
- Avoid cliché statements. Do not state on your medical school application that you are “good at science and want to help people.” Express a unique thought, such as, “My passion for biotechnology allows me to work toward the advancement of human prosthetics to offer future solutions for degenerative vision conditions, like the one that affects my grandmother.” |

Adapted with permission from Purdue University’s 2012-2013 Career Planning Handbook.
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