Career Resource Guide

STATE YOUR CAREER

Career Center
Illinois State University
Get hired using Hire-A-Redbird

• Find and apply for full- and part-time jobs and internships/professional practice experiences
• Find and sign up for on-campus interviews with employers from a variety of industries
• Upload resumes and cover letters for recruiters to find you
• View upcoming career and networking events and find out which companies are attending, what positions they’re seeking to fill, and what majors they’re most interested in
• Find average hiring salaries and much more

FREE TO ILLINOIS STATE STUDENTS
HIREDREDIBIRD.ILLINOISSTATE.EDU

For more information, contact the Career Center at (309) 438-2200 or CareerCenter@IllinoisState.edu.
Thank you to the Career Center Partners and Friends

The Career Center appreciates the financial support received from our partners and friends. Their support enhances our many career development and job search programs and services. We appreciate their investment and interest in connecting with Illinois State talent.

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The Career Center’s Partner Program is an exclusive opportunity designed to assist employers with finding qualified talent for internships and job opportunities. Discover how your company can benefit from becoming a Career Center Partner.

Contact the Career Center at (309) 438-2200.
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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:

- Pick a major because they want to use it to prepare for a specific job, career, or industry.
- Pick a job, career, or industry then choose the major that will best meet their career goals.
- Pick a major because they enjoy it but never intending to directly use it in a future career. Many jobs are open to students with any major and 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 tips and resources we suggest you investigate:

- Visit Illinois State’s [illinoisstate.edu/majors](http://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 and 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) 438-0230.

**YOU’RE READY BUT... are you HON Ready?**

If you expect career advancement that will only be limited by your abilities and performance, then our [Sales and Business Leadership Program](http://hnicareers.com) is for you.

...Are you HON Ready?!
# Career Planning Guide

## A Four-Year—Sometimes More—Process

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<th>INTERACT</th>
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<td>Typically Third Year/ Transfer Students or Anyone Seeking Experiences in a Career</td>
<td>Typically Graduating Students or Anyone Moving into a Career</td>
<td>Alumni with Experience or Anyone with Years of Career Experience</td>
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<td>- Take a career assessment offered by the Career Center (FOCUS, MBTI, Strong Interest Inventory) to assist in choosing a major or determining your career path</td>
<td>- Conduct informational interviews with professionals to help you focus on a specific career within a field</td>
<td>- Research careers and jobs through Career Center resources</td>
<td>- Present career-related programs at Illinois State</td>
<td>- Attend career fairs to explore career options or to recruit other talented Redbirds to your organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Research potential majors/minors by visiting the website, <a href="http://www.FindYourMajor.ilstu.edu">www.FindYourMajor.ilstu.edu</a></td>
<td>- Attend career-related programs through the Career Center</td>
<td>- Post your resume on eRecruiting</td>
<td>- Update your resume, have it critiqued by a Career Center staff member, post it to eRecruiting</td>
<td>- Update your resume annually</td>
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<td>- Attend Career Fairs to learn about professional opportunities</td>
<td>- Participate in internship or externship programs</td>
<td>- Seek experiences that help you gain skills to achieve your career goals</td>
<td>- Attend strategically for and attend career fairs</td>
<td>- Contact the Career Center to discuss a career change</td>
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<td>- Set academic goals, grades are important</td>
<td>- Get involved with student, volunteer, or professional organizations related to your major</td>
<td>- Seek leadership roles with student, volunteer, or professional organizations related to your major</td>
<td>- Seek leadership roles with Illinois State Alumni Services</td>
<td>- Attend conferences and job fairs sponsored by professional associations in your given field</td>
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<td>- Ask for academic help early, if you need it</td>
<td>- Check our professional organizations, community service, student government, and other activities through the Student Involvement Center</td>
<td>- Review and reaffirm your values, interests, personality, and abilities related to your major</td>
<td>- Become a mentor to an Illinois State student</td>
<td>- Network, Network, Network</td>
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<td>- Attend tutoring and workshops available through the Julia N. Visor Center</td>
<td>- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>- Learn how to conduct a well-planned job search</td>
<td>- Maintain contact with former faculty to improve networking potential</td>
<td>- Reevaluate how your career fits your interest, values, and personality</td>
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<tr>
<td>- It is important to get to know your professors, attend their office hours and communicate with them via e-mail</td>
<td>- Get involved to develop time management, interpersonal, and communication skills</td>
<td>- Become familiar with websites that will assist your job search readiness</td>
<td>- Explore courses, workshops, and professional development opportunities</td>
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<td>- Talk with faculty about career options in their fields, actively participate in class</td>
<td>- Review your graduation plan with your academic advisor</td>
<td>- Remember to file your application for graduation</td>
<td>- Consider graduate, professional school or additional training</td>
<td>- Consider graduate, professional school or additional training</td>
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<td>- Meet with your academic advisor to develop your major academic plan</td>
<td>- Meet with your academic advisor to track your progress</td>
<td>- Attend Grad Finale sponsored by the Dean of Students Office</td>
<td>- Maintain contact with former faculty to improve networking potential</td>
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<td>- Set goals to achieve on projects related to leadership roles with student, volunteer, or professional organizations</td>
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<td>- Seek leadership roles with Illinois State Alumni Services</td>
<td>- Become a mentor to an Illinois State student</td>
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<td>- Remember to file your application for graduation</td>
<td>- Attend conferences and job fairs sponsored by professional associations in your given field</td>
<td>- Maintain your relationships with your mentors</td>
<td>- Maintain your relationships with your mentors</td>
<td>- Reevaluate how your career fits your interest, values, and personality</td>
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Chapter 2: Developing Your Self-Marketing Skills

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 the 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:

- Educational experience
- Employment experience
- Community service and volunteer work
- Course enrollment or projects
- Outside activities
- Professional development events/memberships
- Internships
- Honors
- Student organization involvement
- And many others!

Style & Formatting Tips

- **Font:** Choose an easy to read font in 10-12 point size in black.
- **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 purpose you use it for. A “one resume fits all” approach will not be most effective.
- **Layout:** Use bullets, bold, 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 grows with your experiences.

Sample Headings & Sections

Below is a list of possible headings you could use in your resume if you have applicable experiences. The possibilities are endless for heading titles as long as they help highlight specific skills/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/task you completed. Here are some tips to help you write strong bullet points:

- Start each bullet point with an action verb (see page 6 in this publication), then add details.
- If you are still in the role or experience listed, use present tense verbs. If it was something from the past, use past tense verbs.
- 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 key action verbs 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 the attendance, or how much of a budget you managed)

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 continued

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

Does your resume…
- Use consistent formatting for dates, job titles, etc.?
- Display your most relevant qualifications near the top of the page or in a section?
- Highlight all your relevant experience?
- Use action verbs to describe your experiences?
- Use key words from your area of discipline and/or a job posting to describe your experiences?
- Demonstrate an understanding of the position you are seeking and/or the needs of the employer?

The Top Ten Pitfalls in Resume Writing

1. **Too long.** Most new graduates should restrict their resumes to one page. If you have trouble condensing, get help from your career center professional.

2. **Typographical, grammatical or spelling errors.** These errors suggest carelessness, poor education and/or lack of intelligence. Have at least two people proofread your resume. Don’t rely on your computer’s spell-checkers or grammar-checkers.

3. **Hard to read.** A poorly typed or copied resume looks unprofessional. Use a plain typeface, no smaller than a 10-point font. Asterisks, bullets, underlining, boldface type and italics should be used only to make the document easier to read, not fancier. Again, ask a professional’s opinion.

4. **Too verbose.** Do not use complete sentences or paragraphs. Say as much as possible with as few words as possible. A, an and the can almost always be left out. Be careful in your use of jargon and avoid slang.

5. **Too sparse.** Give more than the bare essentials, especially when describing related work experience, skills, accomplishments, activities and interests and club memberships that will give employers important information. Including membership in the Society of Women Engineers, for example, would be helpful to employers who wish to hire more women, yet cannot ask for that information.

6. **Irrelevant information.** Customize each resume to each position you seek (when possible). Of course, include all education and work experience, but emphasize only relevant experience, skills, accomplishments, activities and hobbies. Do not include marital status, age, sex, children, height, weight, health, church membership, etc.

7. **Obviously generic.** Too many resumes scream, “I need a job—any job!” The employer needs to feel that you are interested in that particular position with his or her particular company.

8. **Too snazzy.** Of course, use good quality bond paper, but avoid exotic types, colored paper, photographs, binders and graphics. Electronic resumes should include appropriate industry keywords and use a font size between 10 and 14 points. Avoid underlining, italics or graphics.

9. **Boring.** Make your resume as dynamic as possible. Begin every statement with an action verb. Use active verbs to describe what you have accomplished in past jobs. Take advantage of your rich vocabulary and avoid repeating words, especially the first word in a section.

10. **Too modest.** The resume showcases your qualifications in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward without misrepresentation, falsification or arrogance.
### Action Words for Your Resume and Cover Letters

These are some action words that can help you dress up your resume. Adapted from quintcareers.com.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Communication/people skills</th>
<th>Data/financial skills</th>
<th>Teaching skills</th>
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Transferable Skills

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. And like these students, you may have carefully reviewed your work history (along with your campus and civic involvement) and you may still have a difficult time seeing how the skills you learned in college will transfer to the workplace.

But keep in mind that 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 developing countless skills 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 is taught technical writing)
• acquired through experience (e.g., the 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 qualifications 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 provided you with countless experiences where you’ve acquired a range of skills—many that you may take for granted.

Identifying Transferable Skills
While very closely related (and with some overlap), transferable skills can be divided into three subsets:
• Working With People
• Working With Things
• Working With Data/Information

For example, some transferable skills can be used in every workplace setting (e.g., organizing or public speaking) while some are more applicable to specific settings (e.g., drafting or accounting).

The following are examples of skills often acquired through the classroom, jobs, athletics and other activities. Use these examples to help you develop your own list of the transferable skills you’ve acquired.

Working With People
• Selling
• Training
• Teaching
• Supervising
• Organizing
• Soliciting
• Motivating
• Mediating
• Advising
• Delegating
• Entertaining
• Representing
• Negotiating
• Translating

Working With Things
• Repairing
• Assembling parts
• Designing
• Operating machinery
• Driving
• Maintaining equipment
• Constructing
• Building
• Sketching
• Working with CAD
• Keyboarding
• Drafting
• Surveying
• Troubleshooting

Working With Data/Information
• Calculating
• Developing databases
• Working with spreadsheets
• Accounting
• Writing

• Researching
• Computing
• Testing
• Filing
• Sorting
• Editing
• Gathering data
• Analyzing
• Budgeting

Easy Steps to Identify Your Transferable Skills
Now that you know what transferable skills are, let’s put together a list of your transferable skills. You may want to work with someone in your career services office to help you identify as many transferable skills as possible.

Step 1. Make a list of every job title you’ve held (part-time, full-time and internships), along with volunteer, sports and other affiliations since starting college. (Be sure to record officer positions and other leadership roles.)

Step 2. Using your transcript, list the classes in your major field of study along with foundation courses. Include electives that may be related to your employment interests.

Step 3. For each job title, campus activity and class you’ve just recorded, write a sentence and then underline the action taken. (Avoid stating that you learned or gained experience in any skill. Instead, present your skill more directly as a verifiable qualification.)

“While working for Jones Engineering, I performed 3D modeling and drafting.”

“NOT “While working for Jones Engineering, I gained experience in 3D modeling and drafting.”

“As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I developed and coordinated the marketing of club events.”

“NOT “As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I learned how to market events.”

Step 4. Make a list of the skills/experiences you’ve identified for future reference during your job search.

Using Transferable Skills in the Job Search
Your success in finding the position right for you will depend on your ability to showcase your innate talents and skills. You will also need to demonstrate how you can apply these skills at an employer’s place of business. Consult the staff at your career services office to help you further identify relevant transferable skills and incorporate them on your resume and during your interviews. During each interview, be sure to emphasize only those skills that would be of particular interest to a specific employer.

Transferable skills are the foundation upon which you will build additional, more complex skills as your career unfolds. Start making your list of skills and you’ll discover that you have more to offer than you realized!

Additional Tips to Help Identify Your Transferable Skills
1. Review your list of transferable skills with someone in your field(s) of interest to help you identify any additional skills that you may want to include.

2. Using a major job posting website, print out descriptions of jobs that interest you to help you identify skills being sought. (Also use these postings as guides for terminology on your resume.)

3. Attend career fairs and company information sessions to learn about the skills valued by specific companies and industries.

Written by Rosita Smith.
**Curriculum Vitae, C.V., Vita, or Vitae**

This 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. It is used primarily for educational institutions, applications for professional (academic/teaching 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 need to prepare one.

A two-page resume is not a vitae, though two pages can constitute a vitae. It is not just the length but the types of information on the pages that constitute the difference.

There is no one perfect way to construct a vitae or one perfect way for it to look, but there are a few agreed-upon guidelines. It should be

- Well organized
- Easy to read
- Error free

**Name and Contact Information**
Should be on the first page; the following pages should include name and page number. There is no need to type “vitae” on first page.

**Professional/Career/Vocational/Research Objectives**
Can be brief (one sentence stating general goals) or as long as a paragraph (both short- and long-term goals).

**Education**
Names of universities, colleges, and professional schools attended. List these in reverse chronological order, most recent first and/or most important first. Include degrees, diplomas, certificates, dates of graduation and/or attendance, major, minor, emphasis, concentration, and GPA(s). Omit high school.

**Thesis/Dissertation Abstract**
Brief description of a thesis or dissertation, full title, and date (term) of completion. Consult with an academic advisor regarding appropriate wording of this statement. Some disciplines (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 in 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 of research interest(s).

**Research and/or Laboratory Experience**
Provide detailed descriptions of experience and the ways in which experience 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 writing the syllabi, texts used, and level of the class (freshman, sophomore, graduate level, etc.).

**Instrumentation Experience**
Include computer hardware, photographic, and/or audio-visual programs.

**Special Skills**
Foreign language, computer software, leadership, organizational, and/or 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 for being academic societies and professional associations. List title, organization name, location, and date.

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

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

**Community Service**
Memberships, volunteerism, role, level of involvement, and offices held.

**Background**
Usually 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**
Campus programs; may include role, level of involvement, and offices held.

**Interests**
Avocations; do not get too personal.

**Travel**
Usually international or extensive throughout the United States. Include descriptions and length of visits.

**Computer**
May include hardware and software.

**Special Areas**
Example: psychology tests are administered and interpreted.

**References/Recommendations**
Optional. References should be those willing to be contacted directly without direct communication from you.
SAMPLE COVER LETTER INFORMATION

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
- 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

Dear Ms./Mr. ___:

Opening paragraph: Why you are writing? Are you applying for a specific position or 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 you are 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 hearing from you” to a more assertive approach such as “I will be contacting you within the next two weeks to inquire about setting up a time to meet and discuss my qualifications for this position.” You might repeat your contact information. Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration of your application materials.

Sincerely,

Sign your name here

Enclosure (signals you have included your resume)
Ms. Sophie Jones  
Manager of Human Resources  
Beck’s Public Relations Inc.  
1234 State Street  
Chicago, IL 60600

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 online eRecruiting listings.

My education in human resources and my recent internship at the ABC Publishing House have provided me with the experience and confidence to succeed in training and development. I noted in the job description 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.

Having reviewed Beck’s website, I am particularly impressed by the company’s philosophy of “dedication to professional excellence through continued professional education.” I agree wholeheartedly and would look forward to my own continuing professional development within the organization. I have enclosed my resume, which will give you additional information about my work experiences in human resources, plus my educational background.

Thank you for considering me as a candidate for this position. I have already arranged for you to receive a copy of my university transcripts (as directed in the job announcement) and I eagerly anticipate hearing from you in the near future about the prospect of an interview.

Sincerely,

Pat Smith

Enclosure
THANK-YOU LETTER OVERVIEW

WHEN ARE THANK-YOU LETTERS APPROPRIATE?

Thank-you letters are appropriate after the following occasions:

• After every job interview (this includes in-person interviews and phone interviews).
• After every informational interview or networking meeting.
• After someone has helped you with your job search process (e.g., referred your resume to someone else, offered you contact information, etc.).

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 for job search assistance.
• Mention aspects of the interview that were of particular interest to you.
• 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. Please note that a handwritten thank-you note can make you stand out from the other candidates in a positive way.

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 an immediate 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.
Almost 40% of HR managers predict resumes will soon be replaced by social-networking profiles. Even today, to get the attention of recruiters, grads 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 might seem like a no-brainer to go job hunting on the Internet. “Digital job search is attractive to young people because they’re tech savvy,” said J.T. O’Donnell of CareerHMO.com. But after months of trolling job boards with no response, they wonder “What’s wrong with me?”

Nothing, according to O’Donnell. Estimates are that only 4% to 10% of the people who look for jobs online ever find one. It’s a long-shot. The “underbelly of the job posting world,” she says, “is that many listings are already filled, were just fishing expeditions, or are outright scams.”

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 #1 (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’s like to work at your own 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**
“Eighty percent of all companies are using ATS [applicant-tracking system] that scans and digitizes, so keywords are key,” says O’Donnell. “As recent grads don’t have a lot of professional experience, they probably won’t get selected for an interview.”

There’s a way to get around that. Reverse-engineer several job descriptions. First highlight the repeating keywords (“Microsoft Office Suite,” not “Motivated, self-starter”), then plug them into your resume. Presto…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 don’t stop there. Use LinkedIn to reach 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 high 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 or even creepy.

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% 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 *BRAH! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*. “I opened up her Facebook page and see 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, possibly taken by a studio photographer.

10. **Polish Your Online Image**
“Don’t show or say anything online that you wouldn’t want your mother or boss to see,” she warns. “Clean up your email address and privacy settings. Even then be careful what you share. You don’t know who’s standing around looking over who’s shoulder, or what will be forwarded and sent around.”

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. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at www.jebra.com.
The social media profiles of job candidates are an area of scrutiny for recruiters. In fact, there are now even online research analysts who will comb the internet for damaging information on a firm’s applicants. (On the flip side, there are “scrub services” that will clean up a job hunter’s digital footprint.) Here are some simple ways to take a DIY approach to scrubbing your online presence.

**Google Your Name**
Search for your name online occasionally to see what comes up, or set up automatic name alerts at Google.com/alerts. You may discover results for many people with your same name, possibly with embarrassing or outrageous content. To find the real “you,” try tweaking your name (e.g., Sam versus Samuel) or add some additional identifying modifiers (perhaps your city or school).

Search for your name on all the networks to which you’ve ever belonged, including MySpace and YouTube. (Recruiters check everywhere.) After a thorough review, ask yourself: Will this the social media profile foster callbacks, interviews and job offers? If not, keep reading.

**Keep Some Mystery**
“Most new grads grew up texting, Skyping, Tweeting, Facebooking and reading or creating blogs,” says Jenny Foss, who operates Ladder Recruiting Group in Portland, Ore. “Older, more experienced competitors aren’t ‘native social media people.’” That’s the plus; the minus is you have to shift your mindset from “impressing the guys” to “promoting myself as a polished professional.”

Foss recommends you adjust the privacy settings on your accounts. But you’re not safe even then since companies can change privacy policies. When possible, it is better to remove negative or overly private content than hide it.

**There’s No Swimsuit Competition**
Recruiters will judge you by your profile photos. Do they tell the right story? “Don’t post sexy photographs of yourself online. Don’t even be too glamorous. That’s a really big turnoff to employers,” says Vicky Oliver, author of 201 Smart Answers to Business Etiquette Questions. “Dress in photos as you would in an interview.”

Remove unflattering pictures, videos, and unfavorable comments you've posted on social networks. Post a high-quality headshot, the same one across all platforms. Important: Don’t forget to check out photos where friends have tagged you on Facebook. If you’re pictured at a party with a drink in hand, delete the tag. Adjust privacy settings to prevent that from happening again.

**Blot Out the Bitter**
Have you ever gone online while under the influence or in a foul mood? Bad idea. “Whatever you wouldn’t do at the networking event, don’t do online,” says Oliver. Some examples of social media gaffes: Posting about parties, dates, getting into posting wars with your friends, or using obscenities, faulty grammar, typos, or cryptic texting shortcuts.

“I personally would never put a thumbs-down sign on someone’s comment,” Oliver says. “I would not write anything negative, no snappy commentary at all.”

**Get LinkedIn**
This is the single best social media platform for job seekers because of its professional focus. Some savvy employers are now even requesting LinkedIn profile info as part of the job application process. One of the most powerful aspects of this profile is the recommendations from previous bosses and co-workers. Testimony from others is proof positive of your professionalism.

Make good use of keywords and set up links between all your social media profiles. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Blogspot all rank high in Google searches.

**Witness Protection Program**
Some job seekers are so concerned about privacy they’ve gone into lockdown mode and blocked all of their profiles. Unfortunately, that makes recruiters wonder what they’re trying to hide. Plus, many of them seek employees with social media skills, so cleaning up what’s out there is usually better than shutting it down.

**What Would Your Mother Say?**
Many career coaches and recruiters say that the rule of thumb for social media content is: Would you want your mother or employer to see it? No? Then don’t post it.

“Self-censorship is the main key,” says Alexandra Levit, author of Blind Spots: The 10 Business Myths You Can’t Afford to Believe on Your New Path to Success. “Always think before you post, because if there is a single person out there who you don’t want to see your content, I guarantee it will get back to them.”

You may be too close to the situation to judge what’s appropriate or not, so it can be helpful to have a second pair of eyes to look over your profiles. Select someone who’s about the same age as your target employers, experienced in your field, or at least in the hiring process.

**Netiquette Tips**
Dan Schwabel, a personal branding expert and author of Me 2.0, offers these tips to keep your digital reputation clean:

• Don’t over-promote yourself or people will get turned off.
• Do share industry insights, useful resources, quotes and facts with your audience.
• Don’t send your resume to employers on Facebook.
• Do build a relationship through tweeting before you email blindly.
• Don’t come to an interview without researching the company and the hiring manager online, using LinkedIn first.

Written by Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at www.jebra.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 personal and business relationships.

MEETING AND GREETING

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Terry Cobb, Owner, 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 and assertive. A limp handshake, on the other hand, sends the message that you’re not interested or qualified for the job. Dave Owenby, human resources manager for 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% 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 the “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 unimpressed, and the candidate did not get the job.

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 take care of 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, and 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, Western Carolina University.
Making Career Fairs Work for You

Career fairs can be a great way to connect with potential employers—if you prepare in advance and use your time wisely.

The career fair is your opportunity to meet directly with employers from a variety of organizations, learn about their opportunities, gather information, and find out about next steps in the process. 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 each event. The list of registered employers will be posted on the Career Center Website prior to each event. Develop a prioritized list of employers that you are interested in so your visit to the career fair will be time efficient and focused. Visit the website of each employer on the priority list to research important company information. Take notes!

Identify your targets: Based on your research, rank the organizations on your list and determine who to visit at the fair and in what order. This will help you make the best use of your time.

Prepare a 30-second commercial: Interaction with employers at fairs 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 in your company/organization because of my experience ____,” which can include mentioning of a related internship, summer job, class research project, etc.
• 5-10 seconds—Strengths and accomplishments related to your job target: Whatever highlights/strengths you select, use your own words. The objective is to get your message across naturally, without sounding overly-rehearsed.
• 5-10 seconds—Summary or goal statement: Reasons you would be a good fit for the position, organization, etc. This is a good time to show you have done some research on the organization—deeper than just the home page.

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 plenty of resumes printed on good resume paper.

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 the employer representatives and remember your manners.

Use your time well: When it’s your turn to speak with the recruiter, use your “commercial” to introduce yourself. Have relevant questions for each recruiter reflecting your research and knowledge about the employer; make sure to also show your interest. Ask for the recruiter’s business card so you can follow up.

After the Career Fair

• Ask the representative what the next steps will be, and what you can do to follow up with this contact.
• Complete the online process as soon as possible. Many employers require online applications to be completed to proceed with the interviewing process.
• Send thank-you letter (or emails) within 24 hours to those recruiters with whom you discussed positions of interest. In each letter/message, remind the employer that you met them at the Illinois State University career event, and reiterate your interest in the position.
Dressing for the Interview

Depending upon your fashion style, whether it is the latest trends for the club scene or merely college senior casual, a job interview may be cause for some drastic wardrobe changes. For interviews, some of your individualism might have to be shelved or kept in the closet. In most business and technical job interviews, when it comes to your appearance, conservatism and conformity are in order.

While many companies have adopted the “office casual” dress code, don’t try to set new standards in the interview. When in doubt, it is better to be too conservative than to be too flashy. For men and women, a suit is the best bet.

Here are some guidelines:

**MEN AND WOMEN**

- Two-piece matched suit is always the best and safest choice. Don’t forget to open the tacked vents, if the suit is new.
- Everything should be clean, well-pressed, and professional.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- No visible body art. Cover tattoos with clothing if possible.
- Remove visible body piercings including nose, eyebrow, or multiple earrings in one ear.
- Use perfume/colognes sparingly.
- Hair should be clean, trimmed, and combed or styled.
- Fingernails should be neat, clean, and trimmed.
- No gum, candy, or cigarettes.

**MEN**

- If wearing a 3-button suit, leave the bottom button open.
- Long-sleeved dress shirt (even in summer) in white or light blue is the best choice.
- Solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics are safest.
- Bright ties bring focus to the face but a simple pattern is best for an interview.
- Make sure your tie, when knotted, comes to the middle of your belt buckle.
- Wear polished shoes with dark socks high enough so no skin is visible when you sit down and cross your legs.
- Match shoe and belt color; don’t mix black and brown.
- Facial hair should be neat and clean.
- Briefcase or portfolio.

**WOMEN**

- Suit with a skirt (length should be between 2” above or below the knee) or a business pantsuit are acceptable in navy, blue, tan, gray, burgundy, black, or beige. Try to use solid colors or conservative prints.
- Tailored blouse with a conservative neckline that coordinates nicely with your suit; preferably white, off-white, or neutral color.
- If you wear pants, they should be creased and tailored, not tight or flowing.
- Natural-colored hosiery or opaque tights that best match your suit color.
- Shoes should be closed-toe/closed-heel with low to moderate high heels. Dark leather, low-heeled pumps are the best choice.
- No excessively long fingernails. Use conservative nail polish; avoid unusual colors (e.g., green, blue, lavender).
- Small stud earrings are preferable over dangling or oversized earrings.
- Use accessories in moderation. Use the Rule of 13: If you count more than 13 accessories including buttons, bracelets, rings, earrings, and watches, you are overdoing it.
- Briefcase or portfolio in place of a handbag or purse.

**Taking a Casual Approach**

“Office casual” is becoming the accepted mode of dress at more and more companies. 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 for men and slacks and a sweater for women. At others, especially entrepreneurial computer companies, it is shorts and sandals every day.

The safest fashion rule for new employees to follow is dress about the same as your most conservatively attired co-worker. As a new hire, don’t try to “push the boundaries” of casual attire.

**Fashion Arrests**

- Never wear denim jeans or shorts unless the vast majority of others do.
- Don’t dress too provocatively—you’re at work, not at a dance club.
- “Casual” doesn’t mean “sloppy”—your clothes should always be free of stains or holes.
- Workout wear belongs at the gym.

**Play It Safe:**

- Chinos or corduroy slacks are usually a safe bet for both sexes.
- As for formal business attire, buy the best that your budget will allow.
- If you will be seeing clients, dress appropriately for their workplace, not yours.
- Go to the mall—most department and specialty stores have a section devoted to this style of office attire.
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 then 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. Then 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 though not to say anything that would 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. Then look for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Don’t ask about 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.

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 and use 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 information to help you decide whether you’re interested in the company and important data to refer to during the interview.

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.

**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 with the competition 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 also must face reality: Is the job attainable?

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

- Ability
- Character
- Loyalty
- Initiative
- Personality
- Communication skills
- Work record
- Recommendations
- Outside activities while in school
- Impressions made during the interview

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
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? 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 expect 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 learned in or out of school?
- What frustrates you the most? What was your greatest disappointment?
- Tell me about a difficult decision you had to make. How did you go about making it?
- What kinds of people do you find it 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/university you attended?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- Which academic subjects did you enjoy the most? Least? Why?
- Do you think your grades are a good 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? An advanced degree?

**Work Experience, in General**
- Tell me about your past work experience.
- Of the positions you have held, which did you enjoy the most? 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/interesting job you ever had? The most boring job?
- Describe an innovative change you implemented in your last job.
- How, specifically, do you contribute toward an atmosphere of teamwork?

**Most Recent Position**
- What are your key responsibilities or objectives in your 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? The least? Why?
- What aspects of your supervisor’s management style/philosophy do you like most? Least? 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?

**Questions About the Target Job…**
- In general, how qualified do you feel to perform this position? Why?
- With which aspects of the position do you feel most comfortable? 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 is it about this job that appeals to you the most?
- What have you learned in previous jobs that appeals to you the 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**
(Use only for supervisor or management 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? 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 supervisory experience that did not turn out well and why.
- How would your staff describe you?
YOUR 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL

Use the following guidelines to develop an introduction when meeting employers during interviews, career days and other networking events. Your goal is to create a positive and lasting impression in a brief amount of time.

STEP 1: RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER

1. Preview the list of organizations participating in the event and plan a strategy for the day. Put together an "A" list and a "B" list of employers you want to target. Contact your career services office to see what employers may be recruiting on campus.

2. Research all the employers on your "A" list. Look for current facts about each employer, including new products, services or acquisitions.

3. Write down some key facts about the employer:
   (a) ______________________________________________________________________________________
   (b) ______________________________________________________________________________________

4. Review job descriptions pertinent to your major for employer requirements. Note specific knowledge, skills, and abilities they seek. List academic or employment experiences and activities where you demonstrated these skills.

   The employer is seeking: My qualifications and selling points:
   (a) ______________________________________________________________________________________
   (b) ______________________________________________________________________________________
   (c) ______________________________________________________________________________________
   (d) ______________________________________________________________________________________

5. Review the employer’s mission statement and look for key words that indicate the personal qualities the organization values in its employees. List 2 or 3 of your personal qualities that closely match.

   MY PERSONAL QUALITIES:
   (a) ______________________________________________________________________________________
   (b) ______________________________________________________________________________________
   (c) ______________________________________________________________________________________

STEP 2: DEVELOP YOUR INTRODUCTION

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 the 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.

Notes:
Practice your introduction with a friend or career counselor so it sounds conversational rather than rehearsed. You may want to break your opening remarks into two or three segments rather than delivering it all at once. Good luck with your all-important first impression!

Adapted with permission from the University Career Services department at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.
**Interview with Confidence Worksheet**

Two types of questions you are almost guaranteed to be asked in a job/internship interview: “Tell me about yourself,” and a behavioral question, such as “Tell me about a time you worked on a team.” With the former question, the employer wants 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 wants to know how you behaved in or handled a specific situation with the idea that 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 your experiences influenced you and shaped your thinking about your career direction or workplace behavior and attitudes.

**Tell me about yourself.**

For this question, consider an answer that provides some relevant background information about your interest in the field and position in addition to your relevant experience. It is a brief story about what has shaped your interest and motivation to pursue the opportunity for which you are interviewing. Draw upon your answers to all or some of the questions below to craft your answer.

How did you become interested in this industry/job function? What experiences piqued your interest in this field (classes, internships/jobs, books, etc.)?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What have you done in this field to pursue/explore this interest or that has confirmed your interest?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What experiences/accomplishments have given you the skills the employer is looking for (activities/leadership, internships/jobs, volunteering)?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Why is this position of interest to you now?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

**Behavioral Questions**

Behavioral questions usually start with “Tell me about a time when” or “Give me an example of a time/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 give a specific example rather than to speak in generalities.

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

**Situation:** What was the situation/problem/conflict you were facing?

**Task:** What task(s) did you identify to respond to this situation/to 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 the 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/interested in and 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 those skills and qualities. Examples can come from internships, school activities, volunteer work, and even personal hobbies. Using the worksheet below, construct your stories/answers according to the **STAR** structure.

**SITUATION • TASK • ACTION • RESULTS**

Job competency you want to demonstrate: __________________________

Situation: ______________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Task: ___________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Action(s):  
1. _____________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________________________

   Specific verbs/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? ______________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

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 asks, “Are you a U.S. citizen?” or “What country are you from?” You’ve been asked an illegal question. You could respond, however, with “I am authorized to work in the United States.” Similarly, let’s say the interviewer asks, “Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel for the job?” You might answer, “I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires.”

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

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### Illegal Questions vs. Legal Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>National origin/Citizenship</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Are you a U.S. citizen?</td>
<td>• Are you authorized to work in the United States?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Where were you/your parents born?</td>
<td>• What language do you read/speak/write fluently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is your “native tongue?”</td>
<td>(This question is okay if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job.)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Age</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Marital/Family status</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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 okay assuming they are asked of all applicants for the job.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are your child-care arrangements?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Affiliations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Personal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How tall are you? How much do you weigh?</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>(Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential for the safe performance of the job.)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Disabilities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Do you have any disabilities?</td>
<td>• Are you able to perform the essential functions for this job? (This question is okay 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 and give dates when these occurred.</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, except medical/safety personnel may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What was the date of your last physical exam?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How’s your family’s health?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When did you lose your eyesight? How?</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Arrest record</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Military</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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></td>
<td>• What type of training or education did you receive in the military?</td>
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Questions for Employers

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

• 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 and/or in any literature provided by the employer in advance.
• Never ask about salary or benefit issues until the employer raises those subjects.
• Don’t ask a question unless you are interested in the answer.

If you have trouble developing questions, consider some of the following questions:

• What are the opportunities for personal and professional growth?
• What is the 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?
Chapter 4: Starting Your Job Search

JOB SEARCH TIPS FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

• Focus on your ABILITIES rather than your disabilities
  - On your resume, disclose skills related to your disability such as reading Braille
  - 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
  - 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 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 complete your assignments
  - Job offer: disclose your disability if accommodations in the workplace are necessary, so that the employer can plan accordingly
• Utilize all your resources, including:
  - Disability-specific associations such as the Arthritis Foundation, American Council of the Blind, National Center on Employment of the Deaf
  - Placement services offering assistance to disabled persons such as state vocational rehabilitation agencies, 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

GLBTQ STUDENTS

• Informing the employer of your sexual orientation is completely your choice—do not feel pressured
• Focus on your skills, and do not hold yourself back due to orientation
• Visit www.hrc.org to access a database of employers with gay-friendly policies and procedures
• Specialized job search engines
  - www.lgbtcareerlink.com
  - www.progayjobs.com
  - outforwork.com

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# Job Search Strategies: Pros and Cons

There are many ways to look for a job, some of which are better than others. Presented below are some of the most popular ways, as well as helpful hints and pros and cons of each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Tools, Pros, Cons and Helpful Hints</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **INTERNET**        | Tools: Access to the web and an electronic resume  
                   Pros: Actual job openings. Many employers use a wide variety of job listing services. Many listings have free to low-cost access.  
                   Cons: Competition is growing as use of the internet increases. Pay attention to multiple listings—one position posted on a few sites—to avoid applying multiple times.  
                   Hints: Use the web frequently as information and sites change quickly.                                                                 |
| **NETWORKING**      | Tools: List of contacts, resumes and business attire  
                   Pros: May learn of unadvertised openings. May result in a courtesy interview. Often results in a closer match of your interests to a job.  
                   Cons: A contact in itself is not enough to get you a job. You may exhaust all leads without landing a job. Quite time-consuming.  
                   Hints: Follow through on all leads. Keep broadening your network of contacts.                                                                 |
| **SOCIAL MEDIA**    | Tools: Access to the internet, social media accounts and an electronic resume  
                   Pros: Access to wide variety of employers, contacts and current job openings.  
                   Cons: Employers can view your information and/or pictures. Be sure your profile is professional, or use a separate account for connecting to employers.  
                   Hints: 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. |
| **ON-CAMPUS RECRUITING** | Tools: Scheduling interviews, employer literature, resumes and business attire  
                    Pros: One of the primary ways in which companies recruit for technical and business positions.  
                    Cons: May be less effective for nontechnical/nonbusiness candidates.  
                    Hints: Use the interview schedule as a way to identify possible employers, even if you don’t get to interview on campus with those employers. |
| **TARGETED MAILING** | Tools: List of well-researched companies, tailored cover letters and resumes  
                  Pros: Better approach than the mass-mailing method. Investment of time and effort should merit stronger response from employers.  
                  Cons: Requires a significant investment of time in researching companies and writing cover letters as well as following up with contacts.  
                  Hints: Try to find out who is in charge of the area in which you want to work; send your materials to that person. Great method when used in conjunction with networking. |
| **IN-PERSON VISIT** | Tools: Business attire, company address list and resumes  
                  Pros: Resume and application are on file with the company.  
                  Cons: Requires a great deal of time to make a relatively small number of contacts.  
                  Hints: Research the companies prior to your visit. Ask for a specific person or ask about a specific type of job. |
| **RESUME REFERRAL** | Tools: Registration form supplied by service  
                  Pros: Another way to monitor the job market and get your qualifications to the attention of employers.  
                  Cons: May involve a fee. Often more helpful to those in technical or specialized fields. May not learn of the status of your materials.  
                  Hints: Use only in conjunction with other job search strategies. |
| **EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES** | Tools: Resumes and business attire  
                       Pros: Fee-paid jobs for graduates in technical fields or those with marketable experience.  
                       Cons: May be less help to non-technical/inexperienced graduates. Be wary if you, instead of the employer, have to pay a fee.  
                       Hints: Identify agencies that specialize in your field. Make frequent contact with your counselor to obtain better service. |
| **WANT ADS**        | Tools: Newspapers, journals, newsletters, trade magazines, cover letters and resumes  
                  Pros: Involves minimal investment of time in identifying companies. Resume and cover letter are sent for actual job opening.  
                  Cons: Resume and cover letter will compete with large number of others. Ads follow job market; least effective in times of economic downturn.  
                  Hints: Use as a meter on the job market in a certain career field. Try to get your materials in as early as possible. |

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INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Why Set Up an Informational Interview?
Another helpful tool you can use 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 company in general, typical and atypical career paths, and specific 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 also for students who are nearing graduation and conducting further research about specific employment opportunities.

How Do I Set Up an Informational Interview?
• Identify an employer/organization you would like to research; find the name and contact information of the supervisor of the specific department you are interested in.
• State that you are a student at Illinois State University and would like to conduct an informational interview with them to find out more about the organization and/or a specific position.
• Assure the individual you will not take more than 30 minutes of their time, or alternatively that you will not ask more than five questions.

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/produces and who their target/market 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 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 experiences 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/industry face?
• What types of training programs or opportunities exist for new hires?
• Are there any job shadowing opportunities, internships, or summer work opportunities? How would I apply for those?

Don’t Forget to Write a Thank-You Letter
This can be the start of a networking opportunity that will lead you to other possible positions in the field. Be sure to mail your thank-you letter within 24 hours of the interview!
Many people use the classified ads as their sole job search technique. Unfortunately, statistics show that only 10% to 20% of jobs are ever published—which means that 80% to 90% of jobs remain hidden in the job market. For this reason, networking remains the number one job search strategy.

**Network Your Way to a Job**

By Thomas J. Denham

A NETWORK IS an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and ultimately for your career. Some great network contacts might include people you meet at business and social meetings who provide you with career information and advice.

Students often hesitate to network because they feel awkward asking for help, but it should be an integral part of any job search. Though you might feel nervous when approaching a potential contact, networking is a skill that develops with practice, so don’t give up. Most people love to talk about themselves and their jobs and are willing to give realistic—and free—advice.
Eight Keys to Networking

BE PREPARED First, define what information you need and what you are trying to accomplish by networking. Remember, your purpose in networking is to get to know people who can provide information regarding careers and leads. Some of the many benefits of networking include increased visibility within your field, propelling your professional development, finding suitable mentors, increasing your chances of promotion and perhaps finding your next job.

Second, know yourself—your education, experience and skills. Practice a concise, one-minute presentation of yourself so that people will know the kinds of areas in which you are interested. Your networking meeting should include the following elements: introduction, self-overview, Q&A, obtaining referrals and closing.

BE TARGETED Identify your network. For some, “I don’t have a professional network. I don’t know anyone,” may be your first reaction. You can start by listing everyone you know who are potential prospects: family members, friends, faculty, neighbors, classmates, alumni, bosses, co-workers and community associates. Attend meetings of organizations in your field of interest and get involved. You never know where you are going to meet someone who could lead you to your next job.

Social Networking Websites

Career professionals—and parents—are warning young job seekers that using social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, may be hazardous to your career. After all, do you want your potential employer to see photos of you at last weekend’s party? Certainly, those photos could diminish your prospects of landing a job. However, more job seekers are using social networking to enhance their preparation for interviews, garner an advantage over less wired peers, and even gain an edge with recruiters.

One example of a constructive use of social networking websites is gathering background information about the recruiters with whom you will interview. By finding out about topics that will interest the recruiter, you may gain an upper hand in the interview process. In addition, stronger connections with a potential employer can be made by talking about the clubs he or she belongs to and even friends you have in common—information that can be discovered on Facebook.

Research on professional sites like LinkedIn can also be used to prepare for site visits. By using the alumni connections available through LinkedIn, you can gain added insight into potential employers. If you are interviewing with a company, search for alumni who are working there. You can have conversations with alumni via LinkedIn that you wouldn’t have in an interview, such as, “do you like it at the company” or “can you negotiate salary?”

Networking Rules

When you seek and maintain professional connections via social networking sites, follow the same etiquette you would if you were networking by phone and in person. Remember that every contact is creating an impression. Online, you might tend to be less formal because you are communicating in a space that you typically share with friends. Just as you would not let your guard down if you were having dinner with a potential employer, you must maintain a positive and professional approach when conversing with networking contacts.

continued on page 30
online. Ask good questions, pay attention to the answers, and be polite—this includes sending at least a brief thank-you note anytime someone gives you advice or assistance.

If It’s OK for Mom, It’s OK for Facebook
The more controversial aspect of the interplay between social networking and job searching is the privacy debate. Some observers, including career counselors, deans, and parents, worry that students put themselves at a disadvantage in the job search by making personal information available on Facebook and Twitter pages. More and more companies are using such websites as a screening tool.

Concern about privacy focuses on two areas: social life and identity/affiliations. Parents and career counselors argue that job-seekers would never show photos of themselves at a party in the middle of an interview, so why would they allow employers to see party photos on a Facebook page? Students often respond that most employers do not even use social networking sites and that employers already know that college students drink.

While it may be true that senior managers are less likely to be on Facebook, young recruiters may be active, and in many cases, employers ask younger employees to conduct online searches of candidates. Why risk losing a career opportunity because of a photo with two drinks in your hand?

It’s easy to deduce that if an employer is comparing two candidates who are closely matched in terms of GPA and experience, and one has questionable photos and text on his or her online profile and the second does not, that the second student will get the job offer.

Identity—Public or Private?
Identity and affiliations are the second area where social networking and privacy issues may affect your job search and employment prospects. Historically, job-seekers have fought for increased protection from being asked questions about their identity, including religious affiliation and sexual orientation, because this information could be used by biased employers to discriminate. Via social networking sites, employers can now find information that they are not allowed to ask you.

Employers can no longer legally ask these questions in most states, however, some students make matters like religion, political

Social Networking Websites continued

Questions to Ask During Networking Meetings
- What do you like most (least) about your work?
- Can you describe a typical workday or week?
- What type of education and experience do you need to remain successful in this field?
- What are the future career opportunities in this field?
- What are the challenges in balancing work and personal life?
- Why do people enter/leave this field or company?
- Which companies have the best track record for promoting minorities?
- What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?
- With whom would you recommend I speak? When I call, may I use your name?

BE PROFESSIONAL Ask your networking prospects for advice—not for a job. Your networking meetings should be a source of career information, advice and contacts. Start off the encounter with a firm handshake, eye contact and a warm smile. Focus on asking for one thing at a time. Your contacts expect you to represent yourself with your best foot forward.

BE PATIENT Heena Noorani, research analyst with New York-based Thomson Financial, recommends avoiding the feeling of discouragement if networking does not provide immediate results or instant answers. She advises, “Be prepared for a slow down after you get started. Stay politely persistent with your leads and build momentum. Networking is like gardening: You do not plant the seed, then quickly harvest. Networking requires cultivation that takes time and effort for the process to pay off.”
involvement, and sexual orientation public on their Web pages.

You would never include religious and political affiliations as well as sexual orientation or transgender identity (LGBTQ) on your resume, so do you want this information to be available via social networking sites? There are two strategies to consider. One approach is that if you wish to only work for an employer with whom you can be openly religious, political, or LGBTQ then making that information available on your Web page will screen out discriminating employers and make it more likely that you will land with an employer open to your identity and expression.

A second approach though, is to maintain your privacy and keep more options open. Investigate potential employers thoroughly and pay special attention at site visits to evaluate whether the company would be welcoming. This strategy is based on two perspectives shared by many career professionals. First, as a job-seeker, you want to present only your relevant skills and experience throughout the job search; all other information is irrelevant. Second, if you provide information about your identity and affiliations, you may be discriminated against by one person in the process even though the company overall is a good match.

**Strategies for Safe and Strategic Social Networking**

1. **Be aware of what other people can see on your page.** Recruiters use these sites or ask their colleagues to do searches on candidates.

2. **Determine access intentionally.** Some career counselors advocate deactivating your Facebook or Twitter accounts while job searching.

3. **Set a standard.** If anything appears on your page that you wouldn’t want an interviewer to see, remove the offending content.

4. **Use social networking to your advantage.** Use these sites to find alumni in the companies that interest you and contact them before you interview in your career center or before a site visit. In addition, use social networking sites and Internet searches to learn more about the recruiters who will interview you before the interview.

“Social Networking Websites” written by Harriet L. Schwartz.
Turning Your Internship Into a Full-Time Position

Employers use internships as a way to gain a first in-depth look at prospective employees. In this respect, both you and your employer have a common goal—namely, to determine if there is a good fit between you.

Ten Tips to Becoming a Savvy Intern

1. Exhibit a Can-Do Attitude
   Attitude makes a lasting impression, so make sure that yours is one of your greatest assets. Take on any task assigned with enthusiasm. Take the initiative to acquire new skills. Accept criticism graciously and maintain a sense of humor.

2. Learn the Unwritten Rules
   Get to know your co-workers early in your internship. They will help you figure out the company’s culture. You will need to adapt, observe, learn and process a large volume of information, so ask questions and pay attention.

3. Take Your Assignments Seriously
   Build a reputation for being dependable. Be diligent and accurate in your work. You will generally start out by performing small tasks, asking a lot of questions and learning the systems. Your internship supervisor knows that there will be an initial learning curve and will make allowances for mistakes. Learn from your errors and move on to your next task.

4. Meet Deadlines
   Always assume the responsibility to ask when an assignment is due. You will then understand your supervisor’s priorities and can manage your time accordingly. Alert your boss in advance if you will be unable to meet expectations. This will show respect and professional maturity.

5. Set Realistic Goals and Expectations
   Invest actively in the learning agenda which you set up with your supervisor at the beginning of the assignment. Target specific skills and competencies that you wish to acquire and demonstrate. It is up to you to establish a correlation between your learning goals and the daily work you are asked to perform. Maintain a journal of your activities and accomplishments to monitor your progress. Seek regular reviews from your supervisor to assess your performance.

6. Communicate Respectfully
   Assume that everyone else knows more than you do. However, don’t be afraid to present useful ideas that may save time or money or solve problems. Make sure, however, that your style does not come across as cocky. Employers value assertiveness but not aggressiveness. Maintain a pleasant and respectful demeanor with every person.

7. Be Flexible
   Accept a wide variety of tasks, even those that may not relate directly to your assignments. Your willingness to go the extra mile will help you carve the way to assuming greater responsibilities.

8. Be a Team Player
   Learn how your assignment fits into the grand scheme of things and keep a keen eye on getting the job done. You’re a winner only if your team wins.

9. Get a Mentor
   Identify at least one individual to serve as your mentor—someone willing to take a personal interest in your career development. Begin to network wisely by associating with seasoned employees who may share their knowledge, perspectives and insights.

10. Have Fun!
    Last but not least, enjoy learning, sharpening your skills and developing professionally and personally. Participate in work-related social functions and become an active member in your work community.

Written by Lina Melkonian, Executive Director of Development at San José State University, College of Engineering.

About Internships at Illinois State University

• What is an internship/professional practice at Illinois State University?
  It is a professionally monitored work or service experience for students that provides intentional learning goals and reflects actively on the learning experience. An internship can be part-time, full-time, paid or unpaid. Professional Practice (or internship) consists of one or more credit-generating, academic/career-related, paid or nonpaid work experiences. Professional Practice work sites are located with businesses industries, government, and other agencies and organizations.

• Internships at Illinois State University are defined as Professional Practice courses in your major.
  Professional Practice courses are designated by the numbers 198, 298, 398, 498, and 598. Tuition and fees are assessed in the usual manner for all credit earned in internship experiences. Discuss the major requirements with your academic advisor, internship coordinator, or the assistant director for professional practice in the Career Center.

Significant Information in Obtaining a Successful Internship

• With the assistance of your department faculty/internship coordinator, select an internship that closely matches your future career. Visit the Career Center website for your faculty/internship coordinator’s contact information.
• Be prepared to go outside of your immediate geographical area for a great internship experience—don’t limit yourself!
• Find pertinent information about an employer’s internship program application deadlines and requirements.
• Seriously consider unpaid internships—the benefits can be extremely rewarding.
• Work like your career depends on it—because it does!
• Use your networks during your internship experience. Networking is often the key to moving your career forward!

Visit CareerCenter.IllinoisState.edu, for information and/or resources on how to get the internship you want!
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. Sample response: “I am delighted you have extended me this offer.”
- Get all of the terms so you will have as many details as possible to consider.
- Be clear about 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. Sample response: “I’m sure you understand this is a major decision for me, and I want to be sure I have enough time to think it through carefully.”
- Make sure you know who to call back for more information.
- Thank them for the offer. Sample response: “Thank you so much for calling and presenting me with this opportunity. I look forward to discussing it with you further after I have had time to think it through.”

Step 2. Evaluating the offer
This is the time for you to sit down and consider 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. For example, consider trade-offs you will be willing to make (e.g. better medical leave for less 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.
- Pick your battles. You shouldn’t negotiate more than two or three major issues.

Step 3. The 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 is very conversational. Make sure 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. This is simply an information exchange. It is likely that the company will have to get back to you with the answers to your questions, and possibly a revised offer.
- Sample responses: “I really appreciate the offer and have spent some 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 the offer they made. Some companies are not allowed to negotiate, and this will be obvious in their responses to your questions at this point.
- Show you have done your research, and justify your requests as confidently as you can. Close the conversation with courtesy. Sample dialogue: “Thank you for taking the time to listen to my requests and concerns. I look forward to hearing back from you.”

Step 4. The company response
Again, be as courteous as possible. Sample dialogue: “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: “That 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.”
- Let the company know when you will get back to them. Be gracious. At this point, you have already taken time to think about the offer and the company, so you shouldn’t take an extreme amount of time. One or two days is appropriate.
- Sample dialogue: “I need some time to think about the offer. Thank you for your time and help with this.”

Step 5. Your decision
- If possible, you should accept the position to a person instead of an email address or voicemail.
- If you are accepting, you want to do so as soon as possible. Taking a long time to respond can indicate you are not serious about the position.
- If you are declining the offer, do so respectfully, courteously, and in a timely manner. You do not want to ruin your rapport with the company. You also do not want to ruin the company’s impression of your school for the sake of future students.
- Sample dialogue: “It was a difficult choice, but I have decided I will not be accepting your offer. I was impressed by the people I met, and I truly appreciate your extending me the offer.”

NEGOTIATING

Evaluate benefits. They are often one-third of the total compensation value and may be negotiable. Good ones to look for and understand are the following:
- Cafeteria plans or medical/dependent reimbursement plans
- Pension or 401k
- Medical, dental, vision insurance
- Profit sharing, employee stock plan
- Signing bonus
- Stock options or performance bonuses
- Life, disability insurance
- Promotion and raise schedule
- Vacation, sick, personal time off
- Flex hours, telecommuting
- Tuition reimbursement
- Company assets—car, computer/laptop, cell phone
- Health club membership
- Relocation expenses

- Be sure to negotiate based on the cost of living in the city in which you will be living and working. Many Internet sites contain this type of information. Do the research.
- Study salaries of comparable jobs with similar companies. Knowing your market value will strengthen your negotiating position.
- In evaluating offers, consider title, opportunity for advancement, company reputation, culture, and ability to work with potential managers.
- Don’t 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. Get the offer in writing.
- Contact companies with whom you’ve interviewed. Give them a chance to match the competing offer or top it.


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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 to attend graduate school. If you’re trying to determine whether graduate school is right for you, here are some pointers to help you make an enlightened 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 clueless about your career goals.
- aren’t prepared to devote the time and hard 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 work 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 and assistantships, which could pay for a great deal of your education.

Go to graduate school now if…

- you are absolutely sure you want to be a college professor, doctor, lawyer, etc., and need a graduate degree to pursue your dream job.
- you have been awarded grants, fellowships, scholarships or assistantships that will help pay for your education.
- you’re concerned that once you start earning real money, you won’t be able to return to the lifestyle of a “poor” student.
- your study habits and mental abilities are at their peak, and you worry whether you’ll have the discipline (or motivation) to write papers and study for exams in a few years.

3. I am broke. How will I pay for tuition, books, fees and living expenses?

- Family: You’ve likely borrowed from them in the past; maybe you’re lucky enough for it to still be a viable option.
- Student Loans: Even if you’ve taken out loans in the past, another $50,000 - $75,000 may be a sound “investment” in your future.
- Fellowships/Scholarships: A free education is always the best option. The catch is you need a high GPA, good GRE/GMAT/LSAT/MCAT scores and the commitment to search out every possible source of funding.
- Teaching/Research Assistantships: Many assistantships include tuition waivers plus a monthly stipend. It’s a great way to get paid for earning an education.
- Employer Sponsorship: Did you know that some companies actually pay for you to continue your education? The catch is they usually expect you to continue working for them after you complete your degree so they can recoup their investment.

4. What are the pros and cons of going to graduate school full-time vs. part-time?

Benefits of attending graduate school full-time:

- you’ll be able to complete your degree sooner.
- you can totally commit your intellectual, physical and emotional energy to your education.
- ideal if you want to make a dramatic career change.

Benefits of attending graduate school part-time:

- work income helps pay for your education.
- you can take a very manageable course load.
- you can juggle family responsibilities while completing your degree.
- allows you to work in the function/industry/career of your choice while continuing your education.
- employer will often 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—not your friends or parents.

b. Keep your grades up and sign up (and prepare) to take the required standardized tests.

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 reduce your debt.

f. Research graduate schools to help you find a good match.

g. Investigate the admissions process and the current student body profile of your targeted schools to evaluate your probability for admission.

h. Have faith and APPLY! Remember, you can’t get in unless you apply.

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 test and request that your scores be sent to the appropriate schools. If you have not registered for the test yet, register and prepare for them now.
• Visit prospective campuses and talk to students/faculty involved in the programs you are interested in
• Identify faculty and/or professionals to ask for recommendation letters

SENIOR YEAR

August-October
• Attend Career Center Graduate School Workshops
• Take required graduate admission test if you have not already done so (6 months before earliest application deadline is ideal as it takes 4 weeks for official scores to arrive at designated school)
• Get organized and create a separate file for each institution you are applying to
• Edit personal statement by consulting with writing experts and faculty
• Request faculty 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 the appropriate schools
• Finalize personal statement
• Edit, complete, and submit your application materials in advance of the deadline
• Apply for financial aid opportunities such as scholarships and graduate assistantships

January-March
• Contact schools to confirm receipt of application and completion of file
• Visit schools of interest to narrow your search
• Finalize all financial aid paperwork and fill out 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

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| 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 be tempted to use the same statement for all applications. |
| 2    | Tell a Story                   | - Think in terms of showing or demonstrating through concrete experience.  
- Make your statement fresh, lively, and different, to distinguish yourself and make yourself memorable. |
| 3    | Be Specific                    | - Back up your statements with specific examples or reasons.  
- Be sure your desire to obtain your prospective career is logical, the result of specific experience that is described in your statement. |
| 4    | Find an Angle                  | - Figure out a way to make your story interesting. Finding an angle or a “hook” is vital.                                                 |
| 5    | Concentrate on Your Opening Paragraph | - Grabbing the reader’s attention in the opening paragraph is vital. This paragraph is the framework for the rest of the statement. |
| 6    | Tell What You Know             | - Be specific. Use the language professionals use to convey your knowledge of the field.  
- Refer to experiences such as work, research, courses and professional readings, and explain why you are suited for it. |
| 7    | Don’t Include Some Subjects    | - Avoid references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier.  
- Avoid potentially controversial subjects (for example, controversial religious or political issues). |
| 8    | Do Some Research, If Needed    | - 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 school. |
| 9    | Write Well and Correctly       | - Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay very carefully.  
- Express yourself clearly and concisely.  
- Adhere to stated word limits. |
| 10   | Avoid Clichés                  | - Avoid cliché statements such as stating on your medical school application that you are “good at science and want to help people.” This is not expressing an original thought. |

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Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Illinois State University
Career Center
110 Student Services Building
Campus Box 2520
Normal, IL 61790-2520
Phone: (309) 438-0230
Email: CareerCenter@IllinoisState.edu

CareerCenter.IllinoisState.edu
#StateYourCareer

facebook: /CareerCenterSU
twitter: @ILSTUcareer
Linkedin: IllinoisState.edu/LinkedIn
CareerCenter.IllinoisState.edu/Hire