Career Planning Guide
GRADUATE PROGRAMS AT LOYOLA UNIVERSITY MARYLAND

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CAREER GUIDE
Seize your dream!

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Watch for These Events Throughout the Academic Year!

Fall and Spring Career and Internship Fairs
Employers come to the Marist campus to meet and network with students and alumni about full-time jobs, internships and career information.

Resume Events
Employers, alumni and staff attend programs on campus to help students create and prepare competitive resumes.

Graduate School Forum
Students may speak with numerous graduate and professional school representatives about academic programs and entrance requirements.

Interviewing Events
Employers and organizations will visit campus to conduct mock/practice interviews with students and provide advice and critique.

Federal and Government Job Fair
Held in cooperation with the Mid-Hudson Career Consortium, this regional event brings recruiters from various levels of government together for student recruiting.

Networking Events
Students will be provided with opportunities to develop networking skills with representatives from various fields and occupations.

Teacher Recruitment Fair
A combined event with area colleges, this program assists regional and NYC schools in a day for interviewing education candidates.

Further details can be found on our webpage at:
www.marist.edu/careerservices

Follow our social media accounts!

Companies and Organizations That Recruit at Marist

The following companies and organizations have had a continuing relationship with Marist College. The Center for Career Services continues to develop relationships with prestigious employers for the benefit of our students.

Bank of America  KPMG  Sun Life Financial
CA Technologies  M&T Bank  Target
Cumulus Broadcasting  Macy’s  Teach for America
Department of Homeland Security  Madison Square Garden  Time Warner
Enterprise  Mass Mutual  The TJX Companies, Inc.
Ernst & Young  Mediacom  Toys R Us
ESPN  MetLife Financial  Travelers
Federated Insurance  Morgan Stanley  UBS Financial Services
First Investors  MTV Networks  USAA
Frontier Communications  NBC Universal  U.S. Marine Corps
Goldman Sachs  NHL Productions  U.S. Peace Corps
Health Quest  Nordstrom  U.S. Secret Service
HSBC Bank USA  Northwestern Mutual  Verizon
IBM  PricewaterhouseCoopers  WB Mason
IRS  Progressive Insurance  Wellcare Health Plans
Kohl’s  Sherwin-Williams  Wells Fargo
Marist Programs and Services

Step 1. Register With Career Services

- Submit a release form. This form allows us to release information about you to prospective employers. Pick one up in LB332 or you can print it out online at www.marist.edu/careerservices/release.pdf.
- Check your campus email. Since many employers do not schedule their campus interviews prior to the beginning of the semester, it is essential that you check your email for regular updates.
- Prepare your professional resume and cover letter (we will review them for you). Upload your resume onto FoxQuest. You will need both electronic and hard copy resumes for your search.

Step 2. Understand How to Conduct Your Internship or Career Search

Interviewing and other job search skills workshops are announced online and via email. We also put posters and fliers up on campus. Meet with a member of the staff to personalize your search and fine-tune your cover letter, resume and interviewing skills.

Step 3. Become Familiar With the Marist Recruiting Programs

Information sessions, workshops, on-campus recruiting and career fairs regularly bring employers to our campus. These programs allow students to meet with recruiters and business professionals to discuss internships and full-time jobs. Follow postings on the CCS web pages and look for announcements in your email.

Step 4. Refresh Your Business Etiquette

Employers will judge all Marist students by their experience with you. Marist can lose a recruiter if just one student is discourteous. It may sound incredulous, but that’s the way it can be. If an employer you are not interested in calls you and leaves a message, please do them the courtesy of returning their phone call. Just tell them you are not interested in their organization at this time. It doesn’t take much time and it goes a long way in protecting your reputation and the College’s. If you decide not to take a scheduled interview, call the employer and let them know. The embarrassment you may think you’re avoiding by just not showing up may hurt other Marist students; someone you know may be on the wait list. Please place a simple, professional message on your answering machine. Employers will hang up and lose interest when they hear “party attitude” messages or inappropriate language.

Other Resources to Find Out About Jobs

✓ The Alumni Career Network
Speak to a Marist alumna/us who is working in a field you would like to enter. Get career advice, assistance with your resume and even the inside scoop on possible jobs.

✓ Email
We will email you about upcoming events, deadlines, announcements and important news. Email is sent to the address you listed on FoxQuest and/or your Marist email address.

✓ Jobs On-Line
Our homepage at www.marist.edu/careerservices provides links to many resources including resume preparation, job vacancies, graduate school searches, relocation information, etc.

✓ The Internet
A job search without the Internet is incomplete. Explore links to job and career related pages on the Jobs On-line section of our homepage—www.marist.edu/careerservices and through FoxQuest and CareerShift.

Additional Programs and Services

✓ References
Set up a Reference File with us for transmission of reference letters for employment or graduate school.

✓ Assessment
Not sure of where you are going? Career assessment is available online. You may also want to consult our library of resources on various career fields.

✓ Internships
You owe it to yourself to find out if you can still participate in an internship. It will depend on your major and when you will graduate. Employers seriously consider internship experience when hiring for full-time jobs.

✓ Graduate School Information
Do you need a graduate degree to enter your intended field? Which programs are right for you? Should you go right on or wait to enter graduate school? We can assist you with these and other questions. While you’re at it, inquire about scholarships and fellowships to assist with graduate school costs.
Making Your Career Center Work for You

MANY STUDENTS go through all four years of college without ever setting foot in their school’s career services office. Yet, outside of the academic realm, job seekers will pay hundreds, even thousands, of dollars for the very same services that are included free with the cost of tuition.

The mission of career center practitioners is to teach skills and provide services that will facilitate the career development and job search process, ranging from assessing your abilities to negotiating employment offers. Don’t overlook this opportunity; it could mean passing up the job of a lifetime.

Develop Relationships
Find a career center counselor/advisor and get to know him or her. Try to meet with your counselor at least several times throughout your career development process. Appointments are a great way to stay motivated and to accomplish career-related tasks.

A counselor will listen to your concerns and provide objective advice. You can bounce ideas off him or her, which will help you think through your options. Furthermore, when unique job opportunities come in, counselors/advisors often alert students who they know well and think might be a good fit with the position. Remember, the more you share about your skills and your goals with the staff, the better they will be able to assist you.

Attend Programs
Many career center practitioners spend the bulk of their time planning events for students. From mock interview days and networking nights to resume workshops and career fairs, at any given time there

How to Find the Right Job

Finding the Job You Want takes many steps and involves just as many decisions. This checklist is designed to help you along the way and guide you to the appropriate sources. Be sure to discuss your progress with your career advisor.

Knowing What You Want
- Choose your ideal work environment—large corporation, small business, government agency or nonprofit organization.
- Choose your ideal location—urban, suburban or rural.
- List your three most useful job skills and know which is your strongest.
- Know whether you want to work with people, data or things.
- Know whether you enjoy new projects or prefer following a regular routine.
- List some of the main career areas that might interest you.
- List your favorite leisure time activities.
- Know what kind of reward is most important to you in a job—money, security, creative authority, etc.
Remember, the more you share about your skills and your goals with the staff, the better they will be able to guide you.

may be a number of programs going on that can assist you. Make sure you are aware of what’s taking place. Find the event calendar, whether it is online, in the paper, or through an email. As you attend programs, ask thoughtful questions to make the most of what you are learning.

Don’t Be a Stranger
Your relationship with the career center doesn’t have to end the day you don your cap and gown. Many centers offer services for alumni similar to those for students. If you haven’t found a job or even formed a plan by graduation, you still might be able to meet with counselors, use job listings and/or computers and attend programs. Check with the career center to see what is available and what time limits apply.

Researching Career Options

- Develop a list of career possibilities to research.
- Visit your career services library and utilize the Internet to learn about various careers. The Dictionary of Occupational Titles and the Occupational Outlook Handbook are valuable resources.
- Consider whether your desired career requires an advanced degree.
- Keep up with current trends in your field through trade publications, news/business magazines and newspapers.
- Identify employers interested in interviewing someone with your academic background and experience; create a list of three or more employers in the field you are considering.
- Use the Internet to learn more about potential employers and check out salary surveys and hiring trends in your anticipated career field.
- Make at least three professional contacts through friends, relatives or professors to learn more about your field of interest.
- Meet with faculty and alumni who work or who have worked in your field to talk about available jobs and the outlook for your field.

Getting Experience

- Narrow down the career options you are considering through coursework and personal research.
- Participate in a work experience or internship program in your chosen field to learn of the daily requirements of the careers you are considering. Such assignments can lead to permanent job offers following graduation.
- Become an active member in one or more professional associations—consult the Encyclopedia of Associations for organizations in your field.
- Volunteer for a community or charitable organization to gain further work experience. Volunteer positions can and should be included on your resume.
Programs and Services
In addition to these tips, it’s helpful to understand more about a career center’s numerous services. These programs and offerings may include:

Job Listings and Recruiting Programs
Virtually all career centers have job listings maintained in-house or by professional online services. Employers can post positions specifically for your individual college. Furthermore, many students will be able to take advantage of on-campus recruiting programs, where employers collect student resumes and conduct on-campus interviews for various job openings.

Career Fairs
The beauty of career fairs is that they bring employers to you. Often held in a large venue, you can browse their available positions, talk with them informally, and drop off resumes. Fairs may be held up to several times a year, focusing on different types of positions, such as internships or nonprofit jobs.

Internship Programs
Internships are the most valuable way to try out different career fields and gain hands-on experience while you are still a student. You can build your resume, learn the ropes, and maybe even get academic credit. You might also pave the way to a full-time position after graduation.

Workshops
Career center workshops cover skills ranging from writing an effective cover letter to honing your interview performance. Not only can you get pertinent advice from career center staff and other workshop presenters, but you will also benefit greatly from being in a group environment with your peers.

Alumni Networks
Many schools offer students access to alumni contacts in various career fields. These graduates have volunteered to serve as a resource for information and advice. This can be one of the most helpful ways to learn about different industries, and can help you get your foot in the door.

Mock Interviews
When it comes to interviewing, practice makes perfect. The experience of having a simulated interview with a staff member can calm nerves, enhance performance, teach you how to answer tough questions, and prevent you from making big mistakes.

Resume and Cover Letter Critiques
In addition to the assistance offered during individual appointments, many offices hold specific drop-in hours where a staff member can provide a quick resume or cover letter critique.

“Making Your Career Center Work for You” written by Jennifer Bobrow Burns, Director, Industry Relations, Tisch Center, New York University.

Creating a Resume
- Form a clear job objective.
- Know how your skills and experience support your objective.
- Use action verbs to highlight your accomplishments.
- Limit your resume to one page and make sure it is free of misspelled words and grammatical errors.
- Create your resume using a word processing program and have it professionally duplicated on neutral-colored paper, preferably white, light gray or beige. If you are submitting your resume online, be sure to include relevant keywords and avoid italics, bold and underlined passages.
- Compose a separate cover letter to accompany each resume and address the letter to a specific person. Avoid sending a letter that begins “Dear Sir/Madam.”

Preparing for the Interview
- Arrange informational interviews with employees from companies with which you might want to interview. Use your network of acquaintances to schedule these meetings.
- Thoroughly research each employer with whom you have an interview—be familiar with product lines, services offered and growth prospects.
- Practice your interviewing technique with friends to help prepare for the actual interview.
- Using the information you have gathered, formulate questions to ask the employer during the interview.
- Arrive on time in professional business attire.
- Collect the needed information to write a thank-you letter after each interview.
A College Timeline
How to Plan for Career Success

Freshmen—Question
- Explore your interests and abilities through academic courses
- Utilize self-assessment tools through your career services office
- Consider volunteer positions to help you build your resume and broaden your experience
- Collect information on internships, cooperative education and other paid work experiences
- Learn about any cooperative education or internship programs offered through your career services office
- Join university organizations that will offer you leadership roles in the future
- Attend job fairs to gather information on potential careers and employers
- Familiarize yourself with the services and resources available at your career services office
- Visit each social media profile you have, and either edit your content or your privacy settings. It is time to put your professional foot forward
- Visit your career services office website
- Attend a resume workshop and create a first draft of your resume

Sophomores—Research
- Choose a major that you will enjoy studying
- Obtain an internship/field experience or other experience-based education, such as cooperative education
- Take on more responsibilities in extracurricular activities
- Explore at least three career options available to you through your major
- Attend job fairs and employer information sessions that relate to your major
- Identify organizations and associations in your interest areas for shadowing opportunities

Juniors—Making Decisions
- Complete at least five informational interviews in careers you want to explore
- Shadow several professionals in your field of interest
- Find out more about career opportunities related to your major
- Attend job fairs and employer information sessions that relate to your interests
- Narrow your career interest areas
- Research potential organizations
- Talk to recent graduates in your major about the job market and potential employers.
- Obtain an internship or other practical career experience
- Meet with a career counselor to have your resume updated
- Participate in seminars or workshops offered by your career services office to learn more about job search strategies such as networking and interviewing skills

Seniors—Job Search
- Stay up-to-date with the your career services office calendar and participate in on-campus recruiting activities
- Participate in interviewing skills seminars/workshops or a mock interview program
- Develop a list of prospective employers with contact names and addresses from organizations you are interested in pursuing
- Determine your career-related strengths and skills; determine what you have to offer an employer
- Meet with your career counselor to have your updated resume reviewed
- Visit job listing websites
- Draft a cover letter that can be adapted for a variety of employers and have it reviewed
- Research information on realistic salary expectations
- Go on employment interviews, evaluate job offers and accept one!

Adapted with permission from Career Services at Virginia Tech.
Evaluating Yourself

AN IMPORTANT PART of deciding what you want to do is first understanding yourself. Self-evaluation will help you analyze what is important in the work you choose and the kind of employer for whom you will work. Answer each question honestly. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers.

1. What do you do best? Are these activities related to people, things or data? ________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

2. Do you communicate better orally or in writing? ________________________________

3. Do you consider yourself a leader of a team or group? __________________________

4. Do you see yourself as an active participant in a group or team? _________________

5. Do you prefer to work by yourself? ________________________________

6. Do you prefer working under supervision? _________________________________

7. Do you work well under pressure? __________________________________________

8. Does working under pressure cause you anxiety? ___________________________

9. Do you like taking responsibility? __________________________________________

10. Would you rather follow directions? _______________________________________

11. Do you enjoy new projects and activities? _________________________________

12. Do you prefer to follow a regular routine? _________________________________

13. Rank the following things in order of importance to you when thinking about a job:
    ❑ Career Advancement ❑ Prestige of Employer
    ❑ Location ❑ Salary
    ❑ People (Boss and Colleagues) ❑ Type of Work

14. Do you prefer to work a regular 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule or an irregular schedule? ________________________________________

15. Would you like a job with a lot of travel, a moderate amount, or a small amount? ________________________________________

16. What kind of work environment do you prefer?
    ❑ Indoors ❑ Urban Setting
    ❑ Outdoors ❑ Suburban Setting
    ❑ Rural Setting

17. What size of organization would you like to work for? ________________________

18. Are you willing to move? ________________________________________________

19. Do you prefer to work for a nonprofit or for-profit organization? _____________

20. Are there other factors to consider? _______________________________________

Adapted with permission from the Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.
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) ____________________________________________________________________________  (a) ____________________________________________________________________________
   (b) ____________________________________________________________________________  (b) ____________________________________________________________________________
   (c) ____________________________________________________________________________  (c) ____________________________________________________________________________

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 60-second commercial or introduction to use when meeting employer representatives.

Hello, my name is __________. I am currently a junior, majoring in economics and working part-time as a supervisor at Campus Information Services. 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 Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.
The Resume

A resume is a brief, easy-to-read summary of your skills and experience. Your resume should be honest, positive, and most of all, concise. Remember, on the first review an employer only spends about 30 or 40 seconds reviewing your resume, and it is the first impression you will make. An effective resume will serve its purpose of getting you an interview.

There are many ways to create your resume, but the following are standard components that employers expect to see. You may need to create your own sections to accommodate specialized information about your background.

**Name and Address Header**

Your name, address, phone number and email address are part of your header. Include both a local and permanent address and a phone number so that an employer has no difficulty reaching you. This is especially important when sending resumes close to school breaks and graduation.

**Objective**

Though optional, an objective informs potential employers that you are moving in a certain direction, relays your work preferences, and serves as a focal point from which to review and analyze your resume. It allows the employer to immediately identify the kind of position you are looking for. Therefore, if you are simultaneously seeking positions in a number of fields, you may need to have a different job objective for each position you are applying for. Do not write an objective that is vague and meaningless. If the objective does not specify a focus within a career field, do not use it.

**Education**

In this section, include information regarding your college degree(s); where obtained; date(s); major, minor or concentration; certification; and academic awards and honors. Include your GPA if it is an asset. If not, focus your resume on your non-academic strengths and skills. A general rule of thumb is that if your GPA is a 3.0 or higher, include it. If your GPA for your major is strong, you may just put that down but make sure that you specify that it is only for classes in your major. If you do not have a lot of relevant experience for the position you are applying for, you may choose to list courses and class projects of interest to the employer. Multiple education experiences are listed in reverse chronological order.

**Experience**

This section includes the positions you held, names and locations of employers and dates employed. In the chronological resume, responsibilities, achievements or significant contributions, and demonstrated skills are listed. Mention your most impressive or important duties first.

You may also include independent study or volunteer work in this section if it is relevant to the position you are seeking and you gained significant skills and/or experience from it. If you choose to describe your volunteer work, do not describe it under a heading that implies that you were paid, such as “Employment” or “Work History.” Use headings like “Communications Experience,” “Human Resources Experiences,” “Research Experience,” etc. to further emphasize your related skills.

**Activities**

If you have been involved in campus or community organizations such as athletics, clubs, or student government, you should mention them in this section. Identify any leadership roles that you had in these organizations. If you have too many organizations to list, choose the ones that have the strongest connection to the type of job you seek. Don’t pad this section with organizations you were involved with “in name only.” Employers may ask you about these involvements during an interview.

**Skills**

- **Computer Skills:** You should include a section where you list any computer programs, hardware, software and/or Internet functions with which you have working knowledge.
- **Other Skills:** If you have any notable skills like foreign language abilities, musical talents, writing skills, etc., be sure to mention them here as well.

**Reproducing Your Resume**

Before you make copies, bring your resume to the career office and have it critiqued. An objective reader can catch typographical errors, grammatical mistakes, and weak spots you will want to fix before sending out your resume. Be sure to use the spell-check feature of the word processing software you use, but don’t rely on it completely since many typographical errors are actually correctly spelled words—just not the words you intended to use.

**Layout and Space Utilization**

Employers do not have a lot of time, so make your resume concise and easy to read. Your resume should be visually appealing to the reader. Use an appropriate amount of boldface, capitalization, and underlining to draw the reader’s attention. Remember, don’t overdo it. Do not exceed one page unless you are a very experienced candidate.

**Reproduction**

Always print your resume on high-quality paper—not your everyday printer paper. Never send out a resume that is obviously a photocopy. Use high-quality paper of at least 20-pound weight. Conservative white, off-white, light tan, or light gray are generally acceptable colors. The only time creative colors are acceptable is for artistic resumes, particularly for candidates in graphic design areas. In this case, the resume becomes a vehicle for illustrating the candidate’s talent.
Putting Your Resume on the Internet

Putting your resume on the Internet is not a difficult process. There is no need to create a new resume. You just need to alter your presentation format. Consider putting your resume in three versions:

**Mail Version:** designed with bullets, italics, and highlights

**Scannable Version:** without bullets and the other design highlights

**Internet Version:** a plain text document that can be sent through email or cut-and-pasted into online forms

Why should you put your resume on the Internet?

- To forward your resume through email.
- To post your resume in databases where employers can find you. Thousands of companies search the Internet daily to find potential employees.

Things to Remember When Putting Your Resume on the Internet

- It is a public file. Consider just placing your phone number and email address so the employer can contact you rather than including your home address.
- Check the confidentiality of the database or service where you are placing your resume. Who can access the database? Will you be contacted if your resume is forwarded to an employer?
- Are there service charges to make changes or updates to your resume?
- Will your resume be deleted from the database if you do not update it? A good database will delete your resume within three months if it is not updated. If you find a job, you do not want your resume still on the Internet.


Preparing Your Resume for the Internet

- In your word processor document, set your margins so that you have 6.5 inches of text displayed. (Set left and right margins to 1 inch.)
- Compose a resume from scratch or open an existing resume in your word processor.
- Select all of the text, and then select a font that is non-proportional 12 pitch, such as Courier 12. This will give you 65 characters per line, which will accommodate most email programs.
- Save your resume as a “text only” file with “line breaks.” NOTE: if you have been instructed to use “hard” carriage returns (the enter key) at the end of paragraphs instead of lines, save as “text only” without the line breaks.
- Open this new file in Notepad, or any other text editor that you can cut and paste text into. Most operating systems have a text editor.
- Review your resume in the text editor. Notepad lets you view your resume as the recipient will most likely view it. It will automatically convert proportional fonts to a fixed pitch font if you did not select one earlier, and it will indicate what part of your text are unsupported ASCII characters such as bullets or underlining.
- Replace all unsupported characters with their ASCII equivalent. For example, bullets created in Microsoft Word 6.0 or 7.0 appear as a question mark when opened in Notepad. They can be replaced with asterisks or hyphens. Any character found on your keyboard is an ASCII-equivalent character. If you see long lines of text in your editor, use Notepad’s word wrap feature under the Edit menu. This feature inserts “hard” returns, allowing you to format the resume to meet specified margins. If you have been instructed to enter hard carriage returns at the end of paragraphs instead of lines, then do not use this word wrap feature.

Instructions taken from: ASCII Resume Tutorial, Rebecca Smith’s eResumes & Resources, www.eresumes.com

Following Up

Following up on your resume is one key to job search success. You must try to get in touch with the employers to whom you have sent your resume. Below is a sequence of questions that may assist you.

“I sent my resume to your organization last week. Can you tell me if I am being considered for any openings?”

If the answer is yes:

“Are there any supportive materials, such as references or a transcript, that I could send to you?”

“Do you have any idea when you might be contacting candidates for an interview?”

If the answer is no:

“I understand that there are no openings right now for which I am qualified, but do you anticipate that there will be any openings in the future? If so, will my resume be kept in a file to be considered for these positions or should I reapply?”

Since many organizations “clean out” resume files from time to time, you should ask:

“How long do you keep resumes on file for consideration?”

Secretaries and receptionists are important. They may not be able to get you the job, but in many situations their input can help or hurt. They can also provide a wealth of information. Be cordial and considerate. Make friends with the secretary who handles your call and ask:

“I am very interested in employment in your organization. Do you mind if I call every now and then to check on available openings?”
## Power Verbs for Your Resume

Top 10 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 a technical or business writer or a 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 12-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, 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.

The Three Rs

The three R’s of resume writing are Research, Research, Research. You must know what the prospective company does, what the position involves and whether you will be a fit, before submitting your resume. And that means doing research—about the company, about the position and about the type of employee the company typically hires.

Research the company. Read whatever literature the company has placed in the career library. For additional information, call the company. Ask for any literature it may have, find out how the company is structured and ask what qualities the company generally looks for in its employees. Ask if there are openings in your area, and find out the name of the department head and give him or her a call. Explain that you are considering applying to their company, and ask for their recommendation for next steps. Thank that person for the information, and ask to whom your resume should be directed.

The Internet is another key tool to utilize in your research. Most companies have websites that include information regarding company background, community involvement, special events, executive bios or even past annual reports. Be sure to take advantage of the Internet during your job search.

Research the position. The more you know about the position, the better able you will be to sell yourself and to target your resume to that position. If possible, interview someone who does that same job. In addition to finding out the duties, ask if there is on-the-job training, whether they value education over experience (or vice versa) and what kind of turnover the department experiences. Ask what they like about the position and the company; more important, ask what they don’t like about it.

Finally, research yourself. Your goal is not just to get a job. Your goal is to get a job that you will enjoy. After you find out all you can about the company and the position, ask yourself honestly whether this is what you really want to do and where you really want to be. The odds are overwhelming that you will not hold this position for more than two or three years, so it’s not a lifetime commitment; however, this first job will be the base of your lifetime career. You must start successfully so that future recommendations will always be positive. Furthermore, three years is a long time to spend doing something you don’t like, working in a position that isn’t challenging or living somewhere you don’t want to live.

One last word of advice: Before you go to the interview, review the version of your resume that you submitted to this employer. The resume can only get you the interview; the interview gets you the job.
Expand Your Resume’s Focus

The traditional sections of resume writing—heading, objective, education and experience—are without question the foundation of your resume. As you focus on them, however, it is possible to get tunnel vision and think only about the skills you have developed through your day-to-day work.

Your actual experience has been much broader, and this list will help you explore your extended skills and experiences.

- Have you started an organization?
- Are you a member or officer in a professional association?
- Have you made a presentation at a conference?
- Have you been a panelist in a conference break out session?
- Are you a published author in your field?
- Have you served as a military officer, non-commissioned officer, or within an ROTC program?
- Do you hold any career-related certifications? How about any certifications with transferable skills?
- Have you won any competitions related to your field?
- Were you, or are you still, a Resident Assistant?
- Have you earned a promotion?
  - Did you complete a specific project to achieve the promotion?
  - Was it based on attaining a specific skill set?
  - Was it goal based?
- Have you studied abroad or traveled extensively?
- Have you conducted undergraduate research?
- Are you a mentor or tutor?

**Article adapted by Nancy J. Mellem from “Brainstorming for the Resume”, written by Veronica Rahim, Career Services Consultant, Center for Career Opportunities, for Purdue University’s 2011-2012 Career Planning Handbook.**
Gregory Greystone
student.name@marist.edu
(845) 575-0001

Home Address
Main Street
Anytown, New York 12601

Campus Address
Marist College MSC 00000
3399 North Road
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601

OBJECTIVE
To obtain an entry-level position in public relations

EDUCATION
Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY
Bachelor of Arts in Communication, May 2013
Concentration: Public Relations
GPA 3.4

Semester Abroad, Studied International Communications and Public Relations

HONORS AND AWARDS
Dean’s List
Lambda Pi Eta, Communication Honor Society

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
Broadax and Jones Ltd., New York, NY January - May 2013
Public Relations Intern
• Completed monthly press synopsis of client media activity
• Prepared press releases highlighting scientific research for pharmaceutical clients
• Assisted with coordination of trade show for Aspirin Manufacturers of America

Intern
• Participated in venue research for the 2010 Restaurant Trade Show
• Compiled logistical information concerning transportation, and hotel availability
• Developed basic media plan for submission to the firm’s Senior Management

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE
Marist College Admissions Office, Poughkeepsie, NY September 2011 - May 2012
Operations Assistant (Student Employment)
• Handled phone calls from applicants, parents and guidance counselors
• Scheduled on-campus tours and information sessions
• Monitored and assisted with file review of new applicants

Flying Pig House of Barbecue, Provincetown MA June - August 2011
Waitstaff
• Assured customer satisfaction in a high-volume restaurant
• Completed customer orders with accuracy and efficiency
• All cash and credit card transactions completed with no errors for entire season

ACTIVITIES
• Public Relations Student Society of America, Marist College Chapter - Vice President
• The Circle, Marist College Newspaper, contributing writer
• Campus Ministry, participant in community outreach projects for homeless

SKILLS
• Proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Outlook), Adobe Design CS3 Series and Cision Media Source

REFERENCES
Available upon request
Job Search Correspondence

Cover Letter Basics

Here is your chance to introduce yourself and connect your skills to the job requirements.

Your Street Address — This is a traditional inside address.
City, State Zip
Month Day, Year

Avoid casual language. Spell check and proofread for proper spelling and grammar.

Name — If you cannot find the name/title then use Staffing Manager or HR Director. (Recipient’s Address)
Title
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip
Skip 1 line here.

Dear Ms. Last Name: <-- Always use a colon here. Never use the person’s first name in the salutation. (Salutation)
Skip 1 line here.

Paragraph one explains why you are writing and for which position you are applying. Mention the specific position title and where you found out about it. Refer to your enclosed resume. For example, “Please find my resume enclosed in application for the position of PR Assistant as listed on the NACELink web site.” (Paragraph 1)
Skip 1 line here.

Paragraph two builds a connection between the responsibilities of the position and your skills and personality traits. If there is a description of the position, you should refer to the items mentioned there. Don’t simply restate your resume. Discuss your best selling points in reference to the job. Do not use contractions (she’s, can’t, etc.) or informal terms such as “great,” “awesome,” “love,” etc. (Paragraph 2)
Skip 1 line here.

Go onto the employer’s website before you write paragraph three. Mention here a few of the things that you had a sincere, positive reaction to on the website and let them know how you can contribute to their goals. For example, “While reviewing your website I learned that XYZ Corporation is dedicated to excellent customer service and I hope to be able to apply my understanding of public relations toward that end.” Any other contributions you can make to the organization can also be listed here. (Paragraph 3)
Skip 1 line here.

This is your closing paragraph and in it you thank the reader for their time and consideration and restate how you can be contacted. For example, “Thank you for your time and consideration. If you feel that my background is suitable I would be happy to meet with you to discuss XYZ Company’s needs. Please feel free to contact me at the telephone number or email address above. I look forward to hearing from you.” If you wish to be more direct and assertive, you may say “I will contact your office during the week of (Date) to discuss an appointment.” If you say you will follow-up, then call when you said you would. (Paragraph 4)
Skip 1 line here.

Sincerely. (Closing)

“Yours truly” and “Sincerely yours” are also acceptable.

Your Typed Name
Skip 1 line here.

Print the letter on your resume paper.

If you wish, you may place the word Enclosure (if sending hard copy) or Attachment (if sending by email) here.
Sample Letter of Application

Marist College MSC 13322
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
December 15, 2013

Mr. Edward Anderson
Director of Human Resources
Institute for Human Potential
118 Courtyard Plaza
Arlington, NJ 08954

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I am writing to apply for the Case Manager position that was advertised in the Human Resources Journal. I am a graduate of Marist College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. My resume is enclosed for your review.

During my internship with the Mental Health Association, I was able to apply my classroom education to the practical experience of assisting special needs adults to secure life-skills training and public assistance. I learned that no two clients were alike and each required a firm but compassionate level of support. My direct client interaction has developed work skills that are applicable to the Case Manager position.

In researching the Institute for Human Potential, I discovered that your organization has been recognized as an innovator in building community outreach programs. As you will note on my resume, I have developed and led projects that were a part of the Marist College community outreach initiatives. From what I have learned about the Institute for Human Resources, my profile would provide skills and abilities of interest to you.

I would like to meet with you to further describe my strengths in relation to this position. Feel free to contact me via email at thomas.mccann@marist.edu or by phone at (845) 763-9951.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

Thomas McCann

Enclosure

Sample Letter of Inquiry (Prospecting)

Edward Anderson
Director of Human Resources
Extronic Corporation
118 Courtyard Plaza
Eckland, NY 10895

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Having been a resident of Eckland, New York, for many years, I am familiar with the excellent reputation of Extronic Corporation. Not only has your organization shown tremendous growth from 2004 to 2013, it has also weathered the current recession through a combination of strategic planning and resource consolidation. It is the type of firm with which I would like to be affiliated.

This May, I will be graduating from Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration/Finance. Last semester I interned in the Office of the Vice President for Finance at Marist, where I learned a great deal about long-term financial planning and forecasting. During my two-year tenure as treasurer of the Student Government, I revamped the budget spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel. I am also proficient with Peachtree Software. With my education, employment experience, and college activities, I believe I would be a strong candidate for a finance-related position at Extronic.

I would like to arrange an interview, and can make plans to travel to Eckland on a few days’ notice. Please feel free to contact me at 845-575-0000 or by email at mark.barrett@marist.edu. I look forward to speaking with you in the near future to show you how my qualifications can benefit Extronic Corporation.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Mark Barrett
Email Correspondence

For most of us, sending and receiving email is simple and fun. We use it to communicate with friends and family and to converse with our contemporaries in an informal manner. But while we may be unguarded in our tone when we email friends, a professional tone should be maintained when communicating with prospective employers.

Email is a powerful tool in the hands of a knowledgeable job-seeker. Use it wisely and you will shine. Use it improperly, however, and you’ll brand yourself as immature and unprofessional. It’s irritating when a professional email doesn’t stay on topic or the writer just rambles. Try to succinctly get your point across—then end the email.

Be aware that email is often the preferred method of communication between job-seeker and employer. There are general guidelines that should be followed when emailing cover letters, thank-you notes and replies to various requests for information. Apply the following advice to every email you write:

• Use a meaningful subject header for your email—one that is appropriate to the topic.

• Always be professional and businesslike in your correspondence. Address the recipient as Mr., Ms. or Mrs., and always verify the correct spelling of the recipient’s name.

• Be brief in your communications. Don’t overload the employer with lots of questions in your email.

• Ditch the emoticons. While a ⊕ or an LOL (laughing out loud) may go over well with friends and family, do not use such symbols in your email communications with business people.

• Do not use strange fonts, wallpapers or multicolored backgrounds.

• Sign your email with your full name.

• Avoid using slang.

• Be sure to proofread and spell-check your email before sending it.

Neal Murray, former director of the career services center at the University of California, San Diego, sees a lot of email from job-seekers. “You’d be amazed at the number of emails I receive that have spelling errors, grammatical errors, formatting errors—emails that are too informal in tone or just poorly written,” says Murray. Such emails can send the message that you are unprofessional or unqualified.

When you’re dealing with employers, there is no such thing as an inconsequential communication. Your emails say far more about you than you might realize, and it is important to always present a polished, professional image—even if you are just emailing your phone number and a time when you can be contacted. If you are sloppy and careless, a seemingly trivial communication will stick out like a sore thumb.

Thank-You Notes

If you’ve had an interview with a prospective employer, a thank-you note is a good way to express your appreciation. The note can be emailed a day or two after your interview and only needs to be a few sentences long, as in the following:

Dear Ms. Jones:

I just wanted to send a quick note to thank you for yesterday’s interview. The position we discussed is exactly what I’ve been looking for, and I feel that I will be able to make a positive contribution to your organization. I appreciate the opportunity to be considered for employment at XYZ Corporation. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Remember, a thank-you note is just that—a simple way to say thank you. In the business world, even these brief notes need to be handled with care.

Cover Letters

A well-crafted cover letter can help “sell” you to an employer. It should accomplish three main things:

1. **Introduce yourself to the employer.** If you are a recent college graduate, mention your major and how it would apply to the job you are seeking. Discuss the organizations/extracurricular activities you were involved in and the part-time jobs you held while a student, even if they might seem trivial to you. Chances are, you probably picked up some transferable skills that you will be able to use in the work world.

2. **Sell yourself.** Briefly state your education and the skills that will benefit the employer. Don’t go into a lot of detail here—that’s what your resume is for—but give the employer a sense of your strengths and talents.

3. **Request further action.** This is where you request the next step, such as an appointment or a phone conversation. Be polite but sincere in your desire for further action.

Tips

In addition to the guidelines stated above, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

• Make sure you spell the recipient’s name correctly. If the person uses initials such as J.A. Smith and you are not certain of the individual’s gender, then begin the email: “Dear J.A. Smith.”

• Stick to a standard font like Times New Roman, 12-point.

• Keep your email brief and businesslike.

• Proofread everything you write before sending it.

While a well-crafted email may not be solely responsible for getting you your dream job, rest assured that an email full of errors will result in your being overlooked. Use these email guidelines and you will give yourself an advantage over other job-seekers who are unaware of how to professionally converse through email.

Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.
How to Stand Apart From the Crowd

Competition for jobs is at an all-time high, so it’s essential that you distinguish yourself from other job applicants. Regardless of the field you’re entering, individuality matters. Everything you’ve experienced until now—in the classroom, during after-school jobs and internships, and through volunteer experiences—sets you apart from your fellow students. These unique experiences provide knowledge and abilities that must be demonstrated to potential employers through the resume, cover letter and interview. This is your chance to prove that you’re the best candidate for the job and will make a great addition to their team. Here are some ways to make sure your true potential shines.

What Makes You Special?

Your roommate may have the exact same major and GPA as you do, but those factors are only superficial. More importantly: everyone has his or her own set of life experiences that influence personal growth and skill development. Maybe you’ve traveled around the world, speak several languages, or were born in another country. Or perhaps you’ve worked your way through high school and college to help support your family. Numbers only tell part of the story. When an employer is evaluating you for a job, you have to make sure your unique experiences come through on your resume and cover letter so that you have the opportunity to elaborate on the details during the interview.

Go Team!

Employers want hires who can hit the ground running and work well with others in a team environment. Your academic experience has been packed with teamwork even if you don’t realize it. Just think back to all those group projects and study sessions. Many extracurricular activities from athletics and fraternities and sororities to clubs, volunteer work and student government require team participation as well. By using the language of teamwork and cooperation on your resume and cover letter, you’ve taken the first step toward proving that you’re a collaborator. During the interview you can further express what you’ve learned about yourself and others through teamwork.

Leadership 101

Teamwork is key, but employers also want candidates who can step up to the plate and take charge when it’s appropriate. If you’ve never been class president, however, don’t fear; leadership can be demonstrated in many subtle ways. In addition to traditional leadership roles, leaders also take on responsibility by providing others with information and advice. If you’ve ever helped a friend with a paper, volunteered to teach a class or given a speech that motivated others, then you’ve served as a leader. During your interview, speak confidently about your accomplishments, but don’t cross the line into arrogance. Good leaders know when to show off, as well as when to listen to others.

Art of the Resume

Your resume provides the opportunity to stand out, but don’t distinguish yourself by using bright-colored paper or an unusual font. Those tactics are distracting and leave employers remembering you negatively. Instead, it’s the content of your resume that will really get you noticed. Make sure to describe each experience in clear detail; highlight not only what you did, but also what results were gained from your actions. Don’t forget to include special skills, such as foreign languages and international travel.

Cover Letter Zingers

While your resume chronicles your experiences, the cover letter lets your personality shine through. Here you can expand upon your past experiences and briefly discuss what you learned. Use concrete examples from your resume in order to showcase specific skills and characteristics. Be sure to tailor each letter to the specific organization and position, and state specifically why you want to work for the organization. Demonstrate that you’ve done your research; it will impress employers and set your letter apart from the rest.

Interview Expert

When it comes to the interview, preparation is key. Be ready to talk about everything you’ve done in a positive light, and make sure you’re well informed about the organization and industry. Focus on what distinguishes the employer from their competition and why you are a good fit. If possible, speak to alumni or other current employees to learn more. Remember, practice makes perfect; many career centers offer mock interviews with a counselor. And don’t be afraid to ask for help from friends and professionals as you review the answers to common interview questions.

Do’s and Don’ts

- **DO** dress the part. Even employers with casual dress codes expect interviewees to be dressed in professional business attire.
- **DON’T** chew gum, wear too much cologne/perfume or smoke before the interview.
- **DO** look your interviewer in the eye and offer a firm handshake.
- **DON’T** try too hard to please and appear loud or cocky.
- **DO** emphasize your skills and accomplishments.
- **DON’T** make excuses for failures or lack of experience. Instead, take responsibility for your mistakes and change the subject to something positive.

Written by Jennifer Bobrow Burns, Director, Industry Relations, Tisch Center, New York University.
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 have 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 Web site, 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.
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 Facebook and YouTube. (Recruiters check everywhere.) After a thorough review, ask yourself: Will this 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 snippy 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.”

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### Content You Should NEVER Share

These may seem really obvious, but people lose jobs (and job offers) every day because of them:

- Don’t refer to a company by name; they may get alerts when mentioned online.
- Don’t complain about your job or boss.
- Refrain from making snarky comments about co-workers or customers.
- Don’t reveal your drug/drink habits.
- Never make discriminatory or inflammatory remarks.
- Don’t share intimate relationship details.
- Don’t brag about skipping work, playing games or sleeping on the job.
- Do not broadcast an employer’s confidential information.
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.

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### Job Search Strategies: Pros and Cons

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<td><strong>TARGETED MAILING</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WANT ADS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pros:</strong> Use the interview schedule as a way to identify possible employers, even if you don't get to interview on campus. <strong>Cons:</strong> May be less effective for nontechnical/nonbusiness candidates. <strong>Hints:</strong> Use the interview schedule as a way to identify possible employers, even if you don't get to interview on campus with those employers.</td>
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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.

Adapted and reprinted with permission from Career Services, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
Turning Your Internship Into a Full-Time Position

One of the best benefits of an internship or cooperative education experience is that it can serve as your passport to future employment opportunities. Getting your foot in the door by landing the internship or co-op is only half of the challenge in turning your career dreams into a reality. The more vital half is to build a reputation during this career experience that will culminate in receiving a full-time job offer.

A growing number of employers are using 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.

Here are ten tips to becoming a savvy intern and making powerful career moves:

1. **Exhibit a Can-Do Attitude**
   
   Pass the attitude test and you will be well on your way to success. Attitude speaks loud and clear and makes a lasting impression, so make sure that yours is one of your greatest assets. Take on any task assigned—no matter how small—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 quickly the culture in which you will be working. Being the “new kid” is like being a freshman all over again. You will need to adapt, observe, learn and process a large volume of information. Watch closely how things get done. Ask questions and pay attention to how people interact with each other.

3. **Take Your Assignments Seriously**
   
   Build a reputation for being dependable. Be diligent and accurate in your work. You may encounter a great deal of ambiguity in the work environment, so seek direction when in doubt and do whatever it takes to get the job done. As an intern, 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. From there, your responsibilities and the expectations of others are likely to grow.

4. **Meet Deadlines**
   
   Always assume the responsibility to ask when an assignment is due. This will help you to understand your supervisor’s priorities and to 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 most critical element of your internship—that is, the learning agenda which you set up with your supervisor at the beginning of the assignment. Your learning agenda should target specific skills and competencies that you wish to acquire and demonstrate. After all, the learning agenda is what distinguishes a short-term job from an internship. 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 in order to monitor your progress. Seek regular reviews from your supervisor to assess your performance and reinforce the fact that you mean business.

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. Find out the proper way to address individuals, including customers. Maintain a pleasant and respectful demeanor with every person, regardless of his or her rank.

7. **Be Flexible**
   
   Accept a wide variety of tasks, even those that may not relate directly to your assignments or those that may seem like grunt work. Your willingness to go the extra mile, especially during “crunch time,” 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. In today’s work environment, success is often defined along the lines of your ability to get along with and interact with others. You’re a winner only if your team wins.

9. **Get a Mentor**
   
   Identify at least one individual to serve as your mentor or professional guardian. It should be someone who is willing to take a personal interest in your career development and success. Once you know your way around, begin to network wisely and get “plugged in” by associating with seasoned employees who may share their knowledge, perspectives and insights. Get noticed, because many more people will have a role in determining your future than you might at first realize.

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.

   Make your internship or co-op experience work for you. It can be the first link in the chain of your career.

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

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 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 involvement, and sexual orientation public on their Web pages.

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?
You would never include religious and political affiliations as well as sexual orientation or transgender identity (GLBT) 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 GLBT 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.

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**Do’s & Don’ts of Networking**

- **Do** keep one hand free from a briefcase or purse so you can shake hands when necessary.
- **Do** bring copies of your resume.
- **Don’t** tell them your life story; you are dealing with busy people, so get right to the point.
- **Don’t** be shy or afraid to ask for what you need.
- **Don’t** pass up opportunities to network.

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BE FOCUSED ON QUALITY—NOT QUANTITY In a large group setting, circulate and meet people, but don’t try to talk to everyone. It’s better to have a few meaningful conversations than 50 hasty introductions. Don’t cling to people you already know; you’re unlikely to build new contacts that way. If you are at a reception, be sure to wear a nametag and collect or exchange business cards so you can later contact the people you meet.

BE REFERRAL-CENTERED The person you are networking with may not have a job opening, but he or she may know someone who is hiring. The key is to exchange information and then expand your network by obtaining additional referrals each time you meet someone new. Be sure to mention the person who referred you.

BE PROACTIVE Stay organized and track your networking meetings. Keep a list of your contacts and update it frequently with the names of any leads given to you. Send a thank-you note or email if appropriate. Ask if you can follow-up the conversation with a phone call, or even better, with a more in-depth meeting in the near future.

BE DEDICATED TO NETWORKING Most importantly, networking should be ongoing. You will want to stay in touch with contacts over the long haul—not just when you need something. Make networking part of your long-term career plan.

Thomas J. Denham is the managing partner and career counselor of Careers in Transition LLC.
SCOPE OUT YOUR DREAM JOB or workplace in advance...take a day and follow (“shadow”) a professional who’s already at work doing what you want to do. During the shadow day you can have in-depth conversations, get feedback on your resume, and obtain advice about getting your foot in the door. Students often feel more motivated—and less intimidated—starting a job search after job shadowing. The outcome? You’ll be a savvier job applicant with a better chance of taking it to the next level.

Get a Close-Up Look

Before choosing someone to shadow, ask yourself: Who’s employed at my top-pick organization? Who’s doing work that I want to “road test”? Who’s new in the field and still charged up? Who’s seasoned, with experience that’s wide or deep? Who has contacts they’d be willing to share?

Plan on doing three to five shadows to experience different situations, and to increase your network of contacts. Casting a wide net is an especially good idea if you’re graduating with a degree in liberal arts and are unsure about a job objective. Arrange shadows that hover around your strongest interest, along with a wild card. For example, an English major who likes to write could shadow at an advertising agency, a corporate PR department, a publishing house—and at a recycling non-profit. You never know what you’ll learn or who you’ll meet.

Make sure to read the “Informational Interviews” sidebar on the next page. Informational interviews can be a helpful foot-in-the-door approach to a job shadow experience. They can also help you focus on which professionals might be the most willing to offer you a job shadow experience.
Don’t automatically assume that a certain field will be off-limits for shadowing, either. Most of the time some arrangement can be made. “We’ve set up job shadows for students in ethnomusicology, to medicine, to accounting, to Wall Street, to physical therapy, to nursing, and to museum studies,” says Shannon Forbes, former Director of Career Services at New York’s Hartwick College. “One time we had a student interested in archeology, and we were able to connect her to a Boston city archeologist. She shadowed at the Smithsonian and also at the Museum of Natural History.”

**Fire Up Your Rolodex**

It’s possible to arrange a shadow visit with almost anyone—if you’re creative and persistent. “Talk to people at community organizations, or alumni, or church members, or even professors,” says Forbes. “In some fields, nursing for instance, there’s a lot of red tape, so start with your department or college career office so that they can handle it. They may have an agreement in place already.”

Another college resource that can help you make a connection is the alumni relations office. They often compile a list of alums who’ve offered to act as career information sources, or even mentors. Don’t discount alumni who are not in your field. They might work for a company you’ve targeted, or may have an “in” to someone there.

**Speed Bumps, Detours and U-Turns**

It feels great when shadowing seems to confirm that you’re on the right track. But that isn’t always the case. Even a shadow experience that goes smoothly doesn’t guarantee that there won’t be potholes down the road. After all, it’s only a short visit. “A job shadow doesn’t go deep enough to confirm an interest—it’s best used to eliminate things” says Kelly Perdew, winner of “The Apprentice 2” TV show and CEO of Flashpoint Games. “I thought I wanted to be an attorney with a strong business background, so I doubled up on a JD and MBA degree. I went around and spent an entire day (each) with a number of law firms. I spent a lot of time on informational interviewing, shadowing, a clerkship—and then decided on a different path. Still, it was an incredibly valuable experience. Even if you’ve gone down the wrong path, make the most of the experience and contacts made.”

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**Informational Interviews**

One of the easiest and most effective ways to meet people in a professional field in which you are interested is to conduct informational interviews. Informational interviewing is a networking approach which allows you to meet key professionals, gather career information, investigate career options, get advice on job search techniques and get referrals to other professionals.

The art of informational interviewing is in knowing how to balance your hidden agenda (to locate a job) with the unique opportunity to learn firsthand about the demands of your field. Thus, never abuse your privilege by asking for a job, but execute your informational interviews skillfully, and a job may follow.

**What motivates professionals to grant informational interviews?**

The reasons are varied. Generally, most people enjoy sharing information about themselves and their jobs and, particularly, love giving advice. Some may simply believe in encouraging newcomers to their profession and others may be scoping out prospects for anticipated vacancies. It is common for professionals to exchange favors and information, so don’t hesitate to call upon people.
Once you’ve done your homework, it’s time to contact the individual that you’d like to shadow, or have a go-between make the approach on your behalf. (It’s much harder to say no to a friend than a faceless stranger who calls, emails, or writes with a request.) Another key is to make sure the shadow-ee knows that you’re not asking for a job—only an opportunity to spend some time together at work. A phone call or exchange of emails beforehand is a good way to set some ground rules for the shadow visit. For example, some shadow-ees are so harried that you’ll have to ask questions on the fly, while others may prefer that you save them up for a de-briefing period. Of course, some of how the day shapes up will depend on the personality of the person you shadow. Extroverts usually enjoy spontaneous give and take exchanges, while introverts may not want to talk much at all.

Make the Most of the Visit

According to Dorothy Kerr, former Executive Manager of Employer Services at Rutgers University Career Services in New Brunswick, N.J., some students feel ill at ease during shadowing visits. Rutgers students may attend etiquette classes through Career Services to help them make a good impression. Some of the skills students practice in the sessions include shaking hands, making good eye contact, asking questions, and dining at business functions. “Often we’ll hear, ‘We never sat down to dinner at the table in my family,’ so dining etiquette is new to them,” says Kerr.

Appropriate attire is another stumbling block. The rules about workplace dress and behavior have relaxed as the whole culture has become more casual. “To make the best impression, dress as if you’re going to a job interview,” suggests Kerr. “Your personal appearance should be neat, your hair combed, and your clothes orderly.” Not sure if you should wear a suit or khakis? Ask your shadow-ee for a recommendation.

Your shadow visit will be more interesting if you participate rather than just observe. If you can, pitch in somehow. And don’t give yourself a pass on unpleasant tasks or working conditions, either. If it’s typical in the department to work extended hours, don’t leave at precisely 5:00 p.m. Emphasize the personal aspect, too. Have coffee, lunch, or after-work drinks with your shadow-ee and co-workers. People often let their guard down in a social situation, so you’ll get a truer picture of the organizational dynamics.

Afterward, follow up with a handwritten thank-you note. Then keep in touch periodically with updates on your progress. Who knows, your job shadow experience could very well lead to a mentorship relationship, a job referral, or even an outright employment offer.

Jebra Turner is 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.

How do you set up informational interviews?

One possible approach is to send a letter requesting a brief informational interview (clearly indicating the purpose of the meeting, and communicating the fact that there is no job expectation). Follow this up with a phone call to schedule an appointment. Or, initiate a contact by making cold calls and set up an appointment. The best way to obtain an informational interview is by being referred from one professional to another, a process which becomes easier as your network expands.

How do you prepare for informational interviews?

Prepare for your informational interviews just as you would for an actual job interview: polish your presentation and listening skills, and conduct preliminary research on the organization. You should outline an agenda that includes well-thought-out questions.

Begin your interview with questions that demonstrate your genuine interest in the other person such as, “Describe a typical day in your department.” Then proceed with more general questions such as, “What are the employment prospects in this field?” or “Are you active in any professional organizations in our field and which would you recommend?” If appropriate, venture into a series of questions which place the employer in the advice-giving role, such as, “What should the most important consideration be in my first job?” The whole idea is for you to shine, to make an impression and to get referrals to other professionals.

Always remember to send a thank-you letter to every person who grants you time and to every individual who refers you to someone.
The Ten Best Ways to Go OFFLINE...And Get the Job

Richard Bolles, author of the legendary job search book, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, warns that the biggest mistake he sees job hunters make is spending too long looking online and getting nowhere. Experts estimate that only 4% to 10% of online job seekers have any success using that method. What’s a better option? Ask for leads and info from family, friends, professors, and any other folks you run into. That’s how most people find a job.

1. **Get From Online to F2F**

   If you’ve been spending time searching online, you may have developed virtual friendships with members of industry, special interest or alumni groups. See if you can take those relationships offline. “Maintaining contacts made online is time consuming,” says Vicky Oliver, author of *201 Smart Answers to Business Etiquette Questions*. “Then I realized that this LinkedIn group I belong to, for the alumni of Ivies, was actually meeting in my area, so I attended an event. What a great way to network!”

   If there isn’t a group already meeting, set up one yourself (maybe through MeetUps.com) or invite one person for coffee. Face time can take a relationship to a whole new level.

2. **Job Fairs, Conferences and Classes**

   Go anywhere groups of people in your field assemble. Because everyone has a common interest, and often their intention is to make connections—conversation will flow naturally. While job fairs catering to your major and career interests are best, it may be worth casting a bigger net. “Say you hear about a medical clinical professional job fair, and maybe you’re looking for a staff accountant job. Pay your money and show up anyway,” says Kathleen Downs, recruiting manager at Robert Half International in Orlando, Fla. “There will be HR folks there, so bring your resume, dress in interview clothes, and talk to them.” Downs especially recommends this tactic of networking for people who are extroverted and present well.

3. **Set Up Informational Interviews**

   Spending 20 minutes with someone in the trenches is the best way to research a position, industry or company you’ve targeted. It’s a good way to add contacts to your network too. You can have interesting, meaningful conversations. They’ll also be more likely to want to help you—possibly put in a good word on your behalf or hand-deliver your resume.

   Tap your network of friends and family and keep your request simple. Try some variation of this script: “Do you know anyone who works in sports marketing?” Or, “Do you know anyone who works at Nike?” Or, “Do you know anyone who might know someone who knows such a person?” and finally, “Is it okay for me to contact them and mention you suggested I get in touch?”

   At the end of each informational interview, ask for more leads so you get passed on to others.

4. **Be the Total Package**

   Tattoos, body piercings, or hipster attire may be your personal image statement, but don’t let your appearance scream so loudly that people can’t hear what you’re saying. “Some girls will come in with a small nose ring, and while I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that—it doesn’t help,” says Downs. “Look as conservative as you can and remove all distractions.”

5. **Tell a Story About Yourself**

   In addition to discussing general topics of interest, learn how to slip in a bit about your job search: “I’m looking for a staff accountant job.” Later, practice relaying more detailed, career-related information about yourself. “You need to be specific about your skills and talents,” said Peggy Klaus, author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*, “so you’re able to explain what it is that you do. Prepare and rehearse little stories so it comes off conversationally.”

6. **Be a Giver**

   Now is a great time to volunteer for a nonprofit or industry group. You’ll get out of the house, feel a sense of accomplishment and pick up some new skills. Maybe best of all: “Nonprofits have people serving on their boards that may be able to help you, and you’d never make their acquaintance otherwise;” says Downs.

7. **Put on a Happy Face**

   A job search can be stressful, especially if it’s protracted, but “don’t bring your emotional baggage with you,” when you’re out and about, says Klaus. “You may have just had a fight with your girlfriend, but you still you have to act as if you’re delighted to be there.”

8. **Gyms, Coffee Shops and Bike Paths**

   Develop the ability to strike up a casual conversation about things that interest you, such as karaoke, city bikes or house-roasted coffee. (Geeky is good.) The low-risk first step prepares you to engage in step two, which is an information-gathering career-related conversation, and finally, the actual job interview.

   Plus, by meeting people everywhere you go, you can engage innumerable pairs of eyes and ears helping you look for a job, which is what often leads to success. “The best way to find a job is still friends of friends,” says Oliver. “Build a network of connections so that you hear about a job before it’s posted.”

9. **Network From Within**

   Taking a not-perfect-fit job at a dream company is a great way to network and develop relationships from the inside. “Say you want to be a software developer at Apple, but you’re offered a junior quality control position. Take it and in a few years you may be right where you want to be,” says Tim Sanders, author of *Love is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*. Don’t worry about getting stuck in your first role. If you’re a talented person who makes a good fit with the corporate culture, a smart company will find a way to train and promote you.

10. **Rinse and Repeat**

    Even after you’re hired, don’t stop adding to your network and nurturing your contacts. In an uncertain world, no job is permanent; we’re all temporary employees.

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.
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.”

TweetJob.com, where recruiters tweet jobs, is another engine O’Donnell likes because, “job search success is often just a matter of timing and this is immediate. You can respond quite quickly and be one of the first people in their inbox.”

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 BRAG! 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.
Most students concentrate their job search on Fortune 500 corporations or other large, well-known companies with defined and approachable personnel departments. And in an economic climate that has proved challenging for small business, it would be easy to follow the path of “most students.”

But don’t count out the small companies just yet. Small businesses have been at the forefront of innovation, economic growth and job creation, and there’s no reason to doubt they’ll continue to find themselves in this position in the future.

Generally, any business with 200 or fewer employees is considered a small company. Whether the business has 20 employees or 20,000, the research you do in preparation for an interview opportunity will be the best gauge of the company’s outlook. As we’ve seen, large companies can be just as shaky as small ones, so the questions really come down to: “Is a small company right for you?” and “Are you right for a small company?” There are several things to consider when deciding between working in a large versus a small company.

### Is a Small Company Right for You?

Small companies tend to offer an informal atmosphere, an all-for-one camaraderie and require more versatility and dedication on the part of the company and workers. Small companies are usually growing so they are constantly redefining themselves and the positions within them. Look at the following list of small company traits and consider which are advantages and which are disadvantages for you:

- You are given more responsibility and are not limited by job titles or descriptions.
- Your ideas and suggestions will be heard and given more attention.
- Career advancement and salary increases may be rapid in a growing company.
- You have less job security due to the high rate of failure for a small business.
- You have the opportunity to be involved in the creation or growth of something great.
- You may be involved in the entire organization rather than in a narrow department.
- You may be eligible for stock options and profit sharing.
- The environment is less bureaucratic; there are fewer rules and regulations and thus fewer guidelines to help you determine what to do and whether you’re succeeding or failing.
- Successes and failures are more visible.
- Starting salaries and benefits may be more variable.
- A dominant leader can control the entire organization. This can lead either to more “political games” or a healthy, happy atmosphere.
- You must be able to work with everyone in the organization.

### Are You Right for a Small Company?

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

- Self-motivated
- A generalist with many complementary skills
- A good communicator, both oral and written
- Enthusiastic  •  A risk-taker  •  A quick learner
- Responsible enough to get things done on your own
- There are fewer limitations, and it’s up to you to make the best or worst of that freedom. A small business often has a strong company culture. Learn that company’s culture; it will help you on your way up the corporate ladder.

### Finding a Job in a Small Company

One of the biggest hurdles to finding a job in a small business is contacting a hiring manager. Good timing is critical. The sporadic growth of many small companies can mean sporadic job openings, so you need to network. A small business tends to fill its labor needs informally through personal contacts and recommendations from employees. Job hunters must find their way into the organization and approach someone with hiring authority. This means you must take the initiative. Once you have someone’s attention, you must convince him or her that you can do something for the company. How do you find information on small companies? Try these techniques:

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

Keep the following differences between large and small companies in mind as you conduct your job search:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large Company</th>
<th>Small Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centralized Human Resources</td>
<td>No HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal recruiting program</td>
<td>No full-time recruiters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized hiring procedures</td>
<td>No standard hiring procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep resumes on file</td>
<td>Usually won’t keep resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview held with</td>
<td>Interview often held with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recruiters and managers</td>
<td>the founder or direct boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career section on website</td>
<td>Little/no career section on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring done months in advance of starting date</td>
<td>Hired to begin immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal training programs</td>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predetermined job categories</td>
<td>Jobs emerge to fit needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Always do your homework on the company, and persuade them to hire you through your initiative and original thinking. If you haven’t graduated yet, offer to work for them as an intern. This will give you experience, and if you do well, there’s a good chance that a job will be waiting for you on graduation day.

*Adapted with permission from the Career Resource Manual of the University of California, Davis.*
Federal Jobs: Working for Uncle Sam

So you want to work for the federal government? You are not alone. Uncle Sam employs approximately 2.7 million civilian workers worldwide. Federal employees receive a generous benefits package, and as of 2012 they earned an average salary of $81,709. As the largest employer in the U.S., the federal government offers a variety of career opportunities unparalleled in the private sector. Federal employees work with (and create) cutting-edge technology. They create policy, programs and services that impact the health, safety and welfare of millions of people worldwide.

But with these benefits come bureaucracy. If you do not like working within a system and following a defined chain of command, a federal job might not be for you. This bureaucracy is evident in the hiring process as well. Federal agencies follow strict hiring procedures, and applicants who do not conform to these procedures are left by the wayside. Typically, the federal hiring process can stretch on for months. In fact, many career professionals recommend that students applying for federal jobs begin the process at least two semesters before their graduation date.

Types of Federal Jobs

Federal jobs are separated into two classes: competitive service and excepted service positions. Competitive service jobs, which include the majority of federal positions, are subject to civil service laws passed by Congress. Job applications for competitive service positions are rated on a numerical system in which applications are awarded points based on education, experience and other predetermined job qualification standards. Hiring managers then fill the position from a pool of candidates with the highest point totals.

Hiring managers for excepted service agencies are not required to follow civil service hiring procedures or pick from a pool of candidates who have been rated on a points system. Instead, these agencies set their own qualifications requirements, as occurs in private industry. However, both competitive service and excepted service positions must give preference to veterans who were either disabled or who served in combat areas during certain periods of time. The Federal Reserve, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency are examples of some excepted service agencies. It’s important to note that even agencies that are not strictly excepted service agencies can have excepted service positions available within them.

OPM and USAJOBS

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) acts as the federal government’s human resources agency. OPM’s Web site (opm.gov) is expansive and contains a wealth of information for anyone interested in federal jobs, including federal employment trends, salary ranges, benefits, retirement statistics and enough links to publications and resources to keep a research librarian busy for days. Linked to the OPM site is the USAJOBS site (usajobs.gov), which has its own set of tools and resources that will be familiar to any standard job site user. USAJOBS acts as a portal for federal employment with thousands of job listings at any one time.

Searching for Federal Jobs

Federal agencies now fill their jobs like private industry by allowing applicants to contact the agency directly for job information and applications. However, most of these positions can be accessed through the USAJOBS site. All competitive service positions must be posted on the USAJOBS site, and although agencies are not required to post their excepted service positions on USAJOBS, many do.

Registered visitors to USAJOBS can create and post up to five resumes, which can be made searchable, allowing recruiters from federal agencies to find resumes during applicant searches. Applicants can also use these resumes to apply directly to jobs that have an online application option. In addition, job applicants can create as many as ten “search agents,” which search for job openings using certain criteria (such as location, job type, agency, salary requirements), and email matching postings directly to their inbox. Applicants can also search for jobs directly using the “search jobs” button on the USAJOBS homepage.

Remember, excepted service positions are not required to be posted on the USAJOBS site. If you are interested in employment with an excepted service agency, be sure to visit the recruitment section of its Web site for postings that may not have made it onto the USAJOBS site. It is often worthwhile to look at the sites of agencies that you do not associate with your field of study. If you are interested in the environment, you should definitely visit the EPA’s Web site. But you should also make sure to visit the Web sites of other agencies that you don’t associate with your major. It’s not unusual for a biology major, for example, to find a job with Homeland Security or the Department of Defense.

How to Apply

There is no general way to submit an application to OPM or to individual federal agencies. Instead, students should refer to each job posting for specific directions. Whether for competitive service or excepted service positions, federal job postings can be intimidating. A typical posting can run over 2,000 words and include sections on eligibility requirements, educational requirements, necessary experience, salary range, job duties and even a description of how applicants are evaluated.

Most importantly, all federal job postings include a section titled “How to Apply.” Instead of letting this avalanche of information overwhelm you, use it as a resource to help you put together the best application possible, paying particularly close attention to the “How to Apply” section. If you do not follow the instructions and procedures closely, your application may not be processed. “I would emphasize that applicants should carefully read the ‘fine print’ of all printed and online materials and applications,” says Dr. Richard White, Employer Relations Coordinator, Drew University. “Applicants who dot all their i’s and cross all their t’s gain a competitive advantage and rise to the top of the application pool.”

Federal agencies require specific information on your resume before it can be processed. The OPM created the USAJOBS Resume Builder in an effort to help applicants create a resume which can be used for most government agencies—go to my.usajobs.gov to get started. Agencies may also request that you submit additional forms for application (many of which are available on USAJOBS). Strictly following the “How to Apply” instructions will ensure that your application has all the information necessary.

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.
As liberal arts graduates enter the job market, their direction may not be as obvious as that of their technically trained counterparts. For the most part, engineering or computer science majors know exactly where to target their efforts.

Liberal arts majors are less fortunate in that regard—such a heading cannot be found in the want ads. Yet if they learn to target their aptitudes, they have as good a chance as anyone to find meaningful work.

Students are no longer necessarily hired just because they have a particular degree. Math and physics majors are getting engineering jobs and liberal arts majors are getting accounting jobs. The reason new graduates are being hired is because they have specific skills that meet the needs of the employer.

No one is more suited to this approach than the liberal arts major. What you need to do, explains one career advisor, is to find out what you really want to do—regardless of your major. “Students often ask, ‘What can I do with a major in philosophy?’ But that’s the wrong question. The real questions are, ‘What fascinates me? How can I connect my interests with a job? What do I really want to be doing in 20 years?’”

Once you have answered those questions, look at possibilities for matching your interests with a job. There are more options than you might think. Management consultants, career specialists, personnel managers, teachers or trainers within organizations and schools are just a few options.

As a liberal arts major, you have to do much more work in terms of researching different job markets and finding out where there is a demand. Conduct in-depth research on any companies that appeal to you, and try to match their needs to your wants. You must be specific, however. It is possible to be too general, too open and too flexible.

To be successful, you should combine your long-term vision with short-term specificity. Present yourself to your potential employer as someone who both understands the broad goals of the company and has the ability to grow and contribute in the long run. But most importantly, show how you can excel in that specific job. And this, most likely, will involve some specialized skills. If you’ve taken business courses, had work experiences or utilized a computer in your liberal arts work, point out those strengths.

Once you’ve taken the time to determine your real interests and have set some long-term goals, map out a plan—long- and short-term—on how to get there. Resources are plentiful—from the Occupational Outlook Handbook or Dictionary of Occupational Titles to numerous general job search books, as well as those dealing with specific topics such as What to Do with a Degree in Psychology, The Business of Show Business, etc.

Your liberal arts education has equipped you to take a broad topic and research it. Use those skills to make the connection between what you want and what companies need. Once you find job descriptions that match your long-term interests, set about shaping your resume and, if need be, getting the additional specific skills, training or certification to get that first job.

Your first job may not match your long-term goal. But it’s the first step. And that, at this point, is the all-important one.

### What Liberal Arts Graduates Are Doing

A sampling of the wide range of positions filled by liberal arts graduates:

- Accountant
- Administrative assistant
- Advertising account executive
- Air traffic controller
- Artist
- Auditor
- Bank manager
- Business systems analyst
- Buyer
- Child support enforcement officer
- Claims examiner
- Communications specialist
- Computer specialist
- Copywriter
- Counselor
- Customer service representative
- Editor
- Employee relations specialist
- Engineering planner
- Financial consultant
- Graphic designer
- Hotel manager
- Human resource specialist
- Industrial designer
- Interpreter/translator
- Journalist
- Librarian
- Management consultant
- Marketing representative
- Medical/dental assistant
- Museum coordinator
- Office administrator
- Outpatient therapist
- Paralegal
- Photographer
- Probation officer
- Product specialist
- Psychologist
- Public relations specialist
- Quality engineer
- Recreation administrator
- Research analyst
- Restaurant manager
- Retail manager
- Sales representative
- Social worker
- Speech pathologist
- Stockbroker
- Systems analyst
- Tax consultant
- Teacher
- Technical writer
- Transportation specialist
- Underwriter
- Urban planner
- Writer
International Students and the Job Search

Looking for a job is seldom easy for any student. For you, the international student, the job search process can be especially confusing. You may lack an understanding of U.S. employment regulations, or perhaps you are unaware of the impact your career choice has on your job search. You may also be unsure about your role as the job-seeker and the resources used by American employers to find candidates.

The following is an overview of the issues most relevant to international students in developing a job search strategy. Additional information about the employment process and related topics can be found through your career center and on the internet.

Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Regulations

As an international student, you should only obtain employment-related information from an experienced immigration attorney or your campus USCIS representative. Advice from any other resource may be inaccurate. Once you have decided to remain in the United States to work, contact the international student services office or the office of human resources on your campus and make an appointment with your USCIS representative. In addition to helping you fill out necessary forms, the USCIS representative will inform you of the costs associated with working in the United States.

Importance of Skills and Career Field

Find out if your degree and skills-set are currently in demand in the U.S. job market. An advanced degree, highly marketable skills or extensive experience will all make your job search easier. Find out what region of the United States holds the majority of the jobs in your field; you may need to relocate in order to find the job you want. Learn all you can about your targeted career field by talking to professors, reading industry publications and attending professional meetings and regional conferences.

Role of Employers

It is the employer’s responsibility to find the right people for his or her company—not to help you find a job. The interview is successful when both of you see a match between the employer’s needs and your interest and ability to do the job.

The employer (through hiring managers, human resources staff or employment agencies) will most likely use several resources to find workers, including:
- College recruiting
- Campus or community job fairs
- Posting jobs on the company website or on national job posting sites on the internet
- Posting jobs in major newspapers or trade publications
- Posting jobs with professional associations
- Resume searches on national online services
- Employee referrals
- Regional and national conferences
- Employment agencies (“headhunters”)

Are you accessible to employers through at least some of the above strategies? If not, develop a plan to make sure your credentials are widely circulated. Notify as many people as possible in your field about your job search.

Strong Communication Skills

You can help the employer make an informed hiring decision if you:
- Provide a well-prepared resume that includes desirable skills and relevant employment experiences.
- Clearly convey your interests and ability to do the job in an interview.
- Understand English when spoken to you and can effectively express your thoughts in English.

It’s important to be able to positively promote yourself and talk with confidence about your education, relevant skills and related experiences. Self-promotion is rarely easy for anyone. But, it can be especially difficult for individuals from cultures where talking about yourself is considered inappropriate.

When interviewing in the United States, however, you are expected to be able to explain your credentials and why you are suitable for the position.

Be sensitive to the interviewer’s verbal and nonverbal cues. Some international students may not realize when their accent is causing them to be misunderstood. Interviewers are sometimes too embarrassed or impatient to ask for clarification, so be on the lookout for nonverbal clues, such as follow-up questions that don’t match your responses or sudden disinterest on the part of the interviewer. Also, make sure you express proper nonverbal communication; always look directly at the employer in order to portray confidence and honesty.

If your English language skills need some work, get involved with campus and community activities. These events will allow you to practice speaking English. The more you use the language, the more proficient you will become. These activities are also a great way to make networking contacts.

Career Center

The career center can be a valuable resource in your job search. Be aware, however, that some employers using the career center won’t interview students who are not U.S. citizens. Though this may limit your ability to participate in some campus interviews, there are numerous ways to benefit from the campus career center:

- Attend sessions on job search strategies and related topics.
- Work with the career services staff to develop your job search strategy.
- Attend campus career fairs and company information sessions to inquire about employment opportunities and to practice your networking skills.

It’s a good idea to get advice from other international students who have successfully found employment in this country and to start your job search early. Create and follow a detailed plan of action that will lead you to a great job you can write home about.

Written by Rosita Smith.
Interviewing

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 augmentation.

For your 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, conservativism 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**
- A two-piece suit will suffice in most instances.
- Solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics are safer than bold prints or patterns.
- Bright ties bring focus to the face, but a simple pattern is best for an interview. (A tip for larger men: Use a double Windsor knot to minimize a bulky appearance.)
- Wear polished shoes with socks high enough so no skin is visible when you sit down and cross your legs.

**WOMEN**
- A suit with a knee-length skirt and a tailored blouse is most appropriate.
- Although even the most conservative organizations allow more feminine looks these days, accessories should be kept simple. Basic pumps and modest jewelry and makeup help to present a professional look.
- Pants are more acceptable now but are not recommended for interviews.

Staying Within a Budget

For recent graduates just entering professional life, additions to wardrobes, or complete overhauls, are likely needed. Limited funds, however, can be an obstacle. Image consultant Christine Lazzarini suggests “capsule wardrobe.” For example, by mixing and matching, she says, an eight-piece capsule wardrobe can generate up to 28 ensembles.

Before shopping, Lazzarini advises establishing a budget, 50% of which should be targeted for accessories. For women, “even a brightly colored jacket could be considered an accessory when it makes an outfit you already have look entirely different.”

The most important piece in any wardrobe is a jacket that is versatile and can work with a number of other pieces, according to one fashion expert. This applies to men and women. “If you focus on a suit, buy one with a jacket which may be used with other skirts or trousers,” says a women’s fashion director for a major national retailer. “Then add a black turtleneck or a white shirt. These are the fashion basics that you can build on.”

A navy or black blazer for men can work well with a few different gabardine pants. Although this kind of ensemble would be just as expensive as a single suit, it offers more versatility.

One accessory recommended by company representatives is a briefcase. “When I see one,” says one recruiter, “it definitely adds to the candidate’s stature. It is a symbol to me that the individual has done some research and that he or she is prepared.”

A Final Check

And, of course, your appearance is only as good as your grooming. Create a final checklist to review before you go on an interview:
- Neatly trimmed hair
- Conservative makeup
- No runs in stockings
- Shoes polished (some suggest wearing your sneakers on the way to an interview and changing before you enter the interview site)
- No excessive jewelry; men should refrain from wearing earrings
- No missing buttons, crooked ties or lint

You want your experience and qualifications to shine. Your appearance should enhance your presentation, not overwhelm it.

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’s 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 sections devoted to this style of office attire.
FOR THE MOST PART, modesty is an admirable trait. But it’s of little use during a job interview. The purpose of an interview is to find the best candidate for a particular job. Employers want to know about the knowledge, skills, attributes and experience that distinguish you from other job candidates, and they won’t know what makes you special unless you tell them. However, most employers won’t go out of their way to hire someone who comes across as cocky or arrogant. So how do you balance the two? How do you put your best foot forward without seeming conceited and egotistical?
Choose What to Talk About

Start with the job posting and make a list of all the preferences and requirements. Then try to match them with your own knowledge, skills, and experience. Make sure that you have examples ready for as many of the preferences listed as possible. If leadership experience is preferred, scrutinize your past for examples of it. If the job requires good teamwork skills, be prepared with examples from your past. But also be prepared to talk about things not listed specifically in the job posting. Find out all you can about the company and the job you are interviewing for. If you have certain experience or knowledge that you think would make you do the job better, don’t hesitate to talk about it. The employer is looking for the best candidate for the job. Looking beyond the job posting could help separate you from other applicants.

**Make sure that everything you discuss is relevant to the job.**

It’s not easy to do, but you may have to leave out some of your most impressive skills and achievements. Talking about skills, accomplishments or experience with no relevance to the job does not help the interviewer identify you as a strong job candidate, and could easily be interpreted as bragging.

Many recent college graduates make the mistake of limiting their discussion to their college coursework, or jobs they had that are directly related to the one they are applying for. But this is a mistake. “Students should be willing to talk about any type of knowledge or skills that they have acquired that are relevant to the job they are interviewing for,” says Michael Kemp, retired Director of Career Services at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Volunteer experience, leadership positions in a sorority or a fraternity, extracurricular activities, and even work experience at retail or fast-food jobs can be sources of information. “Many students underplay work experience gained at places like grocery stores or fast-food restaurants,” she continues. “But employers deeply appreciate people who have gotten their hands dirty and aren’t afraid to work hard.”

Story Time

Reading off a list of knowledge, experience, and accomplishments makes for a short and boring interview. Your job during the interview is to keep the interviewer interested in what you are saying. Many career advisors suggest that job candidates prepare a reservoir of stories that they can pull from during the interview. People are naturally drawn to stories. It’s why we read novels and why we watch movies. Also, stories allow job candidates to
show interviewers their skills and knowledge instead of just telling them. “Interviewers need more than just your word that you have a particular skill or attribute. They need specific examples, and stories are a good way of providing that,” says Cynthia Redwine, former Director of the Engineering Career Resource Center at the University of Michigan, College of Engineering.

Stories have the added benefit of being easy to remember—for you, as you use a particular story to demonstrate your qualification during the interview—and for the interviewer who must access your skills and attributes after the interview is completed. Demonstrating a particular job attribute through a story has the added benefit of sounding less boastful than stating the qualification directly. Saying that you are a good leader sounds boastful; explaining how you led a team of volunteers during a record food drive is admirable.

Once you have created a list of job skills and requirements from the job posting and your own research of the company and the position, sit down and try to come up with stories to demonstrate each. Of course, certain things cannot be demonstrated through a story (a high GPA, or a certain degree or academic specialty), but that information is already apparent to the interviewer from

your resume. However, stories can be used in situations that at first might not be apparent. For example, instead of simply stating that you are proficient with a particular piece of software, you can tell the interviewer how you applied the software to accomplish a particular task. Keep your stories short and to the point. An interview is not a creative writing class. There is no need to supply vivid descriptions or unrelated background information. In fact, many career advisors suggest that students keep their stories limited to one minute.

Final Advice
Take time to prepare for the interview. Never walk into an interview with the intention of “winging it” no matter how qualified you think you are for the position. If you are having trouble coming up with stories or examples for the interview, make sure you talk to friends, family members, co-workers, professors and career advisors. Often those around us can see skills and attributes that we do not.

Students sometimes make the mistake of telling employers about job-related knowledge or experience that they don’t have. While candor is an admirable trait, such frankness is out of place in a job interview. Employers don’t want to know why you can’t do the job, but why you can do it. Employers want to hire people who are excited and proud of the work that they have done. They want to know that you will bring that same type of proficiency and enthusiasm to their company. “You have a responsibility during the interview—not to brag, but to give the employer the best picture you can of what they will get if they hire you,” says Kemp. “It’s your responsibility to make sure they get that information, whether or not they ask good questions.”

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer in Nashville, Ind.
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 negatively about previous employers. Needless to say, Cobb was unimpressed, and the candidate did not get the job.

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

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

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host/hostess indicates the seating arrangement.
- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.

Eating

Follow these simple rules for eating and drinking:

- Start eating with the implement that is farthest away from your plate. You may have two spoons and two forks. The spoon farthest away from your place is a soup spoon. The fork farthest away is a salad fork unless you have three forks, one being much smaller, which would be a seafood fork for an appetizer. The dessert fork/spoon is usually above the plate. Remember to work from the outside in.
- Don’t chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.
- Keep hands in lap until you are using them to eat.
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms resting on plate (fork and knife crossed on the plate with tines down).
- Pass all items to the right. If the item has a handle, such as a pitcher, pass with the handle toward the next person. For bowls with spoons, pass with the spoon ready for the next person. If you are the one to reach to the center of the table for an item, pass it before serving yourself.
- While you are speaking during a meal, utensils should be resting on plate (fork and knife crossed on the plate with tines down).
- Don’t chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.
- 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.
Ten Rules of Interviewing

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

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

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

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

3. **Repeat your key strengths three times.**
   It’s essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company’s or department’s goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths 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
- Loyalty
- Personality
- Acceptance
- Recommendations
- Outside activities while in school
- Impressions made during the interview

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
What Happens During the Interview?

The interviewing process can be scary if you don’t know what to expect. All interviews fit a general pattern. While each interview will differ, all will share three common characteristics: the beginning, middle and conclusion.

The typical interview will last 30 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical structure is as follows:

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

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

It Starts Before You Even Say Hello

The typical interview starts before you even get into the inner sanctum. The recruiter begins to evaluate you the minute you are identified. You are expected to shake the recruiter’s hand upon being introduced. Don’t be afraid to extend your hand first. This shows assertiveness.

It’s a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early. You can use the time to relax. It gets easier later. It may mean counting to ten slowly or wiping your hands on a handkerchief to keep them dry.

How’s Your Small Talk Vocabulary?

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

Recruiters are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may be judging how well you communicate on an informal basis. This means you must do more than smile and nod.

The Recruiter Has the Floor

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

As the interview turns to talk about your qualifications, be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that could be construed as negative, i.e., low grade point average, no participation in outside activities, no related work experience. It is up to you to convince the recruiter that although these points appear negative, positive attributes can be found in them. A low GPA could stem from having to fully support yourself through college; you might have no related work experience, but plenty of experience that shows you to be a loyal and valued employee.

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

It’s Your Turn to Ask Questions

When the recruiter asks, “Now do you have any questions?” it’s important to have a few ready. Dr. C. Randall Powell, author of Career Planning Today, suggests some excellent strategies for dealing with this issue. He says questions should elicit positive responses from the employer. Also, the questions should bring out your interest in and knowledge of the organization.

By asking intelligent, well-thought-out questions, you show the employer you are serious about the organization and need more information. It also indicates to the recruiter that you have done your homework.

The Close Counts, Too

The interview isn’t over until you walk out the door. The conclusion of the interview usually lasts five minutes and is very important. During this time the recruiter is assessing your overall performance.

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

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

Expect the Unexpected

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

For example, surprise questions could range from, “Tell me a joke” to “What time period would you like to have lived in?” These are not the kind of questions for which you can prepare in advance. Your reaction time and the response you give will be evaluated by the employer, but there’s no way to anticipate questions like these. While these questions are not always used, they are intended to force you to react under some stress and pressure. The best advice is to think and give a natural response.

Evaluations Made by Recruiters

The employer will be observing and evaluating you during the interview. Erwin S. Stanton, author of Successful Personnel Recruiting and Selection, indicates some evaluations made by the employer during the interview include:

1. How mentally alert and responsive is the job candidate?
2. Is the applicant able to draw proper inferences and conclusions during the course of the interview?
3. Does the applicant demonstrate a degree of intellectual depth when communicating, or is his/her thinking shallow and lacking depth?
4. Has the candidate used good judgment and common sense regarding life planning up to this point?
5. What is the applicant’s capacity for problem-solving activities?
6. How well does the candidate respond to stress and pressure?
Are You Ready for a Behavioral Interview?

“Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn’t carrying his or her weight.” If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you could be in for a behavioral interview. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior, this style of interviewing is popular among recruiters.

Today, more than ever, each hiring decision is critical. Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that might cloud the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant’s actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions.

A manager of staff planning and college relations for a major chemical company believes, “Although we have not conducted any formal studies to determine whether retention or success on the job has been affected, I feel our move to behavioral interviewing has been successful. It helps concentrate recruiters’ questions on areas important to our candidates’ success within [our company].” The company introduced behavioral interviewing in the mid-1980s at several sites and has since implemented it companywide.

Behavioral vs. Traditional Interviews

If you have training or experience with traditional interviewing techniques, you may find the behavioral interview quite different in several ways:

✓ Instead of asking you would behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you did behave.
✓ Expect the interviewer to question and probe (think of “peeling the layers from an onion”).
✓ The interviewer will ask you to provide details and will not allow you to theorize or generalize about events.
✓ The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas that are important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are important.
✓ You may not get a chance to deliver any prepared stories.
✓ Most interviewers will be taking notes throughout the interview.

The behavioral interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information and works from a profile of desired behaviors that are needed for success on the job. Because the behaviors a candidate has demonstrated in previous positions are likely to be repeated, you will be asked to share situations in which you may or may not have exhibited these behaviors. Your answers will be tested for accuracy and consistency.

If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position:

“Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it.”

“Give an example of when you had to work with your hands to accomplish a task or project.”

“What class did you like the most? What did you like about it?”

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation:

“What did you do?”

“What did you say?”

“What were you thinking?”

“How did you feel?”

“What was your role?”

“What was the result?”

You will notice an absence of such questions as, “Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.”

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

✓ Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning and customer service.
✓ Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
✓ Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle and an end; i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action and the outcome or result.
✓ Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
✓ Be honest. Don’t embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
✓ Be specific. Don’t generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

A possible response to the question, “Tell me about a time when you were on a team and a member wasn’t pulling his or her weight” might go as follows: “I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe out of concrete. One of our team members wasn’t showing up for our lab sessions or doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn’t passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful to me for helping him out. We finished our project on time and got a ‘B’ on it.”

The interviewer might then probe: “How did you feel when you confronted this person?” “Exactly what was the nature of the project?” “What was his responsibility as a team member?” “What was your role?” “At what point did you take it upon yourself to confront him?” You can see it is important that you not make up or “shade” information and why you should have a clear memory of the entire incident.

Don’t Forget the Basics

Instead of feeling anxious or threatened by the prospect of a behavioral interview, remember the essential difference between the traditional interview and the behavioral interview: The traditional interviewer may allow you to project what you might or should do in a given situation, whereas the behavioral interviewer is looking for past actions only. It will always be important to put your best foot forward and make a good impression on the interviewer with appropriate attire, good grooming, a firm handshake and direct eye contact. There is no substitute for promptness, courtesy, preparation, enthusiasm and a positive attitude.
Advice From the Experts: Interviewing Tips From On-Campus Recruiters

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

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

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

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

Be realistic—Carefully evaluate what an employer has to offer you…and what you have to offer the employer. Don’t accept a position that isn’t suited to you just because you need a job. Although most entry-level salaries have been on the rise, do not set your starting salary expectations too high. If a starting salary seems inordinately low, but is for a position that you really want, you might be able to arrange for an early salary review.  

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

Questions to Ask Employers

1. Please describe the duties of the job for me.
2. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
3. Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?
4. Does your company encourage further education?
5. How often are performance reviews given?
6. What products (or services) are in the development stage now?
7. Do you have plans for expansion?
8. What are your growth projections for next year?
9. Have you cut your staff in the last three years?
10. How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
11. Do you offer flextime?
12. Is your company environmentally conscious? In what ways?
13. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
14. Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
15. What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) now?
16. May I talk with the last person who held this position?
17. What is the usual promotional time frame?
18. Does your company offer either single or dual career-track programs?
19. What do you like best about your job/company?
20. Once the probation period is completed, how much authority will I have over decisions?
21. Has there been much turnover in this job area?
22. Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?

Make a list of the questions you plan to ask. Keep the list handy so you can make notes about their replies and scratch off the questions as the employer answers them.

23. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
24. What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
25. What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
26. Is there a lot of team/project work?
27. Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
28. Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?
29. How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
30. What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?
The Site Visit/Interview: One Step Closer

While on-campus screening interviews are important, on-site visits are where jobs are won or lost. After an on-campus interview, strong candidates are usually invited to visit the employer’s facility. Work with the employer to schedule the on-site visit at a mutually convenient time. Sometimes employers will try to arrange site visits for several candidates to take place at the same time, so there may not be much flexibility…but you’ll never know if the employer is flexible unless you ask.

1. An invitation to an on-site interview is NOT a guarantee of a job offer. It is a chance to examine whether or not you will be a good match for the job and for the organization.

2. If invited to an on-site interview, respond promptly if you are sincerely interested in this employer. Decline politely if you are not. Never go on an on-site interview for the sake of the trip. Document the name and phone number of the person coordinating your trip. Verify who will be handling trip expenses. Most medium- and large-size companies (as well as many smaller ones) will pay your expenses, but others will not. This is very important, because expenses are handled in various ways: 1) the employer may handle all expenses and travel arrangements; 2) you handle your expenses and arrangements (the employer may assist with this), and the employer will reimburse you later; 3) the employer may offer an on-site interview, but will not pay for your travel.

3. Know yourself and the type of job you are seeking with this employer. Don’t say, “I am willing to consider anything you have.”

4. Thoroughly research the potential employer. Read annual reports, newspaper articles, trade journals, etc. Many companies have websites where you can read their mission statements, find out about long-term goals, read recent press releases, and view corporate photos. Don’t limit your research only to company-controlled information. The internet can be a valuable investigative tool. You may uncover key information that may influence—positively or negatively—your decision to pursue employment with a given organization.

5. Bring extra copies of your resume; copies of any paperwork you may have forwarded to the employer; names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of your references; an updated college transcript; a copy of your best paper as a writing sample; a notebook; a black and/or blue pen for filling out forms and applications; and names and addresses of past employers.

6. Bring extra money and a change of clothes. Also, have the names and phone numbers of those who may be meeting you in case your plans change unexpectedly. Anything can happen and you need to be ready for emergencies.

7. Your role at the interview is to respond to questions, to ask your own questions and to observe. Be ready to meet people who are not part of your formal agenda. Be courteous to everyone regardless of his or her position; you never know who might be watching you and your actions once you arrive in town.

8. Don’t forget your table manners. Plant trips may include several meals or attendance at a reception the night before your “big day.” When ordering food at a restaurant, follow the lead of the employer host. For example, don’t order the three-pound lobster if everyone else is having a more moderately priced entree. If you have the “dining jitters,” some authorities suggest ordering food that is easy to handle, such as a boneless fish fillet or chicken breast.

9. Many employers have a set salary range for entry-level positions and others are more negotiable. Though salary should not be brought up until an offer is extended, it is wise to know your worth in advance. In as much as you are a potential employee, you also represent a valuable skills-set product. You should know what kind of product you have created, its value and what the company is willing to buy. Contact your campus career center to obtain more information on salaries.

10. Soon after the site visit, record your impressions of your performance. Review the business cards of those you met or write the information in your notebook before leaving the facility. You should have the names, titles, addresses and phone numbers of everyone who was involved in your interview so you can determine which individuals you may want to contact with additional questions or follow-up information. A thank-you letter should be written to the person(s) who will be making the hiring decision. Stay in touch with the employer if you want to pursue a career with them.

A site visit is a two-way street. You are there to evaluate the employer and to determine if your expectations are met for job content, company culture and values, organizational structure, and lifestyles (both at work and leisure). Take note of how the employees interact, and also assess the physical work environment.

Just as any good salesperson would never leave a customer without attempting to close the sale, you should never leave an interview without some sort of closure. If you decide that the job is right for you, don’t be afraid to tell the employer that you feel that there is a good fit and you are eager to join their team. The employer is interested in hiring people who want to be associated with them and they will never know of your interest if you don’t voice your opinion. Keep in mind that although the employer has the final power to offer a job, your demeanor during the entire interviewing process—both on and off campus—also gives you a great deal of power.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
Business Etiquette Blunders and How to Fix Them

Getting a handle on business etiquette is even more important in this digital age, when the HR process is in flux and the “rules” aren’t always clear. Here are some of the top etiquette complaints from recruiters, and ways you can avoid those mistakes so that even old-school interviewers will be impressed with your good manners and social graces.

No Show = No Job

This should go without saying, but actually showing up to an interview is necessary to lock down a job offer. Yet, too many candidates casually blow off interviews. One of the easiest ways to make a good impression is to arrive for interviews 10-15 minutes early, so you have plenty of time to get settled and perhaps check your appearance one last time.

If something pressing does come up, immediately call to cancel or reschedule. Decided you don’t want the job after all? Don’t just disappear. It’s not only rude, but every industry has a grapevine, and word of flakiness gets around. Failing to show for an on-campus interview can have even more severe consequences, so make sure you know the cancelation and no-show policy.

Too Negative

“Keep your emotional baggage outside the interview door,” says Peggy Klaus, author of BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It. We all have days when the alarm doesn’t go off, the weather is a mess, and there’s no parking spot. Don’t whine. Be enthusiastic, eager, flexible, and most of all—likeable. “Do not expect the interviewer to entertain you, or do your job for you by drawing you out,” she adds.

Thankless

Sending a thank-you note is an important way to demonstrate good manners. It doesn’t have to be handwritten, but it should be considered and specific. “An email is fine, but make sure it shows thought and effort,” says Klaus. “Don’t do it in the elevator on the way down. Do it with forethought, so you can translate what you got out of the interview.”

If you do a round of interviews with three people, say, then send three slightly different thank-you notes that day, or the next. (Get business cards so you have everyone’s contact information close at hand.)

Too Familiar

When emailing someone you don’t know well, be a bit formal: Capitalize words, don’t use texting shorthand, and start with a salutation. “You don’t send an email to a New York Times bestselling writer and say ‘Hey, I need to know . . .’ “, complains Martin Yate, author of Knock ‘em Dead, the Ultimate Job Search Guide. “No, you start with ‘Dear Martin . . .’ and finish with ‘Thank you for your time. Sincerely, your name.’”

“Similarly, if everyone in the office calls your interviewer ‘Sam,’ adjust that to ‘Ms. or Mr. Jones,’” says Yate. “Be respectful of the people who can put food on your table.”

What Dress Code?

Dressing appropriately for an interview is a balancing act. One level of formality above what people normally wear on the job is just right. For men, if you’d wear khakis and a polo shirt on the job, wear dress slacks and a blazer to the interview. Women should follow a similar “step up” plan. (Scope out company dress codes during informational interviews.)

“On an interview, you’re dressing to get hired, not dated,” says Yate. “Your dress must be conservative and clean cut. It shows respect for the occasion, job, company, interviewer, and most of all—for yourself.”

Dining Disaster

You may have an opportunity to interview at lunch or dinner. It can be doubly nerve wracking to think about what you’ll say, as well as how to keep the spaghetti on your fork. “If you eat like a caveman with a mastodon on your plate, you won’t be invited to dine with the chairman of the board, or important clients,” Yate says. Don’t drink, even if your interviewer does, so that you can keep your wits about you, and be courteous to the wait staff. Consider ordering an easy-to-manage entrée.

Clueless About the Employer

It’s so easy to do online research, that there’s no reason for you not to know about a prospective employer—the company and the individual. How much will employers care if you don’t do your due diligence? One applicant at IBM was asked if he knew what those three letters stood for. He did not. Next! (In case you ever interview at IBM, the answer is International Business Machines.)

Annoying Devices

“We get complaints about candidates taking a cell phone call, or checking email, or texting in a meeting,” says Kathleen Downs, recruiting manager at Robert Half International in Orlando, Fla. “It’s a mistake to not silence a phone during a meeting. Even in the waiting room, we’ve had phones go off and it’s an inappropriate ring tone, like a hip-hop song with swear words.”

Make sure you have a greeting on your voicemail—some employers won’t leave a message if they aren’t sure they’ve reached the right party. And if your phone number is blocked, they can’t call you back if you don’t leave a message. “I’ve called candidates and gotten obnoxious voicemail messages, ‘You know who this is. You know what to do,’” she says. “That’s not the way to win over a recruiter.

Poor Profile

Employers often complain of inappropriate photos or comments on an applicant’s social media profile. “You can try to make that info private, but somehow, someway, there’s a way to get to it,” Downs says. She has her Facebook profile set to private, and directs business contacts to her LinkedIn profile. “Don’t ever post anything racy. For example, don’t post a picture of yourself in a bikini—even if you look good!”

Tattoos and Piercings

Tribal tattoos, hair dyed colors not seen in nature, or dreadlocks may turn off conservative employers. If your personal style doesn’t go over well in interviews, cover up (easy with some tattoos) or get a makeover ASAP.

“A guy with a piercing came to an interview with a tongue ring in,” says Downs. “I told him to go to the restroom and take it out. It was stuck. He had to go to the tattoo parlor a few miles away and have it cut out.”

If your personal style is more important to you than a position with a company, spend a little more time researching the corporate culture of a company before you apply, so you can find the right fit.

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.
Pre-Employment Testing

You are about to graduate and, finally, you don’t have to worry about taking tests any more. Right? Well...not necessarily. An increasing number of employers are using pre-employment testing to help them find the most qualified candidates for the job. In a tight job market, it isn’t surprising that employers are turning to pre-employment testing to make sure that they get the most out of their most important investment—their employees.

“Companies use pre-employment testing because it is expensive to hire the wrong person,” says Kurt Helm, Ph.D., President and founder of Helm and Associates, Inc., a company that designs and sells pre-employment tests. “Along with the resume, cover letter, and interview, pre-employment testing is another tool employers can use to make sure they hire the right person for the job.”

Types of Pre-Employment Tests

As the name implies, pre-employment tests are given to job candidates before a job offer is made. For the purposes of this article, pre-employment tests refer to tests designed to measure an applicant’s knowledge, skill or suitability for a particular job. Whether they are computer-based or written, there are two broad categories of pre-employment tests: personality tests and aptitude tests.

Aptitude Tests

For many employers, your college degree proves that you have the knowledge and training to perform a particular job. But sometimes, employers need more direct proof. Aptitude tests measure how well job applicants can perform a specific task related to the job they are applying for. For example, a student applying for a job as a computer programmer may be asked to create a specific program using C++ in a UNIX system, or a student applying for a job in publishing might be asked to read and correct a sample manuscript. Sometimes, the applicant will be asked to complete the task at the place of employment under rigid time constraints. Other times, the applicant will be able to take the test home with them and return it days or even weeks later.

Personality Tests

Having the knowledge and skills required to do a job does not guarantee that you will be a good employee. You must be able to work well with fellow employees and with your supervisors and managers. “Most terminations that occur in organizations occur because of personality conflicts,” says Dr. Helm. “Employers say things like ‘she didn’t fit in with our corporate culture,’ or ‘he didn’t work well with his managers.’” With this in mind, employers often give potential employees personality tests to see how well they will fit within the corporate culture. These tests attempt to measure a variety of personality factors ranging from how you manage your time and your daily activities to how well they will fit within the corporate culture. These tests contain ‘lie scales,’ which help measure how much effort applicants put into trying to look good in the eyes of the employer,” he says. “These scales are used to adjust the applicants’ test results and give more accurate reports.”

However, there are some common sense things you can do to ensure you will perform your best. Read the test directions carefully, and be sure to ask for clarification if you have any questions about how to take the test. On timed tests, save the difficult questions for the end so you have time to answer the easier questions. And just as you did for your tests in college, make sure you get a good night’s sleep before testing.

Preparing for Pre-Employment Tests

First, find out if any type of pre-employment test will be used. This information can be found in job postings or on the HR section of company websites. You can also ask the employer directly about pre-employment testing when an interview is scheduled. “The employer almost always tells job applicants if there is going to be any type of pre-employment testing during the initial stages of the application process,” says John Kniering, the Director of Career Services at the University of Hartford. “But it never hurts to bring the question up yourself if you are unsure.” In some instances, employers will even provide candidates with sample questions from pre-employment tests. Nobody likes a pop quiz, and knowing that a test is coming and what it will be testing will enable you to be more relaxed. Be sure to take a close look at the qualifications and skills listed on the job description. Almost without exception, those are the skills for which you are going to be tested.

More often than not, however, there is little you can do to prepare for a pre-employment test. Pre-employment tests designed to access your job aptitude will quiz you about information accrued over years of study and experience. You can’t cram for these types of tests. Personality tests, on the other hand, are given to ascertain how you will interact with co-workers and fit in with the corporate climate. Dr. Helm suggests that students respond to personality tests as honestly as they can. “Most personality tests contain ‘lie scales,’ which help measure how much effort applicants put into trying to look good in the eyes of the employer,” he says. “These scales are used to adjust the applicants’ test results and give more accurate reports.”

Employers must also take measures to ensure that pre-employment tests do not unfairly screen out people with disabilities. Tests must measure a job candidate’s knowledge, attributes, and skills, not his or her disabilities. Tell potential employers about any personal disability that you feel puts you at a disadvantage when taking a pre-employment test so that they can make accommodations to ensure the test is applied fairly.

Legal Issues

Employers must be able to show that pre-employment tests used to make hiring decisions tests skills and attributes relevant to the job being filled. “There must be a link between what the test measures and what the job requires,” says Dr. Helm. For aptitude tests, this link is often obvious, but for tests measuring attitude or personality, the connection may be harder to make. “Companies that use employment tests are responsible for making sure that the job description demonstrates the need for behavior or attitudes that the employment test measures,” Dr. Helm adds.

Employers must also take measures to ensure that pre-employment testing is conducted fairly. Employers often give potential employees personality tests to see how well they will fit within the corporate culture. These tests attempt to measure a variety of personality factors ranging from how you manage your time and your daily activities to how well you follow orders or collaborate with others.

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.
Searching for a job after college can be an extremely stressful endeavor. All of the elements of the job search—researching employers, perfecting and targeting your resume, writing cover letters, preparing for interviews—take time. And as a soon-to-be college graduate finishing up your last year of school, time is not something you have a lot of. Every student and every job search is different. However, no matter your major, degree, or employment aspirations, there are steps that you can take to make the necessary task of finding a job less stressful.

**Put Your Job Search in Perspective**

College seniors about to enter the job market can be broadly placed into two camps: 1) Those who know exactly what they want to do after college, 2) and those who have no clue. Both types of students often bring added pressure to the job search process that is, for the most part, self-inflicted.

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

Occasionally, students are able to move into their idea of a perfect job right out of college, but students must be careful not to feel frustrated if that’s not the case. Often, they will have to work up the career ladder a few rungs until they arrive at the job they truly want. Just accepting this fact will take away some of the pressure.

For students who are vague on what career to pursue after college, the idea of looking for a job can be even more stressful. Not knowing what type of job or career to pursue is a common anxiety among recent college graduates. Keep in mind that the process of looking for a job will probably alleviate this concern.

**Make Sure You Are Ready**

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

But escaping the job search by entering into the process of applying to graduate schools when this is not really what you want to do is one of the biggest mistakes students can make. Once you’ve made a decision to pursue employment, don’t hesitate to do so. However, students who legitimately decide to delay their job search should keep in mind that they might lose advantages, such as college job fairs, college career services, on-campus interviews and other services that colleges and universities provide. If you’re ready to start your career, this is the time to do it.

**Get Moving and Keep Moving**

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

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

Additionally, students need to think of looking for a job as a process; something they need to work on every week if not every day. Don’t apply for one job at a time and await the result. This is a recipe for disaster. Keep actively pursuing a job until you actually accept an offer.

**Have Reachable Goals**

Since finding and securing a job is such a large process, students need to break it up into attainable goals. Make sure you write the goals down and know when they’ve been accomplished. Having goals can reduce job search stress in two ways: First, it breaks a large process down into smaller, manageable chunks; and second, reaching goals provides the job seeker with a sense of accomplishment. As you move forward in the job search, you’ll find the stress replaced by a feeling of accomplishment.

**Deal With Interview Anxiety**

For many students, going on a job interview is the most stressful part of the entire job search process. The best way to alleviate some of this stress is simply to prepare. Make sure you know everything you can about the employer and the position, and make sure that you know exactly what skills, experience, and ideas you can bring to that employer. Prepare answers to all the common questions that employers ask (such lists can be found online or in your career office), as well as other questions that are related specifically to your field of study and the position for which you are applying.

Also, make sure that you prepare a list of questions to ask the employer during the interview. Intelligent questions show that you have done your homework and that you have seriously thought about the position you are interviewing for. Lastly, make sure you go through a “mock interview.” By practicing your interview answers in front of a friend or a career counselor, you will be able to hone your interview skills and get rid of the pre-interview jitters.

**Last Words of Advice**

Think positively. Also, remember that a little stress can be a good thing if it doesn’t paralyze you. It can keep you motivated, and keep you reaching toward your goals. But when you feel your stress level getting out of hand, take a break. Walking the dog, working out at the gym, going for a swim—any type of physical activity—is a great way to relieve stress. And if your stress level continues to rise, just take a break from the search. A few days not thinking or worrying about it can do wonders for your stress level. You can then re-enter the job search process refreshed and ready to land the job you want.

*Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind., from interviews with career center directors Dr. Jeff Garis (Pennsylvania State University) and Deidre Sepp (Marist College).*
The Art of Negotiating

By Lily Maestas

AN AREA OF the job search that often receives little attention is the art of negotiating. Once you have been offered a job, you have the opportunity to discuss the terms of your employment. Negotiations may be uncomfortable or unsatisfying because we tend to approach them with a winner-take-all attitude that is counterproductive to the concept of negotiations.

Negotiating with your potential employer can make your job one that best meets your own needs as well as those of your employer. To ensure successful negotiations, it is important to understand the basic components. The definition of negotiation as it relates to employment is: a series of communications (either oral or in writing) that reach a satisfying conclusion for all concerned parties, most often between the new employee and the hiring organization.

Negotiation is a planned series of events that requires strategy, presentation and patience. Preparation is probably the single most important part of successful negotiations. Any good trial attorney will tell you the key to presenting a good case in the courtroom is the hours of preparation that happen beforehand. The same is true for negotiating. A good case will literally present itself. What follows are some suggestions that will help you prepare for successful negotiating.

The definition of negotiation as it relates to employment is: a series of communications (either oral or in writing) that reach a satisfying conclusion for all concerned parties.
Research
Gather as much factual information as you can to back up the case you want to make. For example, if most entering employees cannot negotiate salary, you may be jeopardizing the offer by focusing on that aspect of the package. Turn your attention to other parts of the offer such as their health plan, dental plan, retirement package, the type of schedule you prefer, etc.

Psychological Preparation
Chances are that you will not know the person with whom you will be negotiating. If you are lucky enough to be acquainted, spend some time reviewing what you know about this person’s communication style and decision-making behavior.

In most cases, however, this person will be a stranger. Since most people find the unknown a bit scary, you’ll want to ask yourself what approach to negotiating you find most comfortable. How will you psyche yourself up to feel confident enough to ask for what you want? How will you respond to counteroffers? What are your alternatives? What’s your bottom line? In short, plan your strategy.

Be sure you know exactly what you want. This does not mean you will get exactly that, but having the information clear in your head will help you determine what you are willing to concede. Unless you know what you want, you won’t be able to tell somebody else. Clarity improves communication, which is the conduit for effective negotiations.

Practice
Rehearse the presentation in advance using another person as the employer. If you make mistakes in rehearsal, chances are that you will not repeat them during the actual negotiations. A friend can critique your reasoning and help you prepare for questions. If this all seems like a lot of work, remember that if something is worth negotiating for, it is worth preparing for.

Dollars and Sense
Always begin by expressing genuine interest in the position and the organization, emphasizing the areas of agreement but allowing “wiggle room” to compromise on other areas. Be prepared to support your points of disagreement, outlining the parts you would like to alter, your suggestions on how this can be done and why it would serve the company’s best interests to accommodate your request.

Be prepared to defend your proposal. Back up your reasons for wanting to change the offer with meaningful, work-related skills and positive benefits to the employer. Requesting a salary increase because you are a fast learner or have a high GPA are usually not justifiable reasons in the eyes of the employer. Meaningful work experience or internships that have demonstrated or tested your professional skills are things that will make an employer stop and take notice.

It is sometimes more comfortable for job-seekers to make this initial request in writing and plan to meet later to hash out the differences. You will need to be fairly direct and assertive at this point even though you may

Be sure you know exactly what you want. Unless you know what you want, you won’t be able to tell somebody else.
The Benefits of Company Benefits

Though promises of high starting salaries or accelerated career growth may entice you as you search for your dream job, don’t forget to check out the company’s benefits package. These packages are generally designed to provide protection against financial hardship brought about by unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or injury. With the high cost of medical services, even a routine physical exam can set you back several hundred dollars if you don’t have coverage. “Most employees today are looking for more than a paycheck,” says Amy Roppe, former senior account manager at Benefit Source, Inc., a Des Moines, Iowa-based company that designs and administers employee benefit packages. “Employees are looking for overall job satisfaction, and benefits are a key part of that.”

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

- **Medical insurance.** This is the most basic (and probably most important) benefit you can receive. Health coverage limits an employee’s financial liability in the event of illness or injury.
- **Disability insurance.** Provides an income to the employee in the event of a long-term disability.
- **Life insurance.** Provides a benefit payment to family members in the event of the employee’s death.
- **Dental insurance.** Provides basic dental coverage. Though many people agree that dental insurance is overpriced (you’ll seldom get more than your premiums back in the form of benefits), you’ll be covered for cleanings, scalings and x-rays.
- **Prescription drug plan.** This can save you a bundle, particularly if you require medicine for an ongoing condition. Typically, the employee pays a fixed co-payment—for example, $25—for each prescription.
- **Vision.** Provides a benefit that helps defray the cost of eye exams and corrective lenses.
- **Retirement plans.** These used to be funded entirely by employers but have been largely replaced by 401(k) plans, which are funded by the employee, often with some degree of “matching” contribution from the employer. However, these matching contributions have limits and the plans vary from company to company. In many companies, there is a specified waiting period before new employees can participate.
- **Flexible spending accounts.** These plans allow you to set aside untaxed dollars to pay for dependent care and unreimbursed medical expenses.
- **Tuition reimbursement.** The employer reimburses the cost of continuing education as long as the classes pertain to your job and certain grade levels are achieved.
- **Vacation.** Most companies will offer paid vacation time to employees. The number of days off is usually determined by how long you’ve been with the company.
- **Sick time.** Paid leave in the event of illness.

You should also be aware that there is something called “soft benefits.” These are usually very popular with employees and cost the company little or nothing. For example, many companies have gone to a business casual dress code, while others may offer what is called “dress-down Fridays.” Flextime is another popular soft benefit that many employers offer. This simply means that you don’t have to arrive at work at a specific time each day. If it’s more convenient for you to start at 10 a.m. to avoid the morning rush hour, for example, you’ll be able to do so. However, most companies require employees to be at the office during predetermined “core hours”—usually between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Telecommuting from home is another “benefit” that employers like to tout. However, don’t assume you’ll be allowed to work from home whenever you want. You’ll usually be offered this option when you’re too sick to make it to the office, when you’re on a tight deadline and your boss wants you to put in extra time, or when you’re unable to come to work because of weather-related conditions.

And just what are the most popular benefits among recent college grads entering the work force? “In today’s environment, it is assumed that health insurance will be offered,” says Amy Roppe, “so most young employees tend to inquire more about retirement or bonus programs. No one is sure whether or not there will be a Social Security benefit when retirement time comes. Workers are taking more personal responsibility for their own financial futures.” That sounds like the kind of common-sense advice we should all take.

Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.
feel extremely vulnerable. Keep in mind that the employer has chosen you from a pool of qualified applicants, so you are not as powerless as you think.

Sometimes the employer will bristle at the suggestion that there is room to negotiate. Stand firm, but encourage the employer to think about it for a day or two. Sometimes the employer will bristle at the suggestion that there is room to negotiate. Stand firm, but encourage the employer to think about it for a day or two. The employer may be counting on this discomfort and use it to derail the negotiations. Remember, this is a series of volleys and lobs, trade-offs and compromises that occur over a period of time. It is a process—not a singular event!

Once you have reached a conclusion with which you are both relatively comfortable, present in writing your interpretation of the agreement so that if there is any question, it will be addressed immediately. Negotiation, by definition, implies that each side will give. Do not perceive it as an ultimatum.

If the employer chooses not to grant any of your requests—and realistically, he or she can do that—you will still have the option of accepting the original offer provided you have maintained a positive, productive and friendly atmosphere during your exchanges. You can always re-enter negotiations after you have demonstrated your worth to the organization.

Money Isn’t Everything

There are many things you can negotiate besides salary. For example, benefits can add thousands of dollars to the compensation package. Benefits can range from paid personal leave to discounts on the company’s products and services. They constitute more than just icing on the cake; they may be better than the cake itself. Traditional benefits packages include health insurance, paid vacation and personal/sick days. Companies may offer such benefits as child care, elder care or use of the company jet for family emergencies. Other lucrative benefits could include disability and life insurance and a variety of retirement plans. Some organizations offer investment and stock options as well as relocation reimbursement and tuition credits for continued education.

Written by Lily Maestas, Career Counselor, Career Services, University of California, Santa Barbara.
### Guide to Appropriate Pre-Employment Inquiries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCEPTABLE</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>UNACCEPTABLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Have you worked for this company under a different name?”</td>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>Former name of applicant whose name has been changed by court order or otherwise</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Have you ever been convicted of a crime under another name?”</td>
<td>ADDRESS OR DURATION OF RESIDENCE</td>
<td>Birthplace of applicant</td>
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<td>Applicant’s place of residence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthplace of applicant’s parents, spouse or other relatives</td>
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<td>How long applicant has been a resident of this state or city</td>
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<td>Requirement that applicant submit a birth certificate, naturalization or baptismal record</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Can you, after employment, submit a work permit if under 18?”</td>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>Questions that tend to identify applicants 40 to 64 years of age</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Are you over 18 years of age?”</td>
<td>RELIGION</td>
<td>Applicant’s religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish, pastor or religious holidays observed</td>
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<tr>
<td>“If hired, can you furnish proof of age?” or Statement that hire is subject to verification that applicant’s age meets legal requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Do you attend religious services or a house of worship?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement that photograph may be required after employment</td>
<td>PHOTOGRAPH</td>
<td>Applicant may not be told “This is a Catholic/Protestant/Jewish/atheist organization.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement by employer that if hired, applicant may be required to submit proof of authorization to work in the United States</td>
<td>CITIZENSHIP</td>
<td>Whether applicant, parents or spouse are naturalized or native-born U.S. citizens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages applicant reads, speaks or writes fluently</td>
<td>NATIONAL ORIGIN OR ANCESTRY</td>
<td>Applicant’s nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent or parentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant’s academic, vocational or professional education; schools attended</td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>Date last attended high school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant’s work experience</td>
<td>EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>Applicant’s military experience (general)</td>
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<td>Applicant’s military experience in armed forces of United States, in a state militia (U.S.) or in a particular branch of U.S. armed forces</td>
<td></td>
<td>Type of military discharge</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Have you ever been convicted of any crime? If so, when, where and what was the disposition of case?”</td>
<td>CHARACTER</td>
<td>“Have you ever been arrested?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names of applicant’s relatives already employed by this company</td>
<td>RELATIVES</td>
<td>Marital status or number of dependents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Name or address of relative, spouse or children of adult applicant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and address of person to be notified in case of accident or emergency</td>
<td>NOTICE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY</td>
<td>“With whom do you reside?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and address of relative to be notified in case of emergency</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Do you live with your parents?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations, clubs, professional societies or other associations of which applicant is a member, excluding any names the character of which indicate the race, religious creed, color, national origin or ancestry of its members</td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONS</td>
<td>List all organizations, clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“By whom were you referred for a position here?”</td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>Requirement of submission of a religious reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Can you perform all of the duties outlined in the job description?”</td>
<td>PHYSICAL CONDITION</td>
<td>“Do you have any physical disabilities?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement by employer that all job offers are contingent on passing a physical examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>Questions on general medical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries as to receipt of workmen’s compensation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Candidates for employment, graduate school, scholarships or any activity for which others will evaluate their talents and abilities will need to request letters of recommendation. The content and quality of these letters, as well as the caliber of the people who write them, are critical to the selection process.

Selecting People to Serve as References

Select individuals whom you feel are knowledgeable of your skills, work ethic, talents and future capacity. The selection of your references is critical, as a reference that is ill-informed could sabotage all the great work you have done in a matter of minutes. Choose people who have known you for a minimum of six months. The longer they have known you the better, but they must have had regular contact with you to observe your growth and development. A reference from someone who may have known you several years ago but you have not spoken to in a year or more is not in a position to critique your skills.

If you must choose between several people, select those who know you the best but who also hold a higher rank in their profession. A department head is a better candidate than a graduate assistant or an instructor. Never choose someone on status alone, continue to choose people based on how well they know you and how much they want to assist you in your job search. Do not choose people who are not committed to you or who are not very familiar with your background.

Try to Meet Face to Face

Never assume someone will want the responsibility to serve as your reference. Make an appointment to discuss your career goals and purpose of the letter of recommendation. Determine if the person would want the responsibility of serving as your reference, which involves not only writing a letter supporting your skills, but also handling any phone inquiries and responding to other questions which may be posed by a selection committee. Persons who serve as a reference have responsibilities that go beyond the words they put on paper. They should feel strongly about your success and desire to do whatever they can to assist you in reaching your goals. You have come too far to let someone jeopardize your future.

A personal meeting is always best because you can observe your potential reference’s body language to see how interested he or she is in assisting you. A slow response to a question or a neutral facial expression may be this person’s way of trying to show you that he/she doesn’t feel comfortable serving as your reference. Trust your instincts. If you don’t feel that you want to pursue this person as a reference you are not required to inform them of your decision. At any rate, always thank the person and end the meeting on a positive note.

Help Them Help You

You must assist your reference-givers so they can do the best job possible. Provide them with a copy of your current resume, transcript, job descriptions for the type of employment you desire or other detailed information related to the purpose of the letter. Provide a one-page summary of any achievements or skills exhibited with the person who will be writing the letter. They may not remember everything you did under their supervision or time spent with you. Finally, provide them with a statement of future goals outlining what you want to accomplish in the next few years.

An employer will interview you and then contact your references to determine consistency in your answers. You should not inflate what you are able to do or what you may have completed in work or school assignments. A reference is looked upon as someone who can confirm your skill and ability level. Any inconsistencies between what you said in your interview and a reference’s response could eliminate you from further consideration. The key is to keep your references informed of what you are going to be discussing with employers so there is a clear understanding of what is valued by the employer.

What’s the Magic Number?

Each situation will dictate the appropriate number of references that will be required. The average would be three to five letters of recommendation. Generally, references are people whom you have known professionally; they should not be family or friends. When selecting people as references, choose people who know you well and have the most to say pertaining to the purpose of the letter. One person may be very appropriate for a reference for employment, while another would be best for use in admission to graduate or professional school or a scholarship application.

Encourage your reference to use strong, descriptive words that provide the evidence of your interpersonal skills initiative, leadership, flexibility, conflict resolution, decision-making, judgment, oral and written communication skills, and grasp of your field of study. Education majors are encouraged to request a letter from the cooperating teacher, supervising teacher, professor(s) in your major, and a current or former employer.

Maintain Professional Courtesy

Give your reference writers ample time to complete their letters and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope. Make it as easy for them as possible so they don’t have to spend valuable time searching for the proper return address and a stamp. Follow up with your letter writers and let them know the status of your plans and search. They will want to know how you are doing and whether there is anything else they may do to increase your candidacy. You never know when you will need their assistance again, and it is just good manners to keep those who care about you informed of your progress. Finally, many times when two or more candidates are considered equally qualified, a strong letter of reference can play an important role in determining who is selected for the position.

Maintaining a good list of references is part of any professional’s success. Continue to nurture valuable relationships with people who will want to do whatever they can to aid in your success. Your personal success is based on surrounding yourself with positive people who all believe in you. No one makes it alone; we all need a little help from our friends.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
The transition from college life to your professional career is one of the most difficult challenges you may face. This is a tough adjustment period, particularly if you have never spent any time working in an environment like the one in which you will be spending 40 or more hours a week.

You need to recognize that your first year on the job is a separate and unique career stage. You will be in a transition phase during this time. You’re not a college student anymore, but you haven’t earned all the rights and privileges of a professional either. The most important thing you will need to do is lose your college student attitudes and behaviors and begin to think and act like a professional.

You will quickly learn that the world of work is quite different from the college environment. When you show up for work on the first day, there will not be a syllabus waiting for you to explain what to do and how to do it. You have lost some of the freedom you enjoyed over your daily schedule as a college student. You will be viewed as “the new kid on the block,” and the quality of your work will become very important. Your performance will be a direct reflection on your boss or supervisor. If you can’t get the job done right, someone else surely can.

### Five Main Differences Between College and Work

1. In college you are used to frequent feedback, evaluation and direction. Ask for too much of this on the job and you will appear insecure and lacking in self-confidence.

2. As a student you have enjoyed frequent breaks and vacations from school usually totaling approximately 27 weeks spent in school. During your first year on the job you may have to work six months or more before you earn any time off. You will work on average more than 50 weeks that first year, maybe without a break at all.

3. In college you can choose your own performance level (A, B, C) by attending class, turning in assignments, and studying for exams. In your career, A-level work is required at all times.

4. College tends to focus on effort and growth. The real world cares only about results.

5. Students are encouraged to put forth an individual effort and think independently. Once you begin working, you will see that you will be required to work a lot with teams and in collaborating efforts.

Now that you have had a chance to see what some of the main differences are between college and work, you should take some time to consider how to make that transition as smooth as possible. Please take a look at some suggestions for your first year on the job.

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### 10 Steps to First-Year Success

1. Set goals that include gaining acceptance, respect and credibility. Learn to be a professional.
2. Take advantage of mentor and coaching relationships.
3. Own up to your mistakes and learn from them.
4. Admit what you don’t know; sometimes that is more important than showing off what you do know.
5. Build a good track record. You may have to go above and beyond the call of duty during your first year to make a lasting positive impression.
6. Be prepared to pay your dues. You have to earn your “pin stripes” before you can shed them. Be prepared to work long, hard hours.
7. Find your “niche” with the organization. Work on building relationships and fitting into the company culture.
8. Absorb information and spend your first year learning as much as possible. Master the tasks of your job and improve your knowledge, skills and abilities. LEARN, LEARN, LEARN!
9. Have a positive attitude. You will make a better impression being positive and likable. Leave your complaining at college!
10. Recognize that office politics exist. Learn the politics of your office, but don’t get involved. Watch out for complainers; they tend to gravitate to new hires in hopes of bringing you to their “side.”
Approaching the Graduate School Decision

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:** Perhaps your employer is one of the companies that actually pay for you to continue your education.

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.

**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?

First, make an appointment with the Marist Graduate School Advisor to sort out your decision and begin the process.

- **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 are in your targeted profession to get a realistic sense of the career path and the challenges associated with the work they do.
- **d.** 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.
- **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.
Guidelines for Writing a Personal Statement

**STEP 1: Brainstorming**

**Actions:**
- Devote time to reflect on the following questions.
- Discuss them with friends or family members.
- Jot down notes. In some cases write sentences.
- Think about the flip side of each question. For example, why are you really committed to the field of biology despite pressure from your parents to become a lawyer or to get a job?

**Your answers to some of these questions will form the heart of your personal statement.**

1. How did your pre-college education influence your decision to pursue graduate study in your field?  
   *Think about:* High school courses, teachers, special programs, student organizations, and community or volunteer work.

2. How has your college experience influenced your decision?  
   *Think about:* College courses, professors, academic interests, research, special programs, student organizations, and the decision-making process you went through to choose your major.

3. How has your work experience influenced your decision?  
   *Think about:* Internships, externships, part-time jobs, summer jobs, and volunteer or community work.

4. Who has had the most influence on your decision to pursue graduate study? In what ways?  
   *Think about:* Parents, relatives, teachers, professors, clergy, friends of the family, college friends, parents of friends, local merchants, supervisors, coaches, doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc.

5. What situation has had the most influence on your decision?  
   *Think about:* Family, academic, work or athletic situations. Think about happy, sad, traumatic, moving, or memorable situations.

6. What personally motivates you to pursue graduate study in this field?  
   *Think about:* Your personal skills, interests, and values.

**STEP 2: Writing Your Personal Statement**

**Actions:**
- Incorporate your responses to the above questions. Begin writing your first draft:
  1. Develop an outline of your statement prior to writing. It doesn’t have to be detailed. It can be three or four main points in the order you want to make them.
  2. Accentuate your strengths and what makes you unique.
  3. Explain your weaknesses in positive ways. For example, refer to them not as weaknesses but as areas for improvement or growth.
  4. Paint pictures and tell stories about what makes you special. In this way the admissions readers will remember you. The story can be happy or sad. The more feeling you can inject into your statement, the more you will stand out.
  5. Find out the specific orientation and philosophy of the graduate program. Adapt and refine your statement to fit. This will make you stand out from other applicants who recycle the same personal statement with each application.

**Suggested Outline**

Your personal statement will likely range from 250-1200 words or 1-6 pages. The typical personal statement should be 2-3 double-spaced pages or 500-700 words. Here is a suggested outline. You should adjust the main point of each paragraph and number of paragraphs depending on the desired length of your personal statement and the areas in your background that you choose to emphasize.

- **Paragraph 1** A personal human-interest story
- **Paragraph 2** Your academic interests and achievements
- **Paragraph 3** Your relevant work and/or research experiences
- **Paragraph 4** Your career interests
- **Paragraph 5** Why you are interested in this particular school
- **Paragraph 6** The qualities you will bring to this school

**References**


“Perfect Personal Statements” by Mark Alan Stewart.

*Peterson’s Guide 2004*

**Personal Statement Critiques**

Contact your campus career office and make an appointment with a career counselor to have your personal statement critiqued. Ask a professor if they would review it as well. Having feedback from professionals with different points of view can only make for a stronger personal statement overall.

*Adapted with permission from the Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.*
Developing a Winning CV

A Curriculum Vitae or CV is a professional document that is used for marketing your background for a variety of purposes, mostly within academia or research. It can be multiple pages, but should be focused. Use the following tips to help you get started on your CV.

Common Uses

- Graduate school admission, graduate assistantship or scholarship application
- Teaching, research and upper-level administrative positions in higher education
- School administration positions (superintendent, principal, department head)
- Research and consulting in a variety of settings
- Academic departmental and tenure reviews
- College or university service appointments
- Professional association leadership positions
- Publishing and editorial board reviews
- Speaking engagements
- Grant proposal

[Your CV] can be multiple pages, but should be focused.

Education

Include the following information:

- Name of institution(s) where obtained or working toward a degree, listed in reverse chronological order
- Official name of degree(s) and/or certification(s) obtained or currently working toward
- Add Master’s Thesis, Project and/or Dissertation title(s)
- Name of advisor

Foundational Standards

Found in most standard resumes:

- Heading—name, address, professional email and phone number. A website with professional content (e.g., a portfolio) can be listed in the heading as well. Use the direct URL to the proper page, so the recruiter doesn’t have to search your entire site.
- Objective—should be specific to the position for which you are applying.
- Format—standard margins of one inch, type size from 10-12 points and easy-to-read fonts.
- Content—the organization of your document should be rearranged depending on the potential employer. For example, if your education section speaks more to your qualifications for the desired position, it should appear before your employment experience.
- Experience—highlight paid, unpaid, school and extracurricular experiences that relate to your desired objective.
- Skills—technical/computer, language, leadership, laboratory to name a few.

Additional Sections

Depending on your background, you may want to add additional sections to your resume:

- Teaching Experience and Interests
- Research Experience and Interests
- Related Experience: Internships, Practicum and/or Fieldwork
- Grants Received and Academic Awards
- Special Training
- Scholarships and Fellowships

Written by Veronica Rahim, Career Services Consultant, Center for Career Opportunities, Purdue University, for the 2011-2012 Career Planning Handbook.
We believe in the power of technology to solve just about anything. And we’ve put our sharpest minds to the task. Our solutions are empowering individuals, businesses, and communities everywhere. Join our team and you’ll create an inspiring future with the company that meets every day with one question: “What do we want to build next?” That’s the kind of work we do. And you can be a part of it.

Opportunities currently exist for:

- CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES
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