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INTRODUCTION

Center for Student Professional Development

The Center for Student Professional Development (CSPD) is an active partner in your collegiate experience here at the Fox School of Business. Besides academic preparation, “professional development” is important to your preparation for life after graduation. Consequently, the Fox School has integrated a unique professional development component into both the undergraduate and graduate curricula.

Rather than simply focus on the traditional career elements such as resume development and interview strategies, etc., CSPD strives to differentiate you by taking a multifaceted approach with a focus on personal development, career/industry awareness and impression management. This strategy in combination with job search coaching will truly make a difference in terms of your marketability.

CSPD services/resources:

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- Group workshops
- On-line career resources
- Job postings/resume referrals
- Web-based career management system—FoxNet
- On-campus recruiting
- Industry (Mock) interviews
- Executive speaker series
- Networking events with employers/alumni
- Annual Leadership Retreats
- BA2101—Professional Development Strategies course (BBA)
- BA5387—Career Practicum (MBA)

As mentioned, CSPD is your partner in this process. This means YOU need to take an active role in your professional/career development. The time and energy you invest in your job and internship search will be reflected in the career opportunities available to you.

You have already invested in your future by pursuing a business degree from the Fox School—however, a degree alone will not land you that ideal job. Take the next step and make your investment pay off by taking advantage of the resources CSPD has to offer and start creating your “dream job” strategy from day one!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Location: 134 Alter Hall
Phone: (215) 204-2371
Email: foxcspd@temple.edu
Website: www.fox.temple.edu/cspd
Ten Best Ways to Go Online... And Get the Job

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

1. Check Out Major Job Boards
   Technology is great, so as a job seeker it might seem like a no-brainer to go job hunting on the internet. “Digital job search is attractive to young people because they’re tech savvy,” said J.T. O’Donnell of CareerHMO.com. But after months of trolling job boards with no response, they wonder “What’s wrong with me?”
   Nothing, according to O’Donnell. Estimates are that only 4% to 10% of the people who look for jobs online ever find one. It’s a long-shot. The “underbelly of the job posting world,” she says, “is that many listings are already filled, were just fishing expeditions, or are outright scams.”

2. Online Job Search Engines
   A better bet is a search engine that delivers job listings directly to you. O’Donnell recommends linkup.com. “They focus on company websites so there are fewer duplicate, stale or fishy listings. You can also set up alerts to contact you if one of their 22,000+ companies posts a new opening.”
   It may be that Google is now becoming the #1 ( unofficial) job search engine. Job hunters can search (or set up automatic alerts) for job titles, companies, cities, states, and get lists of postings that match their terms.

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

4. Write Your Resume in Digital Format
   “Eighty percent of all companies are using ATS [applicant-tracking system that scans and digitizes], so keywords are key,” says O’Donnell. “As recent grads don’t have a lot of professional experience, they probably won’t get selected for an interview.”
   There’s a way to get around that. Reverse-engineer several job descriptions. First highlight the repeating keywords (“Microsoft Office Suite,” not “Motivated, self-starter”), then plug them into your resume. Presto... an ATS software-friendly, search-engine-optimized resume!

5. Embrace LinkedIn
   Think of LinkedIn as your resume... on steroids. Fill out your profile completely, but don’t stop there. Use LinkedIn to reach specific individuals—the people most likely to hire you or help you get hired. “Search the database just like recruiters do, by job titles, companies and professions. Search for people who are in jobs one, two, or three levels above your target job,” says Martin Yate, author of Knock ‘em Dead, the Ultimate Job Search Guide.

6. Tweet, Tweet
   Twitter is a favorite method for recruiters to get a quick look at who you are and how you think. It’s fairly easy to micro-blog, too. Share your career-related news or retweet nuggets of interest to people in your field.
   O’Donnell says Twitter is one of her favorite ways to contact hard-to-meet people. “Username, I’d really like to connect with you on Twitter,” she’ll ask. “And they’re likely to do it because it’s only a 140-character commitment. Later, you can tweet, ‘would you mind if I connect with you on LinkedIn?’ It’s low-risk for them so you’ll see a high rate of return.”

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

8. Broadcast on Facebook
   Even though Facebook is usually thought of as a purely social platform, it can be useful during a job search. “I’d do a post to my network of friends, family and other contacts,” says Sanders, rather than contacting strangers.” For instance: “I am on the hunt to find a job at [company] because of X. Does anyone know anybody at [company]? That X has to be believable, such as, I think they make the best products in the industry.
   It’s good to repost a variation of that request every few days. (You’re reaching only about 10% of your friends’ feeds at any time, Sanders says.)

9. A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words
   Your digital footprint often precedes you, so it’s a good idea to periodically review your online identity. Enlist another set of eyes, too, for another perspective.
   “I helped my niece with her profile,” says Peggy Klaus, author of 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.
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.

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

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

Strategies for Safe and Strategic Social Networking

1. Be aware of what other people can see on your page. Recruiters use these sites or ask their colleagues to do searches on candidates.
2. Determine access intentionally. Some career counselors advocate deactivating your Facebook or Twitter accounts while job searching.
3. Set a standard. If anything appears on your page that you wouldn’t want an interviewer to see, remove the offending content.
4. Use social networking to your advantage. Use these sites to find alumni in the companies that interest you and contact them before you interview in your career center or before a site visit. In addition, use social networking sites and internet searches to learn more about the recruiters who will interview you before the interview.

Written by Harriet L. Schwartz.
THE CAREER SEARCH

Job Search Strategies: Pros and Cons

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Tools, Pros, Cons and Helpful Hints</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERNET</td>
<td>Tools: Access to the web and an electronic resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search online job banks and company websites. Submit resume online/post on job boards.</td>
<td>Pros: Actual job openings. Many employers use a wide variety of job listing services. Many listings have free to low-cost access. Worldwide geographic reach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: Competition is growing as use of the internet increases. Pay attention to multiple listings—one position posted on a few sites—to avoid applying multiple times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints: Use the web frequently as information and sites change quickly.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NETWORKING</td>
<td>Tools: List of contacts, resumes and business attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to everyone you know to develop a list of possible contacts; ask for information on job/companies and to circulate your resume.</td>
<td>Pros: May learn of unadvertised openings. May result in a courtesy interview. Often results in a closer match of your interests to a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: A contact in itself is not enough to get you a job. You may exhaust all leads without landing a job. Quite time-consuming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints: Follow through on all leads. Keep broadening your network of contacts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL MEDIA</td>
<td>Tools: Access to the internet, social media accounts and an electronic resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter</td>
<td>Pros: Access to a wide variety of employers, contacts and current job openings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: Employers can view your information and/or pictures. Be sure your profile is professional, or use a separate account for connecting to employers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints: Follow your favorite companies. Show off your education and skills. Display an appropriate photo. Perform a search on your name to review your internet presence, and clean up the results if necessary.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON-CAMPUS RECRUITING</td>
<td>Tools: Scheduling interviews, employer literature, resumes and business attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow specific procedures to secure on-campus interviews.</td>
<td>Pros: One of the primary ways in which companies recruit for technical and business positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: May be less effective for nontechnical/nonbusiness candidates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints: Use the interview schedule as a way to identify possible employers, even if you don’t get to interview on campus with those employers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TARGETED MAILING</td>
<td>Tools: List of well-researched companies, tailored cover letters and resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a good cover letter tailored to a specific type of job and the needs of the company. Send letter with resume to selected companies.</td>
<td>Pros: Better approach than the mass-mailing method. Investment of time and effort should merit stronger response from employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: Requires a significant investment of time in researching companies and writing cover letters as well as following up with contacts.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints: Try to find out who is in charge of the area in which you want to work; send your materials to that person. Great method when used in conjunction with networking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN-PERSON VISIT</td>
<td>Tools: Business attire, company address list and resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit many companies. Ask to see person in specific department. Submit resume and application, if possible.</td>
<td>Pros: Resume and application are on file with the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: Requires a great deal of time to make a relatively small number of contacts.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hints: Research the companies prior to your visit. Ask for a specific person or ask about a specific type of job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESUME REFERRAL</td>
<td>Tools: Registration form supplied by service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register with one of the many national referral services. As jobs are listed by employers, the data bank of registrants is searched for matches. If your materials match, they are sent to the employers.</td>
<td>Pros: Another way to monitor the job market and get your qualifications to the attention of employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: May involve a fee. Often more helpful to those in technical or specialized fields. May not learn of the status of your materials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hints: Use only in conjunction with other job search strategies.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES</td>
<td>Tools: Resumes and business attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to employment agency ads in newspapers; check phone book for names of agencies to contact.</td>
<td>Pros: Fee-paid jobs for graduates in technical fields or those with marketable experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: May be less help to non-technical/inexperienced graduates. Be wary if you, instead of the employer, have to pay a fee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints: Identify agencies that specialize in your field. Make frequent contact with your counselor to obtain better service.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANT ADS</td>
<td>Tools: Newspapers, journals, newsletters, trade magazines, cover letters and resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scan want ads. Mail resume with cover letter tailored to specific job qualifications.</td>
<td>Pros: Involves minimal investment of time in identifying companies. Resume and cover letter are sent for actual job opening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons: Resume and cover letter will compete with large number of others. Ads follow job market; least effective in times of economic downturn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints: Use as a meter on the job market in a certain career field. Try to get your materials in as early as possible.</td>
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Adapted and reprinted with permission from Career Services, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
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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.
Don’t Forget the Small Companies

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 faults 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:

Large Company
- Centralized Human Resources
- Formal recruiting program
- Standardized hiring procedures
- Keep resumes on file
- Usually won’t keep resumes
- Career section on website
- Hired to begin immediately
- Formal training programs
- Predetermined job categories
- Jobs emerge to fit needs

Small Company
- No HR
- No full-time recruiters
- No standard hiring procedures
- Usually won’t keep resumes
- Interview often held with recruiters and managers
- the founder or direct boss
- Little/no career section on website
- On-the-job training
- Predetermined job categories
- Jobs emerge to fit needs

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.
Are you looking for more from your future career than just a steady income? Do you find the traditional employment track unappealing? Do you want the chance to make a real impact in your community or even the world? Then a career in the nonprofit sector may be the answer.

What Is a Nonprofit?

Nonprofits (also known as not-for-profits) are organizations that promote a cause or provide a public service and are granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501 of the Federal Tax Code. Nonprofits are often at the forefront of advocacy, social issues and scientific research. Some manage and promote the arts, culture or even history in communities across the nation. Political and labor groups are nonprofit organizations, as are professional and trade organizations. The broad category of nonprofits also includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide critical services to areas affected by war or natural disasters. Some promote environmental issues on an international scale.

With all these categories, it’s no wonder that over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States employ 10.7 million people or 10.1% of the total workforce. Amy Butler from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, “Health professionals, educators, other professionals, health technicians, administrative support workers, and service occupations account for the majority of paid workers in the nonprofit sector,” in her 2009 “Wages in the Nonprofit Sector” article.

Is a Nonprofit Right for You?

Most nonprofit employees are not motivated by money or a prestigious title. Instead, they find fulfillment in a career that contributes to the welfare of others or advances a particular cause. Depending on your interests and beliefs, working for a particular nonprofit can be both challenging and fulfilling. You often work with people who share your altruism and passion about an issue or cause. And unlike the private sector or government, there are usually endless opportunities in entry-level positions where related experience is not required.

But working for a nonprofit is not all bliss and passion, nor is it an escape from work-related stress. Nonprofit employees may not have to meet sales goals or make money for their owners or shareholders, but they are still held accountable for their decisions by their funding sources and constituents. Some organizations are highly politicized. Resources tend to be limited for staff development, bonuses or the latest equipment. Nonprofit workers must learn to work effectively with a broad range of people, including their clients, elected officials, volunteers, donors and local civic leaders.

Top management is usually held accountable to a board of advisors or board of directors. The latter group has governing power, including the power to terminate top management. Instability in funding is often a frustrating factor among nonprofits (especially among the smaller ones), as it must be sought each year from a variety of sources. Today, receiving grants is becoming more difficult. Grantors are demanding increased accountability and results in exchange for their financial support.

Opportunities

Take a look at the current job openings in the nonprofit sector and you will see a broad range of jobs. Positions with arts organizations can include curators, writers, performing artists and event planners. Health agencies often hire counselors, researchers and lobbyists. All nonprofit companies require the services of grant writers, fundraisers (also known as development officers), accountants, information technology workers and office managers. While idealism and passion may be the fuel to energize an organization, solid administrative skills including writing, strong interpersonal skills, multiple business and political contacts, and good business acumen are highly valued and required to ensure the stability and longevity of an organization.

But Will I Earn Enough?

Because of the wide variety of agencies in staff size, organization budget and scope of activities, it is nearly impossible to provide a salary range based on position. For example, the salary of the executive director of the Red Cross would be six figures, while the executive director of a two-person organization whose services are narrow and local may be in the low 30s. The Chronicle of Philanthropy (philanthropy.com) periodically publishes the salaries of top executives in nonprofits. In general, the larger an organization and the wider its scope, the greater the salary—though it may still be below the national average. Career advancement is also more likely within a larger organization.

How and Where to Find Nonprofit Positions

If you are interested in working for a nonprofit organization, talk to others in the field to help you decide if the nonprofit sector is right for you. Schedule an appointment with three or four directors and program administrators to find out the differences (and similarities) between various agencies. Ask about the types of people typically hired and the types of jobs available. Find out what makes the field satisfying—and frustrating. Ask about pay, advancement and the skills most highly sought. Read public literature about different agencies, and serve as a volunteer with an agency of interest to you to become acquainted with the staff and the agency’s services. Volunteer positions sometimes become paid positions or provide you with solid leads and the “inside track” to paid positions.

When you are ready to apply for specific positions, use local resources such as the United Way, your local newspaper and the Internet, using the key word nonprofit. Opportunity Knocks (www.opportunityknocks.org) provides a comprehensive print and online version of nonprofit job opportunities throughout the United States. Many organizations (especially larger ones like the Red Cross) have their own Web sites that list job openings.

Wherever you choose to look, a job with a nonprofit organization can be a great way to start your career—and do something good for your community.

Written by Rosita Smith.
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.
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 scouting out prospects for anticipated vacancies. It is common for professionals to exchange favors and information, so don’t hesitate to call upon people.

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.

Qualities Desired in New College Graduates

By Businesses, Industries and Government Agencies

Energy, Drive, Enthusiasm and Initiative
Hard-working, disciplined and dependable
Eager, professional and positive attitude
Strong self-motivation and high self-esteem
Confident and assertive, yet diplomatic and flexible
Sincere and preserves integrity
Ambitious and takes risks
Uses common sense

Adapts Textbook Learning to the Working World
Quick learner
Asks questions
Analytical; independent thinker
Willing to continue education and growth
Committed to excellence
Open-minded, willing to try new things

Knowledge of Computers
Established word processing, spreadsheet, database and presentation software skills
Excellent computer literacy
Firm understanding of mobile computing
Networking in its many forms: social, face-to-face and technological
Programming experience a plus

Communications Skills
Good writing skills
Excellent oral communication skills
Listens well; compassionate and empathetic
Excellent problem-solving and analytical skills
Creative and innovative

Leadership Skills
Organizational skills and attention to detail

Accepts and handles responsibilities
Action-oriented and results-driven
Loyal to employers
Customer-focused
Team-spirited; understands group dynamics
Always willing to help others
Mature, poised and personable
Diversity aware; treats others with respect and dignity

Oriented to Growth
Acceptance of an entry-level position; doesn’t view required tasks as “menial”
Academic excellence in field of study
Views the organization’s total picture, not just one area of specialization
Willing to accomplish more than required

Source: Adapted from Recruiting Trends by L. Patrick Scheetz, Ph.D., Collegiate Employment Research Institute. ©Michigan State University.
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.
Clean Up Your Social Media Identity

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/accounts. 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 the social media profile foster callbacks, interviews and job offers? If not, keep reading.

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

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

There’s No Swimsuit Competition
Recruiters will judge you by your profile photos. Do they tell the right story? Don’t post sexy photographs of your self 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.”

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

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

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

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

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.
Your Bragging Rights: Selling Yourself

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 Micael 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 the stories from 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 qualifications 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.
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 that 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, internships), along with volunteer, sports and other affiliations since starting college. (Be sure to record officer positions and other leadership roles.)

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

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

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

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 identify relevant transferable skills and incorporate them on your resume and during your interviews. During each interview, be sure to emphasize only those skills that would be of particular interest to a specific employer.

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

Additional Tips to Help Identify Your Transferable Skills
1. Review your list of transferable skills with someone in your field(s) of interest to help you identify any additional skills that you may want to include.
2. Using a major job posting website, print out descriptions of jobs that interest you to help you identify skills being sought. (Also use these postings as guides for terminology on your resume.)
3. Attend career fairs and company information sessions to learn about the skills valued by specific companies and industries.

Written by Rosita Smith.
Power Verbs for Your Resume

- accelerated
- accommodated
- accomplished
- achieved
- acquired
- acted
- activated
- adapted
- added
- addressed
- adjusted
- administered
- admitted
- advanced
- advised
- aided
- alleviated
- allocated
- allowed
- altered
- ameliorated
- amended
- analyzed
- appointed
- apportioned
- appraised
- apprised
- approved
- approximated
- arbitrated
- arranged
- ascertained
- assembled
- assessed
- assigned
- assisted
- attained
- attested
- audited
- augmented
- authored
- authorized
- balanced
- bolstered
- boosted
- brainstormed
- budgeted
- built
- calculated
- catalogued
- centralized
- certified
- chaired
- charted
- clarified
- classified
- coached
- collaborated
- collected
- commissioned
- committed
- communicated
- compared
- compiled
- composed
- computed
- conceptualized
- concluded
- confirmed
- consented
- consolidated
- constructed
- contracted
- contributed
- converted
- convinced
- cooperated
- coordinated
- correlated
- corresponded
- counseled
- created
- critiqued
- customized
- debugged
- deciphered
- dedicated
- delegated
- deliberated
- demonstrated
- designated
- designed
- determined
- devaluated
- developed
- devised
- diagnosed
- directed
- disbursed
- dispatched
- displayed
- drafted
- eased
- eclipsed
- edited
- educated
- elevated
- elicited
- employed
- empowered
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- encouraged
- endorsed
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- fabricated
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- familiarized
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- forecasted
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- founded
- fulfilled
- generated
- grew
- guaranteed
- guided
- hired
- identified
- illustrated
- implemented
- improved
- improvised
- increased
- indexed
- indicated
- inferred
- influenced
- informed
- initiated
- innovated
- inspired
- instituted
- instructed
- integrated
- interceded
- interpreted
- interviewed
- introduced
- invented
- investigated
- involved
- issued
- judged
- justified
- launched
- lectured
- led
- licensed
- lightened
- linked
- maintained
- marketed
- measured
- mediated
- measured
- maximized
- minimized
- mobilized
- modeled
- moderated
- modernized
- modified
- monitored
- motivated
- multiplied
- negotiated
- officiated
- operated
- orchestrated
- organized
- originated
- overhauled
- performed
- persuaded
- pioneered
- planned
- polished
- prepared
- prescribed
- prioritized
- processed
- produced
- projected
- programmed
- promoted
- publicized
- purchased
- queried
- questioned
- raised
- rated
- realized
- recommended
- reconciled
- recorded
- recruited
- rectified
- reduced
- refined
- reduced (losses)
- refined
- referred
- reformed
- regulated
- regulated
- rehabilitated
- reinforced
- rejuvenated
- repaired
- reported
- represented
- researched
- reserved
- resolved
- resolved
- (problems)
- restored
- retrieved
- revamped
- reviewed
- revised
- revised
- revitalized
- revived
- sanctioned
- satisfied
- scheduled
- screened
- scrutinized
- secured
- served
- set goals
- settled
- shaped
- smoothed
- solicited
- solved
- sought
- spearheaded
- specified
- spoke
- stimulated
- streamlined
- strengthened
- studied
- submitted
- substantiated
- suggested
- summarized
- supervised
- supplemented
- surveyed
- sustained
- synthesized
- systematized
- tabulated
- tailored
- traced
- trained
- transacted
- transformed
- translated
- transmitted
- updated
- upgraded
- validated
- valued
- verified
- visualized
- wrote

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

1. Use a meaningful subject header for your email—one that is appropriate to the topic.
2. 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.
3. Be brief in your communications. Don’t overload the employer with lots of questions in your email.
4. 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.
5. Do not use strange fonts, wallpapers or multicolored backgrounds.
6. Sign your email with your full name.
7. Avoid using slang.
8. 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.
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 does 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.
Looking for a Career That Lets You Really Go Places?

Jump Start Your Career With the Freedom Mortgage First Flyer Program

What if you could earn while you learn, right out of school? Explore a career with a leading company, network one-on-one with company leaders and get all the training and support you need to start succeeding – from Day One.

The Freedom Mortgage First Flyer program offers unique and invaluable opportunities to get off to the best possible career start as a mortgage representative. Few other programs offer all of these advantages to graduates:

- **Unlimited income potential** — generous base salary, commissions, potential for bonuses and advancement your first year; excellent benefits
- **Best-in-class training and technology tools** — including preparation for state licensing exams
- **Personal mentoring** — with the guidance of a dedicated coach your entire first year
- **Exposure to company leadership** — network, learn and be recognized

Plus lots of opportunities to have fun and bond with your fellow First Flyers inside and outside the office! It’s an amazing opportunity for people-oriented, highly-motivated individuals who want to help people achieve their home buying dreams.

**Interested? We’re happy to tell you more, let’s talk!**

For more information, contact:

Rachel Buckthorpe at (856) 380-9138 or by email at Rachel.Buckthorpe@FreedomMortgage.com

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**About Freedom Mortgage**

- 7th largest national mortgage lender *
- 25 years experience
- 3,500 employees
- A+ Rating with the Better Business Bureau

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* Inside Mortgage Finance, Q22015.
What Happens During the Interview?

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

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?
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 during the interview. Don’t ask about benefits or salary. The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match.

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

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

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

In Summary

Because of its importance, interviewing requires advance preparation. Only you will be able to positively affect the outcome. You must be able to compete successfully with the competition for the job you want. In order to do that, be certain you have considered the kind of job you want, why you want it and how you qualify for it. You also must face reality: Is the job attainable?

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

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

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
Students With Disabilities: Acing the Interview

The traditional face-to-face interview can be particularly stressful when you have a disability—especially a visible disability. Hiring managers and employers may have had little prior experience with persons with disabilities and may react with discomfort or even shock to the appearance of a wheelchair, cane or an unusual physical trait. When this happens, the interviewer is often so uncomfortable that he or she just wants to “get it over with” and conducts the interview in a hurried manner. But this scenario robs you of the opportunity to present your credentials and could prevent the employer from identifying a suitable, qualified candidate for employment.

It is essential that you understand that interviewing is not a passive process where the interviewer asks all the questions and you simply provide the answers. You, even more than applicants without disabilities, must be skilled in handling each interview in order to put the employer representative at ease. You must also be able to demonstrate your ability to manage your disability and be prepared to provide relevant information about your skills, experiences and educational background. In addition, you may have to inform the employer of the equipment, tools and related resources that you will need to perform the job tasks.

To Disclose or Not to Disclose

To disclose or not to disclose, and when and how to disclose, are decisions that persons with disabilities must make for themselves during the job search process. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you are not legally obligated to disclose your disability unless it is likely to directly affect your job performance. On the other hand, if your disability is visible, it will be evident at the time of the interview so it may be more prudent to acknowledge your disability during the application process to avoid catching the employer representative off guard.

Reasons for Disclosing

You take a risk when you decide to disclose your disability. Some employers may reject your application based on negative, preconceived ideas about persons with disabilities. In addition, you may feel that the issue is too personal to be publicized among strangers. On the other hand, if you provide false answers about your health or disability on an application and the truth is uncovered later, you risk losing your job. You may even be held legally responsible if you failed to inform your employer and an accident occurs that is related to your disability.

Timing the Disclosure

The employer’s first contact with you will typically be through your cover letter and resume, especially if you initially contacted the organization. There are many differing opinions on whether one should mention the disability on the resume or in the cover letter. If you are comfortable revealing your disability early in the process, then give careful consideration to where the information is placed and how it is stated. The cover letter and resume should primarily outline relevant skills, experiences and education for the position for which you are applying. The reader should have a clear understanding of your suitability for the position. Therefore, if you choose to disclose your disability, the disclosure should be brief and placed near the end of the cover letter and resume. It should never be the first piece of information that the employer sees about you. The information should also reveal your ability to manage your disability while performing required job functions.

When You Get the Interview

As stated earlier, it may not be wise to hide the disability (especially a visible disability) until the time of the interview. The employer representative may be surprised, uncomfortable or assume that you intentionally hid critical information. As a result, more time may be spent asking irrelevant and trivial questions because of nervousness, rather than focusing on your suitability for the position. Get assistance from contacts in human resources, your career center or workers with disabilities about the different ways to prepare the interviewer for your arrival. Take the time to rehearse what you will say before making initial contact. If oral communication is difficult for you, have a career services staff person (or another professional) place the call for you and explain how you plan to handle the interview. If you require support for your interview (such as a sign language interpreter), contact human resources in advance to arrange for this assistance. Advance preparation puts everyone at ease and shows that you can manage your affairs.

Tips on Managing the Interview

Prior to the Interview

1. Identify a career services staff person to help you prepare employers for their interview with you.
2. Arrange for several taped, mock interview sessions to become more confident in discussing your work-related skills and in putting the employer representative at ease; rehearse ahead of time to prepare how you will handle inappropriate, personal or possibly illegal questions.
3. If your disability makes oral communication difficult, create a written narrative to supplement your resume that details your abilities.
4. Determine any technical support, resources and costs that might be necessary for your employment so that you can respond to questions related to this topic.
5. Be sure that your career center has information for employers on interviewing persons with disabilities.
6. Seek advice from other workers with disabilities who have been successful in finding employment.
7. Review the general advice about interviewing outlined in this career guide.

During the Interview

1. Put the interviewer at ease before starting the interview by addressing any visible disability (if you have not done so already).
2. Plan to participate fully in the discussion (not just answer questions); maintain the appropriate control of the interview by tactfully keeping the interview focused on your abilities—not the disability.
3. Inform the employer of any accommodations needed and how they can be achieved, thereby demonstrating your ability to manage your disability.
4. Conclude the interview by reiterating your qualifications and giving the interviewer the opportunity to ask any further questions.

Written by Rosita Smith.
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?

Dealing With Rejection in the Job Search

After meticulously preparing your cover letters and resumes, you send them to carefully selected companies that you are sure would like to hire you. You even get a few job interviews. But all of your return correspondence is the same: “Thanks, but no thanks.” Your self-confidence melts and you begin to question your value to an employer.

Sometimes, we begin to dread the BIG NO so much that we stop pursuing additional interviews, thereby shutting off our pipeline to the future. We confirm that we couldn’t get a job because we stop looking. Remember, fear of rejection doesn’t have to paralyze your job search efforts. Let that fear fuel your determination; make it your ally and you’ll learn a lot.

Eight Guidelines to Ward Off Rejection

1. Depersonalize the interview.
   Employers may get as many as 500 resumes for one job opening. How can you, I and the other 498 of us be no good?

2. Don’t make it all or nothing.
   Don’t set yourself up for a letdown: “If I don’t get this job, I’m a failure.” Tell yourself, “It could be mine. It’s a good possibility. It’s certainly not an impossibility.”

3. Don’t blame the interviewer.
   Realize interviewers aren’t in a hurry to think and behave our way. Blame your turndown on a stone-hearted interviewer who didn’t flatter you with beautiful compliments, and you will learn nothing.

4. Don’t live in the past.
   When you dredge up past failures, your nervous system kicks in and you experience all the feelings that go with failure. Unwittingly, you overestimate the dangers facing you and underestimate yourself.

5. Don’t get mad at the system.
   Does anything less pleasurable exist than hunting for a job? Still, you must adjust to the world rather than make the world adjust to you. The easiest thing is to conform, to do what 400,000 other people are doing. When you sit down to play bridge or poker or drive a car, do you complain about the rules?

6. Take the spotlight off yourself.
   Sell your skills, not yourself. Concentrate on what you’re there for: to find out the interviewer’s problems and to show how you can work together to solve them.

7. See yourself in the new role.
   Form a mental picture of the positive self you’d like to become in job interviews, rather than focusing on what scares you. All therapists agree on this: Before a person can effect changes, he must really “see” himself in the new role. Just for fun, play with the idea.

8. Keep up your sense of humor.
   Nobody yet has contracted an incurable disease from a job interview.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
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.

Take note of how the employees interact, and also assess the physical work environment.

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 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.
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, cautions Cobb.

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

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host/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 plate 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.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Keep hands in lap unless you are using them to eat.
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Carry food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Bring food to your mouth—your head to the plate.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.

When ordering, keep in mind that this is a talking business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.

Professional Etiquette

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Written by Jennie Hunter, retired professor, Western Carolina University.
# 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>
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<td>Applicant’s place of residence</td>
<td>ADDRESS OR DURATION OF RESIDENCE</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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<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>
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<td>“If hired, can you furnish proof of age?” or Statement that hire is</td>
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<tr>
<td>subject to verification that applicant’s age meets legal requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement by employer of regular days, hours or shift to be worked</td>
<td>WORK DAYS AND SHIFTS</td>
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<td>Statement that photograph may be required after employment</td>
<td>PHOTOGRAPH</td>
<td>Requirement that applicant affix a photograph to the application form</td>
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<td>Statement by employer that if hired, applicant may be required to</td>
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<td>Request applicant, at his/her option, to submit photograph</td>
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<tr>
<td>submit proof of authorization to work in the United States</td>
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<td>Requirement of photograph after interview but before hiring</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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<td></td>
<td>Date of arrival in United States or port of entry; how long a resident</td>
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<td>Nationality of applicant’s parents or spouse; maiden name of applicant’s wife or mother</td>
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<td>Language commonly used by applicant, “What is your mother tongue?”</td>
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<td>How applicant acquired ability to read, write or speak a foreign language</td>
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<td>Applicant’s academic, vocational or professional education; schools</td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>Date last attended high school</td>
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<td>attended</td>
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<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</td>
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<td>Type of military discharge</td>
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<td>state militia (U.S.) or in a particular branch of U.S. armed forces</td>
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<td>“Have you ever been convicted of any crime? If so, when, where and</td>
<td>CHARACTER</td>
<td>“Have you ever been arrested?”</td>
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<td>what was the disposition of case?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Names of applicant’s relatives already employed by this company</td>
<td>RELATIVES</td>
<td>Marital status or number of dependents</td>
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<td>Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor</td>
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<td>Name or address of relative, spouse or children of adult applicant</td>
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<td>Name and address of person to be notified in case of accident or</td>
<td>NOTICE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY</td>
<td>“With whom do you reside?”</td>
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<td>emergency</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Do you live with your parents?”</td>
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<td>Organizations, clubs, professional societies or other associations of</td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONS</td>
<td>List all organizations, clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong</td>
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<tr>
<td>which applicant is a member, excluding any names the character of which</td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>Requirement of submission of a religious reference</td>
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<td>indicate the race, religious creed, color, national origin or ancestry of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>its members</td>
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<td>“By whom were you referred for a position here?”</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Statement by employer that all job offers are contingent on passing a</td>
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<td>Questions on general medical condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>physical examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inquiries as to receipt of workers’ compensation</td>
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The Art of Negotiating

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.

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 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 at which time you will discuss the details of your proposal with him/her. Do not rush the process because you are uncomfortable. 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 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.
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, a 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.

**Additional Benefits:**
- **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.*
Choosing Between Job Offers

The first question many of your friends will ask when you receive a job offer is “What does it pay?” For many college graduates this consideration is near the top of the list, which is not surprising. Most students have invested thousands of dollars in their education, often racking up high student loan balances. Most graduates are looking forward to paying off that debt. Also, the value of a salary is easy to understand; the more zeroes after the first digit, the better.

In order to evaluate a salary offer you need to know what the average pay scale is for your degree and industry. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is a good source of salary information for entry-level college graduates. Their annual Salary Survey should be available in your campus career center. Make sure you factor cost-of-living differences when considering salary offers. For example, you may need an offer of $76,000 in San Francisco to equal an offer of $40,000 in Huntsville, Ala.

Bonuses and commissions are considered part of your salary, so take them into consideration when evaluating an offer. It’s also important to have a good understanding of an employer’s policies concerning raises. Be sure to never make your decision on salary alone. Students tend to over-emphasize salary when considering job offers. Money is important, but it’s more important that you like your job. If you like your job, chances are you’ll be good at it. And if you’re good at your job, eventually you will be financially rewarded.

Factor in Benefits
Of course, salary is only one way in which employers financially compensate their employees. Ask anybody with a long work history and they’ll tell you how important benefits are. When most people think of employer benefits, they think of things like health insurance, vacation time and retirement savings. But employers are continually coming up with more and more creative ways to compensate their workers, from health club memberships to flextime. The value of a benefits plan depends on your own plans and needs. A company gym or membership at a health club won’t be of much value to you if you don’t like to sweat.

Who’s the Boss?
Who you work for can have as much bearing on your overall job satisfaction as how much you earn and what you do. First, analyze how stable the potential employer is. If the company is for-profit, what were its earnings last year? What are its projections for growth? If the job is with a government agency or a nonprofit, what type of funding does it have? How long has the employer been around? You could receive the best job offer in the world, but if the job is cut in six months, it won’t do you much good.

Corporate Culture
There are three aspects to a work environment: 1) the physical workspace, 2) the “corporate culture” of the employer, and 3) fellow co-workers. Don’t underestimate the importance of a good workspace. If you are a private person, you probably will not be able to do your best work in a cluster of cubicles. If you are an extrovert, you won’t be happy shut in an office for hours on end.

Corporate culture comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of an organization. What’s the hierarchy of the organization? Is there a dress code? Is overtime expected? Do they value creativity or is it more important that you follow protocol? Whenever possible, you should talk to current or previous employees to get a sense of the corporate culture. You may also be able to get a sense of the environment during the interview or by meeting your potential boss and co-workers during the interview process. Ask yourself if the corporate culture is compatible with your own attitudes, beliefs and values.

Your boss and fellow co-workers make up the last part of the work environment. Hopefully, you will like the people you work with, but you must, at least, be able to work well with them professionally. You may not be able to get a good sense of your potential co-workers or boss during the interview process. But if you do develop strong feelings one way or the other, be sure to take them into consideration when making your final decision.

Like What You Do
Recent college graduates are seldom able to land their dream jobs right out of school, but it’s still important that you at least like what you do. Before accepting a job offer, make sure you have a very good sense of what your day-to-day duties will be. What are your responsibilities? Will you be primarily working in teams or alone? Will your job tasks be repetitive or varied? Will your work be challenging? What level of stress can you expect with the position?

Location, Location, Location
Climate, proximity to friends and family and local population (i.e., urban vs. rural) should all be evaluated against your desires and preferences. If you are considering a job far away from your current address, will the employer pay for part or all of your moving expenses? Even if you are looking at a local job, location can be important—especially as it relates to travel time. A long commute will cost you time, money and probably more than a little frustration. Make sure the tradeoff is worth it.

Time is on Your Side
It’s acceptable to request two or three days to consider a job offer. And depending on the employer and the position, even a week of consideration time can be acceptable. If you’ve already received another offer or expect to hear back from another employer soon, make sure you have time to consider both offers. But don’t ask for too much time to consider. Like all of us, employers don’t like uncertainty. Make sure you give them an answer one way or another as soon as you can.

It’s Your Call
Once you make a decision, act quickly. If you are accepting a position, notify the hiring manager by phone followed by a confirmation letter or an email. Keep the letter short and state the agreed upon salary and the start date. When rejecting an offer, make sure to thank the employer for their time and interest. It always pays to be polite in your correspondence. You never know where your career path will take you and it might just take you back to an employer you initially rejected.

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.
# The Cost of Living Index

The following is a selection of cities where many graduating students accept offers. The cost of living index is based on the composite price of groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, clothing and entertainment in each city listed. Use the calculation to compare salaries in different cities. For further information about the data below, please refer to [www.bestplaces.net/cost-of-living](http://www.bestplaces.net/cost-of-living).

To compare information from other sources, refer to these websites: [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com) and [www.homefair.com/real-estate/salary-calculator.asp](http://www.homefair.com/real-estate/salary-calculator.asp).

<table>
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<th>Average City, USA</th>
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<td>Alabama</td>
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| Illinois          | 103 |
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| Wisconsin         | 116 |
| Madison           |     |
| Milwaukee         | 85  |

| Wyoming           | 103 |
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