Imagine tomorrow...

Then come and create it as a civilian engineer, scientist, accountant, or contract administrator within the Naval Sea Systems Command.

U.S. Citizenship Required
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Mission Statement
“We provide students and alumni with exceptional academically and professionally related employment services.”
Career Management Center
Old Dominion University
The Old Dominion University Career Management Center (CMC) provides students and alumni with exceptional academically and professionally related employment services.

CMC signature programs offer a full array of career services and events connecting students, alumni, and employers. As a two-time national award winner for innovative services we integrate technology into the career development process to help meet individual needs.

The Career Advantage Program guarantees real-world experience related to the undergraduate major and the International Career Advantage Program supports both international students and the international experience. Our Recruiting Advantage Partnership and professional associations promote Equal Employment Opportunity and cultivate relationships with local, regional, and national organizations posting part-time, internship, and professional opportunities just for ODU students and alumni.

Our Cyber Center, career coaches, and virtual assistants deliver career programs and assistance anytime, anywhere while the Alumni Advantage Program extends career services free for life. CMC professionals and our employers are dedicated to helping you explore, experience, and engage in your future at any stage of your career.

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Cyber Learning Center
Courses, Events, Drop-ins
cybercoach@odu.edu

Virtual Assistance 24/7/365
www.odu.edu/cmc
1-800-937-ODU1 (6381)
Career Advantage Program (CAP)

The CMC promotes career assistance, experience, and engagement with comprehensive services through the Career Advantage Program (CAP). CAP is a series of career-related programs and events designed to include credit-bearing practical work experience related to your undergraduate major. Professional staff members are available at every step, both in person and electronically.

College Liaisons and Intern/Co-op Coordinators specialize in career consultation based on your chosen major. Individualized appointments assist you with important career decisions and development needs. College specific and employer events cover career topics and fairs from a unique perspective. CMC career assistance from a distance is available live, online, and on-demand to help you develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities you need to compete in today's workforce.

Career Assistance from trained career professionals:
- Explore the Cyber Career Center and reach a Cyber Coach at cybercoach@odu.edu
- Experience through Career Coursework that enhances your academic and professional career
- Engage in Career Fairs and Events to network and develop your career

Career Experience through targeted career opportunities:
- Explore through Student Employment with signature programs and positions on and off campus
- Experience Internships and Cooperative Education, a partnership that increases your hiring potential
- Engage in On-Campus Recruiting, a convenient part of your professional employment plan

Career Engagement with specialized career development tools and resources:
- Explore with Focus and learn what you can do with your major
- Experience counts on your Resume and in professional communication
- Engage in job search and interviewing strategies and soon you will be evaluating an offer

Tools for Success
- Focus on your future with interactive, self-guided activities and learn more about career and education planning
- What can I do with this major? helps you identify areas of employment, employers, and strategies based on your selected major
- ODU CareerLink is your network for success, link to your future 24/7 with resumes, jobs, interviews, contacts, and events
- Going Global is the ultimate international job seeker’s guide created for international students and US students going abroad
- CareerSearch gives you access to over one million organizations and contacts based on your chosen industry, geographic, position, and keyword search criteria

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

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

A College Timeline: How to Plan for Career Success

Freshmen—Question

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

Sophomores—Research

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

Juniors—Making Decisions

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

Seniors—Job Search

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

Adapted with permission from Career Services at Virginia Tech.
Use **Job Agents** to stay on top of the latest opportunities as they become available. When a new job posting matches your personalized search criteria, your **Job Agent** will notify you!

Don’t have a definite career goal? Set up multiple **Job Agents** to find the latest opportunities across various career fields.

**START HERE:**
- Login to CareerLink
- Hover over "Jobs"
- Select "ODU CareerLink Jobs"
- Then, it’s as easy as 1-2-3!

**1. CREATE YOUR AGENT:**
- Click on the "Advanced Search" link (next to keyword search bar).
- Select personalized criteria (see suggested search tips, below).
- Click on "Search".

**2. ENABLE YOUR AGENT:**
- Click on the "Saved Searches" link (below keyword search bar)
- Give your search a “Title”
- Select the frequency you want it to run.
- Click "Save".

**SUGGESTED SEARCH TIPS:**
- Select a Position Type
- Leave the "Majors/Concentrations" section blank
- Select a radius of miles around a zip code
- Select a "State" under "More Filters" link
- Leave all other sections blank

**HINT:**
- Be sure to clear search criteria using "Clear All" function between searches

**3. START YOUR SEARCH:**
- Job postings that match your search criteria will be emailed to you, automatically.
- Manually run your search criteria by clicking on “Saved Searches” (listed under the keyword search bar) and selecting the “Title” next to the appropriate agent
- Delete or edit **Search Agents**, and update your run frequency from the "Saved Searches" link, as your preferences or qualifications change.
- Never stop searching! Once you’ve secured a job, set your sights on your next opportunity, and keep looking!
Resume Writing Steps
Do It Right the First Time

The only job of a resume is to get you an interview. That’s it. Your effectiveness in generating interviews will depend on your ability to communicate your skills and competencies to employers. Remember, your skills are transferable from one environment to another. Successful Old Dominion University job seekers understand the importance of the following steps.

Step One: Gather Information and Conduct a Self-Inventory
Review your personal information and experience. Start with a blank piece of paper and list each item that has relevance. This is not your resume—that will come in the next step. Instead, now is the time to get the relevant information out of your head and commit it to paper. Go for volume here, focus on details and specifics. You will condense this information later.

Contact Information
State your full name, current and temporary addresses, telephone numbers, and email address.

Career Objective
State what position you are seeking and describe the skills, abilities, experience, and interests that back up your candidacy. If you can’t match yourself to the position, then perhaps you need to redefine your career goals. Need help with your objective? Come to the Career Management Center.

Education
Begin with current school (ODU) and list your degree/s, major/s, and minor/s. State the date you will graduate. For each school you’ve attended, list the city and state in which they are located. Include academic honors, awards, scholarships, projects, or publications. Juniors and up, please, no high school information. Generally, list your GPA if 3.0 or better. You can also list your GPA in your major if it’s better than your cumulative. Military training can be listed here. Create a list of the relevant courses that complement your career objective.

Work Experience
Describe any paid and non-paid experiences that have helped you develop skills. Detail your title, employer name, location, and dates of employment. Focus on the work you performed, your contributions/achievements, and what skills you used/gained while there. Be specific—use numbers, figures and descriptions of the environment. You need to give the reader a mental picture of the experience.

College, Community and Professional Involvement
State name of organization and the role you played. Be sure to describe the organization for readers who may not be familiar with Old Dominion University or the Hampton Roads area. Don’t just list organizations; instead, state contributions, offices held and demonstrated skills. Include dates of membership.

Organizations
List memberships, offices held, dates, projects, certifications and licensure.

Special Skills
Detail skills in foreign languages, computer hardware and software, laboratory skills, and any other skills you may have.

Interests and Activities
Again, no lists. Instead, detail any hobbies and endeavors that support your objective.

Step Two: Choose a Resume Format
The format you choose should reflect your own personal situation. Consider your qualifications, career objective, experience, and the kind of employer you are seeking before you select a style. The most common formats are:

Chronological—Jobs and education are listed in reverse chronological order—the most recent experience first. This format is best for those who have some experience directly related to their objective.

Functional Skills—Highlights qualifications, skills and related accomplishments with little emphasis on dates. This format is not recommended.

Combination—Similar to the functional resume, but with employment history listed in a separate section. This style is best for people who have little related experience but lots of transferable skills, new graduates, career changers who have gaps in their work history, and those who have had many similar jobs. It allows the writer list their experience in order of relevance to the position rather than by date or functional title.

Step Three: Write Your Resume
Describe your experience in terms of the functions you performed and what you accomplished. Use action verbs to strengthen descriptions. Employers are interested in how successful you were in the past because it predicts future performance.

Make It Clear
Do not use personal pronouns like “I” and “my.” Do not use full sentences. Instead, use short bulleted phrases in past tense for past experience, present tense for present activity. Avoid “responsible for” and “duties included.” Place the most relevant information first and avoid abbreviations. Your experience can be divided into “related” and “other” in order to highlight related experience first.

Objective Statement
Your objective statement can be general or specific. It should be work-centered, not self-centered, and should emphasize what you can bring to the position, not what the position can do for you. All other information on your resume should focus on the objective.

References
Names and addresses of references should not be included on your resume. List this information on another sheet of paper and bring it with you to interviews. Include the name, title, business address, phone number, fax and email address of each person.

Step Four: Critique Your First Draft
After you are satisfied with your first draft, ask several individuals who are familiar with the type of employment you are seeking to look it over. Always have someone at the Career Management Center check it before distribution.
Showy designs. These colors will not reproduce well if the
white, cream, ecru or beige paper. Avoid pastels, grays or
Print your resume on 24 lb. cotton bond paper. Use pure
Professional

Step Five: Write a Final Draft and Make It Look Professional

Print your resume on 24 lb. cotton bond paper. Use pure white, cream, ecru or beige paper. Avoid pastels, grays or showy designs. These colors will not reproduce well if the employer decides to make copies or forward your resume via fax. Never have a copy center photocopy your resume onto quality paper; it is not good enough for your resume. Always print your resume using a laser or high-quality inkjet printer.
**Sample Chronological Resume**

Your Name  
myname@odu.edu

Current Address:  
123 Main Street  
Portsmouth, VA 23703  
757-456-5126

Permanent Address:  
526 Big Willow Lane  
Richmond, VA 24879  
804-258-4587

**OBJECTIVE**  
An entry-level position in ________.

**EDUCATION**

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA  
Bachelor of Science in ________  
May 2015  
Major: ________  
Minor: Information Systems  
GPA: 3.2

Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach, VA  
Associate of Science in Business  
June 2013  
GPA: 3.5

Relevant Courses: Managerial Accounting, Taxation, Principles of Insurance, Business Law, Finance, Accounting Information Systems

**RELATED EXPERIENCE**

Jones, Smith and Chang, Chesapeake, VA  
Intern (Summer 2014)  
• Use “ed” action verbs to describe the functions of your job, such as maintained, supervised, trained, prepared, conducted, assisted, created, edited, provided  
• Quality and quantity when possible  
• Do not use “responsible for” or “duties included”  
• Never use “I”, “me”, or “my”

First Baptist Church, Chesapeake, VA  
Youth Group Treasurer (September 2011-August 2013)  
• Treat this as you would a job since it is related to accounting

**OTHER EXPERIENCE**

Outback Restaurant, Virginia Beach, VA  
Waiter (September 2011-August 2014)  
• Served food and beverages; provided excellent customer service in fast-paced environment  
• Assisted manager with evening deposit

**ACTIVITIES**

Member of Alpha Beta Delta fraternity, 2013-present  
• Director of communications, 2014-2015  
  • Prepare brochures, flyers, emails and other communications to members to publicize events

Old Dominion University Tennis Team, 2013-present

**References available on request.**

**Sample Experienced Resume**

Name  
Street Address  
City, VA 23622  
(757) 555-1212  
professional@whatever.com

**OBJECTIVE**  
Be clear, specific and employer focused.

**PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY**

• 3-5 short statements that summarize your education and experience  
• Can also use some “soft” skills, such as leadership abilities  
• Think of this as your 15 second commercial for yourself  
• If the reader read no further he/she would have a good idea of what you can do

**EDUCATION**

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA  
Bachelor of Arts  
December 2014  
Major: English  
GPA: 3.9/4.0

**RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Name of Employer, City and State  
Your Title  
Dates of employment  
• Describe the functions of your position, using action verbs (“ed”)  
• Quantify when possible  
• Mention major accomplishments  
• Keep bullet points short, but they can go over onto a second line if you need the space to fully describe the task  
• Use a new bullet for each separate area; use a semi colon to further describe something mentioned already in the bullet

**OTHER EXPERIENCE**

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA  
Graduate Research Assistant  
2013 – 2014  
• Keep these descriptions short as “other” experience is not related to your goal, but used to show you worked and have transferable skills

**COMPUTER SKILLS, TECHNICAL SKILLS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**You can use a second page if you have more experience.**

**References available on request.**
Transferable Skills

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

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

What Are Transferable Skills?

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

Your transferable skills are often:

• acquired through a class (e.g., an English major who is taught technical writing)
• acquired through experience (e.g., the student government representative who develops strong motivation and consensus building skills)

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

Remember that it is impossible to complete college without acquiring transferable skills. Campus and community activities, class projects and assignments, athletic activities, internships and summer/part-time jobs have provided you with countless experiences where you’ve acquired a range of skills—many that you may take for granted.

Identifying Transferable Skills

While very closely related (and with some overlap), transferable skills can be divided into three subsets:

• Working With People • Working With Things
• Working With Data/Information

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

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

Working With People

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

Working With Things

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

Working With Data/Information

• Calculating • Developing databases
• Working with spreadsheets • Accounting • Writing
• Researching • Computing • Testing • Filing • Sorting
• Editing • Gathering data • Analyzing • Budgeting

Easy Steps to Identify Your Transferable Skills

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using Transferable Skills in the Job Search

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

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

Additional Tips to Help Identify Your Transferable Skills

1. Review your list of transferable skills with someone in your field(s) of interest to help you identify any additional skills that you may want to include.

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

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

Written by Rosita Smith.
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.
Your 60-Second Commercial

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

---

**Step 1: Research the Employer**

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

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

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

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

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

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

   **My personal qualities:**
   (a) ______________________________  (b) ______________________________  (c) ______________________________

---

**Step 2: Develop Your Introduction**

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

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

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

*Adapted with permission from the Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.*
Network Your Way to a Job

Many people use the classified ads as their sole job search technique. Unfortunately, statistics show that only 10% to 20% of jobs are ever published—which means that 80% to 90% of jobs remain hidden in the job market. For this reason, networking remains the number one job search strategy.

Networking Defined
A network is an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and ultimately for your career. Some great network contacts might include people you meet at business and social meetings who provide you with career information and advice. Students often hesitate to network because they feel awkward asking for help, but it should be an integral part of any job search. Though you might feel nervous when approaching a potential contact, networking is a skill that develops with practice, so don’t give up. Most people love to talk about themselves and their jobs and are willing to give realistic—and free—advice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Written by Thomas J. Denham, managing partner and career counselor of Careers in Transition LLC.
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 (GLBT) on your resume, so do you want this information to be available via social networking sites? There are two strategies to consider. One approach is that if you wish to only work for an employer with whom you can be openly religious, political, or GLBT then making that information available on your web page will screen out discriminating employers and make it more likely that you will land with an employer open to your identity and expression.

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

Strategies for Safe and Strategic Social Networking

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

Written by Harriet L. Schwartz.
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/alerts. You may discover results for many people with your same name, possibly with embarrassing or outrageous content. To find the real “you,” try tweaking your name (e.g., Sam versus Samuel) or add some additional identifying modifiers (perhaps your city or school).

Search for your name on all the networks to which you’ve ever belonged, including MySpace and YouTube. (Recruiters check everywhere.) After a thorough review, ask yourself: *Will this 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 real story? “Don’t post sexy photographs of yourself alone. 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.
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.

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Getting the Most Out of a Career Fair

Many employers use career fairs—both on and off campus—to promote their opportunities and to pre-screen applicants. Career fairs come in all shapes and sizes, from small community-sponsored events to giant regional career expositions held at major convention centers.

Most career fairs consist of booths and/or tables manned by recruiters and other representatives from each organization. For on-campus events, some employers also send alumni representatives. Large corporations and some government agencies have staffs who work the career fair “circuit” nationwide.

An employer’s display area is also subject to wide variance. It could be a simple table with a stack of brochures and business cards and a lone representative or an elaborate multimedia extravaganza with interactive displays, videos, posters and a team of recruiters.

**Fashions and Accessories**

Generally, the appropriate attire for career fair attendees is more relaxed than what you’d wear to an actual job interview. In most cases, “business casual” is the norm. If you’re unsure of the dress code (particularly for off-campus events), it would be wise to err on the overdressed side—you’ll make a better impression if you appear professional. Think of it as a dress rehearsal for your real interviews!

Remember to bring copies of your resume (or resumes, if you have several versions tailored to different career choices), a few pens and pencils (have backups—they have a way of disappearing), a folder or portfolio and some sort of note-taking device (paper or electronic pad). Keep track of the recruiters with whom you speak and send follow-up notes to the ones who interest you. Don’t bring your backpack; it’s cumbersome for you, it gets in the way of others and it screams “student!” instead of “candidate!”

**Stop, Look and Listen**

Keep your eyes and ears open—there’s nothing wrong with subtly eavesdropping on the questions asked and answers received by your fellow career fair attendees. You might pick up some valuable information, in addition to witnessing some real-life career search “do’s and don’ts.”

In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. If you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on posters and a team of recruiters.

By all means, try to attend at least one career fair before beginning your formal job interviewing process. For new entrants into the professional career marketplace, this is a good way to make the transition into “self-marketing mode” without the formality and possible intimidation of a one-on-one job interview. It’s an opportunity that’s too valuable to miss.

**You’re a Prospector—Start Digging**

The questions you ask at a career fair depend upon your goals. Are you interested in finding out about a particular career field? Then ask generalized questions about working within the industry. If you’re seeking career opportunities with a specific employer, focus your questions on the application and interview process, and ask for specific information about that employer.

**Fair Thee Well**

You can’t make a dent in the career fair process without preparation. Before you attend your first career fair, there are certain “dos” and “don’ts” that you must follow.

**A Few Words About Career Fair Etiquette**

1. **Don’t interrupt the employer reps or your fellow job-seekers.** If someone else is monopolizing the employer’s time, try to make eye contact with the rep to let him or her know that you’re interested in speaking. You may be doing a favor by giving the recruiter an out. If all else fails, move to the next exhibit and plan to come back later.

2. **If you have a real interest in an employer, find out the procedures required to secure an interview.** At some career fairs, initial screening interviews may be done on the spot. Other times, the career fair is used to pre-screen applicants for interviews to be conducted later (either on campus or at the employer’s site).

3. **Sincerity always wins.** Don’t lay it on too thick, but don’t be too blasé either. Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with good communication skills.

4. **Don’t just drop your resume on employers’ display tables.** Try to get it into a person’s hands and at least say a few words. If the scene is too busy and you can’t get a word in edgewise, jot a note on your resume to the effect of, “I’m very interested in talking to you.” Look around the display for the recruiter’s business card (or at the very least, write down his or her name and get some literature with the company’s address) and send a follow-up note and another copy of your resume.

5. **If you know ahead of time that one of your “dream companies” is a career fair participant, do some prior research (at minimum, visit their website. A little advance preparation goes a long way and can make you stand out among the masses of other attendees.**
Ten Rules of Interviewing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. **Ask questions.**
   The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you plan how you would answer an interviewer’s questions, write out specific questions you want to ask. Then look for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Don’t ask about benefits or salary. The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match.

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

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

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

Depending upon your fashion style, whether it is the latest trends for the club scene or merely college senior casual, a job interview may be cause for some drastic wardrobe augmentation.

For your interviews, some of your individualism might have to be shelved or kept in the closet. In most business and technical job interviews, when it comes to your appearance, conservatism and conformity are in order.

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

Here are some guidelines:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Taking a Casual Approach**
“Office casual” is becoming the accepted mode of dress at more and more companies. The rules, however, for casual attire are subject to tremendous company-to-company variance. At some, “casual day” is a Friday-only observance, where the dress code is slightly relaxed—a sports coat and slacks for men and slacks and a sweater for women. At others, especially entrepreneurial computer companies, it’s shorts and sandals every day.

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

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

**Play It Safe**
- Chinos or corduroy slacks are usually a safe bet for both sexes.
- As for formal business attire, buy the best that your budget will allow.
- If you will be seeing clients, dress appropriately for their workplace, not yours.
- Go to the mall—most department and specialty stores have sections devoted to this style of office attire.
Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn’t carrying his or her weight.” If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you could be in for a behavioral interview. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior, this style of interviewing is popular among recruiters.

Today, more than ever, each hiring decision is critical. Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that might cloud the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant’s actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions. A manager of staff planning and college relations for a major chemical company believes, “Although we have not conducted any formal studies to determine whether retention or success on the job has been affected, I feel our move to behavioral interviewing has been successful. It helps concentrate recruiters’ questions on areas important to our candidates’ success within [our company].” The company introduced behavioral interviewing in the mid-1980s at several sites and has since implemented it companywide.

Behavioral vs. Traditional Interviews

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

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

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

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

“What did you say?”
“What were you thinking?”
“How did you feel?”
“What was your role?”
“What was the result?”

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

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

✔ Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning and customer service.
✔ Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
✔ Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle and an end; i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action and the outcome or result.
✔ Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
✔ Be honest. Don’t embellish or omit any part of the story.

The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.

✔ Be specific. Don’t generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

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

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

Don’t Forget the Basics

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

1. Please describe the duties of the job for me.
2. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
3. Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?
4. Does your company encourage further education?
5. How often are performance reviews given?
6. What products (or services) are in the development stage now?
7. Do you have plans for expansion?
8. What are your growth projections for next year?
9. Have you cut your staff in the last three years?
10. How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
11. Do you offer flextime?
12. Is your company environmentally conscious? In what ways?
13. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
14. Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
15. What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) now?
16. May I talk with the last person who held this position?
17. What is the usual promotional time frame?
18. Does your company offer either single or dual career-track programs?
19. What do you like best about your job/company?
20. Once the probation period is completed, how much authority will I have over decisions?
21. Has there been much turnover in this job area?
22. Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?
23. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
24. What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
25. What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
26. Is there a lot of team/project work?
27. Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
28. Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?
29. How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
30. What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?

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.
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 $81,704. 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 website (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 website 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 website. But you should also make sure to visit the websites 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 do 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.
Business Etiquette Blunders and How to Fix Them

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

No Show = No Job

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

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

Too Negative

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

Thankless

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

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

Too Familiar

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

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

What Dress Code?

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

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

Dining Disaster

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

Clueless About the Employer

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

Annoying Devices

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

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

Poor Profile

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

Tattoos and Piercings

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

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

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

Written by Jebra Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about career issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at www.jebra.com.
The transition from college life to your professional career is one of the most difficult challenges you may face. This is a tough adjustment period, particularly if you have never spent any time working in an environment like the one in which you will be spending 40 or more hours a week.

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

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

Five Main Differences Between College and Work
1. In college you are used to frequent feedback, evaluation and direction. Ask for too much of this on the job and you will appear insecure and lacking in self-confidence.
2. As a student you have enjoyed frequent breaks and vacations from school usually totaling approximately 27 weeks spent in school. During your first year on the job you may have to work six months or more before you earn any time off. You will work on average more than 50 weeks that first year, maybe without a break at all.
3. In college you can choose your own performance level (A, B, C) by attending class, turning in assignments, and studying for exams. In your career, A-level work is required at all times.
4. College tends to focus on effort and growth. The real world cares only about results.
5. Students are encouraged to put forth an individual effort and think independently. Once you begin working, you will see that you will be required to work a lot with teams and in collaborating efforts.

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

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

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At some point in your college career, you must decide what you would like to do after graduation—and that includes whether or not to attend graduate school. If you’re trying to determine whether graduate school is right for you, here are some pointers to help you make an enlightened decision.

1. Should I consider going to graduate school?

Going to graduate school might be a good idea if you...

- want to be a professor, lawyer, doctor, investment banker or work in any profession that requires a post-secondary education.
- wish to develop additional expertise in a particular subject or field to maximize your future earning potential and opportunities for career advancement.
- are deeply interested in a particular subject and wish to study it in-depth—AND have the time and financial resources to devote to further education.

Going to graduate school might not be a good idea if you...

- are trying to delay your entry into the “real world” with real responsibilities and real bills.
- are clueless about your career goals.
- aren’t prepared to devote the time and hard work needed to succeed.
- want to stay in school longer to avoid a poor job market.

2. Is it better to work first or attend graduate school immediately after I complete my undergraduate degree?

Work first if...

- you would like to get some real-world work experience before investing thousands of dollars in a graduate degree.
- the graduate school of your choice prefers work experience (most MBA and some Ph.D. programs require this).
- you cannot afford to go to graduate school now, and you haven’t applied for any scholarships, grants, fellowships and assistantships, which could pay for a great deal of your education.

Go to graduate school now if...

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

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

- **Family:** You’ve likely borrowed from them in the past; maybe you’re lucky enough for it to still be a viable option.
- **Student Loans:** Even if you’ve taken out loans in the past, another $50,000 - $75,000 may be a sound “investment” in your future.

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

**Benefits of attending graduate school full-time:**

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

**Benefits of attending graduate school part-time:**

- work income helps pay for your education.
- you can take a very manageable course load.
- you can juggle family responsibilities while completing your degree.
- allows you to work in the function/industry/career of your choice while continuing your education.
- employer will often pay for part (or all) of your graduate degree.

5. Assuming I want to go to graduate school in the near future, what should I do now?

a. Identify your true strengths, interests and values to help you discover what is right for YOU—not your friends or parents.

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

c. Talk to faculty, friends and family who have gone to graduate school to get their perspective about the differences between being an undergraduate and a graduate student.

d. Talk to faculty, friends and family who are in your targeted profession to get a realistic sense of the career path and the challenges associated with the work they do.

e. Investigate creative ways to finance your education—by planning ahead you may reduce your debt.

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

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

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

Written by Roslyn J. Bradford.
Guidelines for Writing Your Personal Statement

STEP 1: Brainstorming

Actions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEP 2: Writing Your Personal Statement

Actions:

Incorporate your responses to the above questions. Begin writing your first draft:

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

Suggested Outline

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

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

References

Write for Success: Preparing a Successful Professional School Application, Third Edition, October 2005 by Evelyn W. Jackson, PhD and Harold R. Bardo, PhD. NAAHP, National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, Inc.


Personal Statement Critiques

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

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