
51 TIPS TO PREPARE FOR A CAREER

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Introduction

College represents a significant investment of time, effort, and money. There are many good reasons for attending college, but first and foremost, you go to college to enhance your career prospects. Your education should greatly increase the likelihood that you will be able to obtain challenging and rewarding work—right out of college and over the course of your lifetime.

This book provides the tools you'll need to make sound decisions, prepare for your future, and ultimately realize your professional dreams.

Preview

"The overall purpose of college is to help students find a career path that will lead to a successful, happy future."

Reyna Gobel, Forbes Contributor

TIP 1

VISIT CAREER SERVICES

"I was clueless my first year here. The best advice I ever got was to go to Career Services. Now I have a plan and I know what I'm doing."

COLBY, SOPHOMORE ACCOUNTING MAJOR

What happens on your visit to Career Services depends on your needs.

You can stop by to gather some career information, or have an in-depth discussion on your major and career options. But on a typical visit, you will most likely do one or more of the following:

- ▶ Be shown the online career portal for internships, workshops, jobs, and Career Fairs
- ▶ Complete a career interest inventory
- ▶ Discuss past courses, activities, and jobs
- ▶ Address any issues that may influence your decision-making
- ▶ Be referred to experts in your area of interest—faculty members, alumni, or professionals in the community

Schedule an appointment or visit during walk-in hours. Explore the Career Services website or attend a workshop. But whatever you do, take full advantage of one of your college's most valuable services!

TIP 2

REVIEW YOUR INTERESTS, SKILLS, AND VALUES

*College is first and foremost an opportunity
for self-discovery and personal growth.*

There's a lot to consider when making career decisions.

To ensure that you choose a career field that's a good match for you, examine your interests, skills, and values.

- ▶ **Interests:** topics and activities you find interesting, challenging, and enjoyable
- ▶ **Skills:** areas in which you are proficient or have a natural talent
- ▶ **Values:** what's important to you in terms of the way you want to live and work

Discuss your interests, skills, and values with a Career Counselor. Also, ask about taking a career inventory such as the Strong Interest Inventory, CliftonStrengths Assessment, or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Self-awareness is an integral component to the career decision making process.

TIP 3

INVESTIGATE ALL AVAILABLE MAJORS

80% of college students change their major at least once before they graduate.

One way of categorizing majors is in terms of whether or not they are intended to prepare you for a specific career.

Majors such as Engineering, Education, Nursing, and Architecture prepare students for a career in a particular field.

In contrast, Liberal Arts majors offer a well-rounded education, providing students with the skills necessary to pursue a variety of careers and/or graduate school.

Debates have raged for decades about the relative value of liberal arts vs. career related majors. In fact, there are no “good” or “bad” majors – only majors that are right (or wrong) for you.

Carefully review all available majors, the required coursework, and their related career paths.

TIP 4

MEET WITH YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISOR

Your Academic Advisor is there to help you navigate your way through college. Be sure to use this valuable resource.

Your academic advisor will assist you with course selection and academic planning.

To make the most of your appointments with your advisor, bring a copy of your online degree audit (e.g., DARS) and a list of questions, including questions on the following:

- ▶ General education and major/minor requirements
- ▶ Prerequisites and electives
- ▶ Studying abroad
- ▶ Retaking courses for which you received a poor grade
- ▶ Course withdrawals
- ▶ Courses recommended or required for graduate school admission
- ▶ Taking a course online, Pass/Fail, or at a hometown college during the summer

Don't wait to meet with your advisor until just before course registration when advisors are the busiest. Schedule appointments weeks or months in advance.

TIP 5

PARTICIPATE IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

"One of the best things I did in college was to join clubs. I always felt like I was accomplishing something important—or just having a few laughs." KATE, SENIOR EDUCATION MAJOR

Colleges offer dozens of clubs and organizations – academic, social, athletic, political, spiritual, international, and cultural.

Some clubs, such as Accounting, Pre-Med, Pre-Law, and Nursing, are directly related to a student's career path. Most clubs, however, are not related to a career or major; students simply join because they share common interests.

Student organizations are a great way to learn more about a topic, meet students with similar interests, and participate in activities you enjoy and deem important.

Active involvement tells recruiters that you are a well-rounded individual who takes initiative, manages time effectively, and possesses “soft skills” such as planning and teamwork.

TIP 6

GET TO KNOW YOUR PROFESSORS

"I've gotten to know a few of my professors pretty well just by dropping in during office hours." KEITH, SOPHOMORE ENGINEERING MAJOR

Professors and instructors do more than lecture, administer tests, and grade papers.

In addition to their teaching duties, college faculty members publish articles, conduct research, present at conferences, and do outside consulting. They are smart people who know a thing or two beyond their subject matter. And professors often have contacts in the world "beyond academia," and/or graduate school connections.

Develop positive relationships with your professors. Visit during office hours, ask questions, and share your concerns and aspirations.

A recent study revealed that students who sought out faculty mentors had a 28% higher chance of getting a better-than-average first job after graduation.

TIP 7

CREATE A CAREER TIMELINE

*“Without goals and plans to reach them,
you are like a ship that has set sail with
no destination.”* FITZHUGH DODSON

With proper planning you can have it all—a great college experience and a rewarding career after you graduate.

With classes and an active social life, who has time to research careers, volunteer, work, and meet with academic advisors and career counselors? When these activities are stretched out over 3 to 4 years—you do!

Some career-related tasks span months, whereas others require only an hour or two. But time has a way of slipping away, so create a written timeline with the career-related tasks you intend to complete today, next week, next semester, and/or next summer.

Revise your timeline as tasks are completed and new opportunities arise.

TIP 8

DEVELOP SOFT SKILLS

“Job applicants with excellent soft skills are always at a premium.”

NATHAN CHILTON, PROGRAM SPECIALIST, UNION TANK CAR

Soft Skills are a combination of people skills, character traits, communication skills, and personal attributes.

Soft skills enable people to perform, collaborate, and succeed in their work. These skills are typically developed in “real world” settings rather than in the classroom.

Soft skills include:

- ▶ Communication (verbal and written)
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Positive attitude
- ▶ Professionalism
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Strong work ethic

Hard skills, in contrast, are relevant to a specific job, such as knowing a particular software program. These skills are typically learned in school.

TIP 9

RESEARCH YOUR CAREER OPTIONS

To make informed career choices you must have up-to-date and accurate career information.

Conducting career and industry research is essential for understanding what options exist.

Quick Quiz – Can you answer these questions?

- ▶ *What do Actuaries do? Industrial Engineers? Logistics Coordinators? Public Relations Specialists? Forensic Anthropologists?*
- ▶ *What's the difference between Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants? Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Clinical Social Workers?*

We could pose hundreds of additional questions...but you get the idea.

There are MANY industries and career fields. You probably know a lot about a few, a little about some, and nothing about most of them. Fortunately, this is easily remedied.

Speak to your Career Counselor about how you can learn more about the careers in your areas of interest.

TIP 10

IMPROVE AREAS OF WEAKNESS

*“A weakness, I now realize, is nothing
but a strength not properly developed.”*

FAY WELDON

Everyone has subject areas that could stand some improvement.

While you are in college, look for ways to develop these, and other, skill areas.

- ▶ **Writing** – Take a writing composition class and/or visit the Writing Center.
- ▶ **Public Speaking** – Enroll in a public speaking course. Join Toastmasters.
- ▶ **Art** – You may never become the next Picasso, but you can learn basic graphic and web design software.
- ▶ **Mathematics** – Even the most “mathematically challenged” student can learn to use basic statistics and data management programs. Khan Academy offers great math tutorials.

College is the ideal time to venture out of your comfort zone and develop some new skills.

TIP 11

STAY OUT OF TROUBLE

According to CareerBuilder, 72% of companies conduct background checks on all new employees before they're hired.

Criminal arrests and convictions can permanently impact your job or graduate school prospects.

Misdemeanor and felony arrests and convictions of college students are not uncommon. DUI, drug possession, drug trafficking/distribution, sexual assault, and shoplifting top the list.

Because most employers and graduate schools run background checks on applicants, and/or ask applicants to disclose criminal charges, an arrest and conviction may affect your future.

Bottom line: Criminal behavior can hinder or prevent your entry into many professions.

TIP 12

VISIT THE CAREER SERVICES WEBSITE OFTEN

If Career Services provides a listserv, blog, or Facebook page, be sure to register and read their posts.

Regularly check your Career Services website for events and opportunities.

On the Career Services website you will likely find a Calendar of Events that lists Graduate School, Internship, Career, and Job Fairs, workshops, presentations, and guest speakers. This site may also contain articles and links to a variety of career-related topics.

Career Services sites generally post new job and internship opportunities on an ongoing basis. Check it regularly to ensure that you don't miss application deadlines.

TIP 13

WORK HARD TO GET GOOD GRADES

"One of the smartest things I did was to start hanging out with people who actually care about their grades."

CHRISTIE, SOPHOMORE MARKETING MAJOR

Good grades are important for entry into some, but not all, career fields.

Employers in creative and communication fields (e.g., graphic design, advertising, music, theater, journalism) are primarily concerned with your portfolio of work. If you write like Hemingway or compose like Mozart, getting straight A's is not that important.

In the majority of fields, however, a high GPA carries considerable weight in the interview selection process—and certainly in graduate school admission. When two students with identical credentials apply for a position, the one with the better grades often gets the nod.

A high GPA implies a strong work ethic, as well as excellent problem-solving, multi-tasking, and time-management skills.

TIP 14

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

"A strong indicator of a student's potential work ethic is to look at their passion and commitment towards community service."

TOM TOUZINSKY, DISTRICT MANAGER, PFIZER

Community service provides a variety of personal and professional benefits.

- ▶ Participation in community service offers many of the same benefits as paid work. It provides “real life” work experience, the development of “soft skills,” and professional networking opportunities.
- ▶ Recruiters today are interested in a candidate's moral fiber, ethical values, and concern for others. Serving the less fortunate speaks favorably to the content of your character.
- ▶ Volunteers typically derive as much value from their service as those they're helping. Community service is personally rewarding—sometimes even life changing.

Check out your college's Community Service program for volunteer opportunities. Student organizations, fraternities, and sororities also provide volunteer opportunities. Select a cause that speaks to your heart!

TIP 15

CONSIDER HAVING A MINOR

Minors typically require 15–24 credit hours (five to eight 3-credit hour classes).

The purpose of a minor (or double major) is to provide supplementary knowledge and credentials.

You must declare a major, but minors are optional. If you choose to have a minor, it's ideal if your minor complements your major by providing additional career-related skills and know-how.

Because there can be great value in being bilingual, a foreign language minor is a popular and practical option. Likewise, a minor in English, Business, Communication Studies, or Computer Science provides valuable work-related skills.

A minor also provides an opportunity to pursue a passion. Consider a minor in any topic that interests you.

TIP 16

STRENGTHEN YOUR VERBAL SKILLS

*Speaking well is not to be confused
with talking a lot.*

When recruiters are surveyed about the qualities they seek in graduating college students, the results are always the same. “Communication skills” tops the list.

The college years are the ideal time to strengthen your verbal communication and listening skills. Enroll in a public speaking course, take class presentations seriously, and apply for positions that require speaking before diverse audiences (e.g., campus tour guide).

Eliminate rapid speech, poor grammar, slang, and filler words such as "um," "ah," "you know," and the ubiquitous "like."

View TED Talks for examples of powerful and effective public speakers.

TIP 17

ARRANGE JOB SHADOWING

“My department arranged for some of us to spend the day at a local manufacturing plant. It was a real eye opener for me.”

THAN, JUNIOR INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING MAJOR

Job shadowing is simply hanging out with professionals at work in order to gain first-hand knowledge of their job.

Some colleges offer job shadowing programs, but typically it will be up to you to contact a professional to arrange a job shadowing experience.

In some cases, confidentiality issues may prevent the presence of outsiders at a job site. But while you're networking with professionals and conducting informational interviews, there's no harm in asking about job shadowing opportunities.

During any job shadowing experience, dress and conduct yourself in a manner that's consistent with the professional setting.

TIP 18

AVOID WITHDRAWALS AND INCOMPLETES

Dropping one or more classes during a semester may jeopardize financial aid and work-study eligibility.

Despite your best efforts, classes don't always proceed as planned.

Academic difficulties, illness, or family emergencies may require that you petition for a “W” (Withdrawal) or “I” (Incomplete) in one or more courses. Check with your professor and Academic Advisor about “W” and “I” policies, paperwork, and deadlines.

There are limits to the number of “W’s” and “I’s” that are permitted, and too many on your transcript may be viewed unfavorably by recruiters—even if you had legitimate reasons for receiving them.

Only petition for “W’s” and “I’s” when there is absolutely no alternative.

TIP 19

CLEAN UP YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Do more than clean up your online presence, make it work for you. Posts showcasing your qualifications and professionalism are a plus.

You know this, but it bears repeating. Inappropriate, profane, or immature online posts and photos can sabotage your career or graduate school prospects.

According to a recent survey, more than 70% of recruiters check candidates out on social media sites, with more than half rejecting a candidate based on something they saw.

Remember the Grandma Rule: If you wouldn't say it or show it to your grandmother, then don't post it.

TIP 20

ATTEND CAREER EVENTS

"I attended several career programs and what I learned gave me a real edge when I applied for a job." ANA, SENIOR MATH MAJOR

Campus career events are helpful to any student hoping to find meaningful employment after graduation.

Career events are plentiful at college. You just need to keep an eye out for them.

- ▶ Academic departments bring in alumni to discuss their careers.
- ▶ Companies that recruit on college campuses often conduct presentations on internship and job opportunities. (Note: they typically provide food.)
- ▶ Student and pre-professional organizations (e.g., pre-law, pre-med) and Greek chapters invite guest speakers.
- ▶ Career Services, academic departments, and student groups sponsor programs on topics such as job searching, interviewing, resumes and cover letters, networking, and dining etiquette.

Read the flyers posted throughout campus and regularly check online Event Calendars.

TIP 21

ENRICH YOUR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

"We value students who are learning new languages—and those who are sensitive to the differing styles of living across the globe."

ERIK MILLER, CAMPUS RECRUITER, QUALCOMM

We live in an increasingly diverse society, so it's important to be able to demonstrate your knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse peoples, cultures, and values.

An increasing number of organizations and industries are becoming internationalized through expansion into new worldwide marketplaces.

In the competitive 21st century work setting, having knowledge of other cultures and speaking a foreign language can place you at a distinct advantage.

Exposure to new traditions, ideas, belief systems, and perspectives is personally and professionally beneficial.

TIP 22

MINIMIZE YOUR DEBT

*“You must gain control over your money
or the lack of it will forever control you.”*

DAVE RAMSEY, AUTHOR

Excessive debt can adversely affect your career prospects and personal life.

Debt may limit your ability to:

- ▶ Finance graduate or professional school
- ▶ Pursue a desirable, but lower-paying, social service, public-interest, or teaching job
- ▶ Get loans to start a business of your own
- ▶ Get approved for a car loan, apartment rental, or home loan

Keep debt to a minimum by taking out loans only when 100% necessary—and only for educational expenses.

To help minimize debt, live within a strict budget, apply for scholarships, and work at a part-time and/or summer job.

TIP 23

DEVELOP TEAMWORK SKILLS

Participate in projects that require the Five C's of Teamwork: Collaboration, Cooperation, Communication, Compromise, and Successful Conclusions

“Playing well with others” is as important now as it was in kindergarten.

Teamwork is the cooperative and coordinated effort of a group of people acting together as a team, or in the interest of a common cause. It's an important career skill because achieving goals at work typically requires the efforts of more than one person.

To develop teamwork skills, actively participate in class and campus projects. Ask questions, participate in discussions, listen to other people's points of view, provide constructive feedback, and offer suggestions.

When you're working in a group, avoid the temptation to assume full responsibility to make sure that things get done “your way,” or to retreat and let others do all the work.

TIP 24

LEARN ON YOUR OWN

*“I know of nothing more inspiring than
that of making discoveries for one’s self.”*

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

There is plenty you can learn outside the classroom that will enhance your career skills and employability.

Check out online tutorials and mini-courses from services such as LinkedIn Learning, Khan Academy, Udacity, and EdX.org. Microsoft also offers various certifications.

If your school has a Continuing (or Lifelong) Education program, review the certification programs and non-credit coursework they offer. Also speak to professionals in your area of interest for recommended books, courses, and credential programs.

Learning on your own shows self-motivation, curiosity, and an interest in personal growth—all traits that employers look for.

TIP 25

TEST DRIVE A CAREER WITH AN INTERNSHIP

“My internship made me realize that I had chosen the right major. I love college, but now I’m looking forward to life after college.”

LAUREN, SENIOR MEDIA STUDIES MAJOR

Internships provide the opportunity to obtain relevant work experience while still in college.

Internships offer an inside glimpse of an occupation, company, and industry—while helping you determine if a prospective career is right for you. And since many companies use internship programs to screen prospective full-time hires, internships often turn into job offers.

Students typically complete part-time or full-time internships during the summers following their sophomore and/or junior years. Internships are also available during the school year. Some are paid; many are not. Only pursue internships that involve challenging, career-relevant tasks—rather than "busy work."

Career Services will help you identify internship opportunities in your area of interest.

TIP 26

HONE YOUR WRITING SKILLS

*“The ability to express an idea is well
nigh as important as the idea itself.”*

BERNARD BARUCH

It's not just journalists, editors, and authors who write on the job.

Virtually all occupations require employees to convey ideas via the written word.

Employees write sales reports, case notes, performance evaluations, email messages, PowerPoint presentations, social media posts, and memos. Writing skills are also integral to success in graduate school.

What better time to refine your writing skills than in college? Enroll in elective grammar or composition courses and visit the Writing Center for assistance.

Many otherwise qualified job applicants eliminate their chance of an interview due to poorly written resumes and cover letters. Visit Career Services for assistance on these.

TIP 27

SEEK OUT MENTORS

Mentor was the name of a character in Homer's epic tale, "The Odyssey." He was the teacher and advisor for the king's son.

A mentor can provide guidance on academic and career issues, and much more.

Discussions with a mentor can be on any topic of interest (e.g., finances, relationships, spirituality, career goals). You, the protégé, seek a mentor's guidance, ask questions, and express your gratitude for the mentor's time and efforts.

Contact with your mentor can be made in a variety of ways—in person or via phone, text, email, or video chats.

Mentors can be professors, supervisors at work, family members, or friends of the family—anyone you respect and admire.

TIP 28

ASSUME LEADERSHIP ROLES

"Thanks to my leadership positions in college, I now feel confident in my ability to manage an operation and supervise others."

BREYN, SENIOR BUSINESS MAJOR

Leadership is the ability to influence, guide, and motivate members of an organization or group to achieve shared goals.

The best way to learn leadership skills is to dive right in. Join a team, cause, or club, or start your own. Over time, take on greater responsibilities and leadership roles (e.g., run for an office).

Employers seek candidates with demonstrated leadership skills because of their potential to advance through the ranks, and their ability to inspire and motivate others.

*For information and leadership advice, read **The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People** by Stephen R. Covey and **The New One Minute Manager** by Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson.*

TIP 29

REHEARSE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

“Once I got my elevator pitch down, I felt more confident when approaching professionals and hiring managers.” DEION, SENIOR BUSINESS MAJOR

An elevator pitch is a quick synopsis of your background, skills, and accomplishments.

Businesspeople use “elevator pitches” to quickly spark interest in a project, idea, or product. *College students also need an elevator pitch.*

An elevator pitch allows you to introduce yourself to career contacts in a clear and convincing manner. A good elevator pitch lasts no longer than a 20-30 second elevator ride.

A compelling pitch is important because initial professional contacts are often brief—and you only have one chance to make a good first impression.

Make your pitch at Career, Internship, and Job Fairs, conferences, networking events, and at social situations where professionals congregate.

TIP 30

WORK WHILE IN COLLEGE

"Students who have internship or real world experience gain the edge above other candidates when seeking jobs with Disney."

KATIE MOCK, RECRUITER, DISNEY CAREERSTART PROGRAMS

Nothing predicts future success in the workplace like past success in the workplace.

Recruiters look favorably upon students whose work experience demonstrates time-management skills, a strong work ethic, and an array of other “soft skills” (integrity, leadership, teamwork, etc.).

Work can be on- or off-campus, part-time or full-time, during the summer or during the academic year. You can do an internship, run your own business, perform community service, or assume a leadership position on campus. It’s all work—and it’s all good.

Whether waiting tables, performing computer troubleshooting, or interning at a Fortune 500 Company, balancing college and a job is an impressive and career-enhancing accomplishment.

TIP 31

UPDATE AND INVOLVE YOUR PARENTS

Knowing that you're taking your career preparation seriously should alleviate any concerns your parents may have regarding your future career.

Your parents are likely to be heavily invested in your education. Not just financially, but emotionally as well.

Your parents are proud of you, but perhaps somewhat anxious as well. One of their greatest wishes is that you will find a career that brings you fulfillment and purpose. They want you to be happy.

Make a practice of updating your parents on your efforts to achieve career satisfaction. Tell them about the research you've done, the information you've obtained, the assistance you've received, and the short-term and long-term goals toward which you're working.

Periodically ask your parents for their thoughts and suggestions. They're likely to have some helpful advice, and they may know someone in your area of interest for you to talk to or job shadow.

TIP 32

CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

"Informational interviews are a fun way to gain valuable career information and build your professional network."

HILLES HUGHES, CAREER CENTER DIR, MARIETTA COLLEGE

An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in a field that interests you.

An informational interview is not a job interview, and the objective is not to find a job—it is to gather information.

If you already know people in your area of interest, ask if they will meet with you in person, video chat, or discuss their work with you over the phone. If you don't know anyone in your area of interest, do an online search, use LinkedIn, or visit Career Services and the Alumni Office to connect with professionals.

Prepare a list of questions prior to the conversation, and follow-up with a thank you note.

There's no need to be shy about contacting professionals—most people enjoy talking about their work.

TIP 33

ATTEND CAREER, INTERNSHIP, AND JOB FAIRS

"I attended a Job Fair when I was a junior, so I knew what to expect this year when it counted." DREW, SENIOR COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR

Imagine how convenient it would be if dozens, or even hundreds, of recruiters and hiring managers convened in a single location to meet with you.

Well, they do! They are called Career, Internship, or Job Fairs. You meet company representatives, submit your resume, demonstrate your communication and interviewing skills, and learn about various careers, jobs, and organizations.

Even if you're not currently seeking an internship or job, attend fairs sponsored by Career Services or academic departments. Think of it as a dress rehearsal.

But don't arrive the day of the fair and wander aimlessly from table to table. You need to prepare—which conveniently leads us to Tip 34.

TIP 34

PREPARE FOR CAREER, INTERNSHIP, AND JOB FAIRS

Visit Career Services a week or more in advance to ensure that you're prepared for the fair.

You wouldn't walk into an exam without having studied, or give a speech without having rehearsed it. The same applies to Career, Internship, and Job Fairs.

Do the following a week or more in advance:

- ▶ Fine tune your resume.
- ▶ Gather the appropriate attire.
- ▶ Rehearse your greeting and elevator pitch (your personal 20-30 second marketing pitch).
- ▶ Research organizations of interest and create a list of questions regarding internships and/or full-time positions.

Arrive early, carrying a portfolio for your notes and resumes. Approach each recruiter with direct eye contact and a smile.

This is your opportunity to impress recruiters with your preparation, confidence, and enthusiasm.

TIP 35

POLISH YOUR RESUME

"A well-designed resume provides employers with a snapshot of the candidate's potential to be successful in the organization."

KEITH ROGENSKI, ASST SUPERINTENDENT, BENICA USD

Your resume is a marketing tool that highlights your education, accomplishments, work experience, talents, and skills.

Resumes should be concise, error-free, and well organized. They must be readable by people and computers (i.e., Applicant Tracking systems).

Resumes are not just for internship and job hunting. Your resume also provides a way of keeping track of your activities, and it serves as a reminder of what else you need to accomplish before you graduate.

Visit Career Services for assistance in creating a polished and professional appearing resume.

TIP 36

CREATE A LINKEDIN PROFILE

"Use LinkedIn to create a professional online presence—and to identify and connect with recruiters and alumni."

EMILY BAXT, CAREER CENTER, UNIV. OF SAN DIEGO

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are social networking sites. LinkedIn, in contrast, is a very popular and valuable professional networking site.

A free LinkedIn profile allows you to:

- ▶ Maintain a professional online presence
- ▶ Present information on your education, skills, experience, and accomplishments
- ▶ Create links to your website, artwork, blog, PowerPoint presentations, and/or writing samples
- ▶ Join professional groups and participate in forum discussions
- ▶ Keep abreast of trends in your career field
- ▶ Find jobs, and be found by recruiters

LinkedIn is a very powerful networking tool. Invite fellow LinkedIn users to become “Connections” and provide recommendations. Get started at [LinkedIn Help](#).

TIP 37

LEARN PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE

Two fundamentals of professional etiquette:

- 1. Show up five minutes early for everything.*
- 2. Silence your phone.*

At some point you will be judged by your behavior in an interview or other professional setting. Now is the time to prepare.

To demonstrate professional etiquette:

- ▶ Dress appropriately.
- ▶ Make direct eye contact.
- ▶ Introduce yourself properly.
- ▶ Communicate with a strong, clear speaking voice.
- ▶ Avoid slang or foul language.
- ▶ Use appropriate table manners.
- ▶ Master the art of mingling, networking, and remembering names.

Participate in professional etiquette seminars offered by Career Services and student organizations. There are also many YouTube videos on this topic.

TIP 38

NETWORK NETWORK NETWORK

Networking is by far the most important aspect of career preparation and the job search.

Networking is a critical component of career development.

Networking is all about interacting with people who can do you some good. It involves reaching out to people you already know (family, neighbors, friends of the family, teachers) and people you would like to meet (professionals in your field, alumni, graduate students).

The more you network, the more likely it is that you will receive helpful career and academic advice, internship/job offers, and introductions to others in your field.

Speak to your Career Counselor about networking events, LinkedIn Connections, and other networking strategies.

TIP 39

UPGRADE YOUR TECH SKILLS

“What a computer is to me is the most remarkable tool that we have ever come up with. It’s the equivalent of a bicycle for our minds.” STEVE JOBS

You may never write a line of code, but you will be using a computer at work.

Business professionals use Excel and QuickBooks; healthcare professionals use patient information managements systems, and teachers use Moodle, Blackboard, and other course management tools. Artists use Corel Painter and social scientists crunch data with SAS and SPSS. *And on and on across all industries.*

It is to your advantage to become familiar with the applications used in your field. It's equally important to acquaint yourself with the technology utilized by a wide variety of industries, such as web design, database management, social media, cloud storage, and desktop publishing.

Even if a program is not commonly used in your field of interest, proficiency demonstrates your comfort level with computers—which will be a plus for you in the hiring process.

TIP 40

REACH OUT TO ALUMNI

“When networking with alumni, you should leave them feeling valued and appreciated. Always follow up with a note of thanks.”

DARA WILSON-GRANT, PRESIDENT, CAREERS IN BLOOM

Large state universities may have over a half million living alumni. Smaller schools have thousands or tens of thousands.

Alumni are a particularly valuable resource for career information and advice. Most alumni have a strong allegiance to their school and feel a kinship with their school's current students.

Reach out to alumni for academic and career advice—and also for information about the companies they've worked for and/or the graduate programs they have attended.

Contact the Alumni Office and use tools such as Switchboard, CampusTap, and LinkedIn to locate and contact alumni in your area of interest.

TIP 41

CONSIDER GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate study is required of some professions, an option for others, and unnecessary in many fields.

Attending graduate school is a major life decision that should be made with care and consideration.

Two "bad reasons" for attending graduate school are 1) you don't know what else to do; 2) you want to please or impress someone.

Good reasons include:

- ▶ You have firm career plans for which graduate study is required or advisable.
- ▶ You've met all of the application requirements.
- ▶ You have the financial means to attend, or are comfortable with the amount of debt you will incur.

You may want to consider delaying graduate school until you've gained more work experience and/or paid down debt.

TIP 42

CONNECT WITH ORGANIZATIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Recruiting uses social media profiles, blogs, and other internet sites to find and gather information on candidates.

More and more companies now post internship and job opportunities on social media sites. It's called "Social Recruiting."

If you dream of working for a specific company or nonprofit organization, be sure to follow them on social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Doing so demonstrates your interest in an internship or future full-time position.

Connecting on social media is also a good way to find contests, scholarships, internships, and job openings.

TIP 43

INVEST IN INTERVIEW ATTIRE

"Those who come across as polished and pulled together are quite simply more likely to be hired than those who are seen as putting in less effort." "DRESS FOR INTERVIEW SUCCESS" FORBES

In order to make a good impression, you need to have the proper attire for interviews and professional events.

Men should wear a navy or dark gray suit, with matching black or brown shoes and belt, a long-sleeved white or light-colored shirt, a subdued tie, and tall black socks.

Women should wear a navy, dark gray, or black skirt or pant suit with a coordinating shirt or blouse. Avoid wearing short skirts and low cut blouses, and wear neutral colored shoes – either professional flats or heels under two inches.

It may seem ridiculous that a wrinkled blouse or grease stained tie can sabotage four years of hard work. But it happens all the time—otherwise qualified candidates are rejected because of inappropriate attire at an interview or Job Fair.

TIP 44

CULTIVATE PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

Business recruiters and hiring managers typically arrange to speak with references by phone.

Many recruiters, and all graduate programs, require letters of recommendation, or they request contact information for references.

Develop relationships with three or four “Professional References” who can speak to your work habits, integrity, initiative, and reliability. They can be professors, college administrators, religious leaders, or supervisors from work.

References should be people familiar with the quality of your work and/or academic achievements. References should not be friends, co-workers, or family members.

Don't wait until the last minute to identify and contact references. Cultivate relationships with your references over the course of your college career.

TIP 45

PREPARE FOR PHONE AND VIDEO INTERVIEWS

The phone or video screening interview is typically the first interview in the hiring process.

Many organizations schedule initial interviews via phone or video chat.

Organizations do phone and video interviews as a convenient and inexpensive way to screen candidates for in-person interviews.

“Remote interviewing” requires special preparation. Your connection must be perfect, and your video view must be free of background distractions. With the absence of “body language” and visual cues, the speed, volume, and clarity of your speech are particularly important.

Check with Career Services about practice sessions, and the availability of quiet interview rooms for your phone or video interviews.

TIP 46

EXPLORE ONLINE JOB SITES

Over three quarters of job seekers use mobile apps to search for jobs.

Online job sites post an array of internships and full-time positions. They are also a great source of career information.

Read online job postings and you'll see the qualifications, education, skills, and qualities that recruiters are seeking in job candidates. You'll also learn about job titles, companies, job responsibilities, and salaries.

There are hundreds of specialized and general job sites, including CareerBuilder, Monster, WayUp, Simply Hired, Glassdoor, Indeed, LinkedIn, and Idealist (for nonprofit positions).

An especially good job site to explore for entry-level jobs is your college's Career Services online job portal.

TIP 47

STRENGTHEN YOUR CREDIT SCORE

*Credit scores range between 300 – 850.
A score of 700 or more is generally
considered to be "good."*

You get a credit score once you apply for a credit card, take out a loan, or open a bank account in your own name.

Your credit score estimates your likelihood of repaying a future loan or credit card balance, paying rent, or making utility payments. In the states that allow it, a large number of employers check a potential employee's credit report as part of the hiring process.

Your credit history is considered by some employers to be a reflection of your trustworthiness and responsibility. This is especially common in accounting, money management, law enforcement, and other government positions.

To build good credit, avoid excessive debt and pay your bills on time, and in full.

TIP 48

PRACTICE INTERVIEWING SKILLS

The key to effective interviewing is to project confidence, and to share examples of your skills and qualifications for the job.

Most students dread the prospect of interviewing for an internship, full-time position, or a spot in a graduate program. But fear not—interviewing is an acquired skill.

Practice and preparation is the best remedy for “interview jitters.” Career Services offers practice (or “mock”) interviews, workshops and videos, and sample questions/answers.

Here are some common interview prompts and questions:

- ▶ Tell me about yourself.
- ▶ What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- ▶ Why are you interested in this position?
- ▶ How will you contribute to our organization?
- ▶ Tell me about a time when you demonstrated teamwork (or initiative or creative problem solving).

*Do you know how to answer these questions?
You will if you prepare in advance.*

TIP 49

WRITE COMPELLING COVER LETTERS

A cover letter should not repeat what's on your resume. Instead, address how you will contribute to the success of the organization.

With each internship and job application, include a letter expressing your interest. This letter should also highlight your most relevant and impressive accomplishments.

A cover letter should accompany your resume when applying for a posted position. It's often your first contact with a recruiter so it is particularly important that it portray you in a positive and professional manner.

The same applies to prospecting (or “inquiry”) letters—which you submit when no position has been posted. Prospecting letters show that you are proactive and have a genuine interest in joining an organization.

Whether written as an email, attachment, or hard copy document, cover letters must be well written, succinct, and tailored to each position.

TIP 50

EXPRESS YOUR APPRECIATION

“Handwritten notes cost nothing, mean something, and have permanence in a way emails and text messages don’t.”

JOHN COLEMAN, HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW CONTRIBUTOR

Assistance is readily available at college. Gratitude should be equally plentiful.

In college, academic, career, and personal guidance is available from a variety of sources.

- ▶ Career counselors, academic advisors, and alumni share their knowledge.
- ▶ Professors and work supervisors serve as references and write letters of recommendation.
- ▶ Employers make on-campus presentations and conduct interviews.

Make a practice of expressing your gratitude for advice, support, and opportunities. Often a simple "thank you" will suffice.

Thanks sent in an email or text message may be fine, but an old-fashioned hand-written thank you note will set you apart.

TIP 51

ENJOY THE JOURNEY

*“The future belongs to those who believe
in the beauty of their dreams.”*

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Planning and preparation during your college years will help put you on the path to a satisfying and productive career.

College lasts about four years—more if you attend graduate school. *Your career will span four or more decades.*

Your career is an ongoing lifelong journey full of successes and occasional setbacks. Every step along the way presents unique challenges and new opportunities to learn about yourself—and the world of work.

To help you prepare for your career and get the most out of your college experience, take full advantage of the services and support available at your college.

51 TIP REVIEW

- TIP 1 Visit Career Services
- TIP 2 Review Your Interests, Skills, and Values
- TIP 3 Investigate All Available Majors
- TIP 4 Meet with Your Academic Advisor
- TIP 5 Participate in Student Organizations
- TIP 6 Get to Know Your Professors
- TIP 7 Create a Career Timeline
- TIP 8 Develop Soft Skills
- TIP 9 Research Your Career Options
- TIP 10 Improve Areas of Weakness
- TIP 11 Stay Out of Trouble
- TIP 12 Visit the Career Services Website Often
- TIP 13 Work Hard to Get Good Grades
- TIP 14 Volunteer Your Time
- TIP 15 Consider Having a Minor
- TIP 16 Strengthen Your Verbal Skills
- TIP 17 Arrange Job Shadowing

- TIP 18 Avoid Withdrawals and Incompletes
- TIP 19 Clean Up Your Online Presence
- TIP 20 Attend Career Events
- TIP 21 Enrich Your Cultural Competence
- TIP 22 Minimize Your Debt
- TIP 23 Develop Teamwork Skills
- TIP 24 Learn on Your Own
- TIP 25 Test Drive a Career with an Internship
- TIP 26 Hone Your Writing Skills
- TIP 27 Seek Out Mentors
- TIP 28 Assume Leadership Roles
- TIP 29 Rehearse Your Elevator Pitch
- TIP 30 Work While in College
- TIP 31 Update and Involve Your Parents
- TIP 32 Conduct Informational Interviews
- TIP 33 Attend Career, Internship, and Job Fairs
- TIP 34 Prepare for Career, Internship, and Job Fairs
- TIP 35 Polish Your Resume

- TIP 36 Create a LinkedIn Profile
- TIP 37 Learn Professional Etiquette
- TIP 38 Network, Network, Network
- TIP 39 Upgrade Your Tech Skills
- TIP 40 Reach Out to Alumni
- TIP 41 Consider Graduate School
- TIP 42 Connect with Organizations on Social Media
- TIP 43 Invest in Interview Attire
- TIP 44 Cultivate Professional References
- TIP 45 Prepare for Phone and Video Interviews
- TIP 46 Explore Online Job Sites
- TIP 47 Strengthen Your Credit Score
- TIP 48 Practice Interviewing Skills
- TIP 49 Write Compelling Cover Letters
- TIP 50 Express Your Appreciation
- TIP 51 Enjoy the Journey

While you are in college, surround yourself with people who have your best interests in mind. Constantly ask questions, seek help, and...enjoy the journey.

About the Authors

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