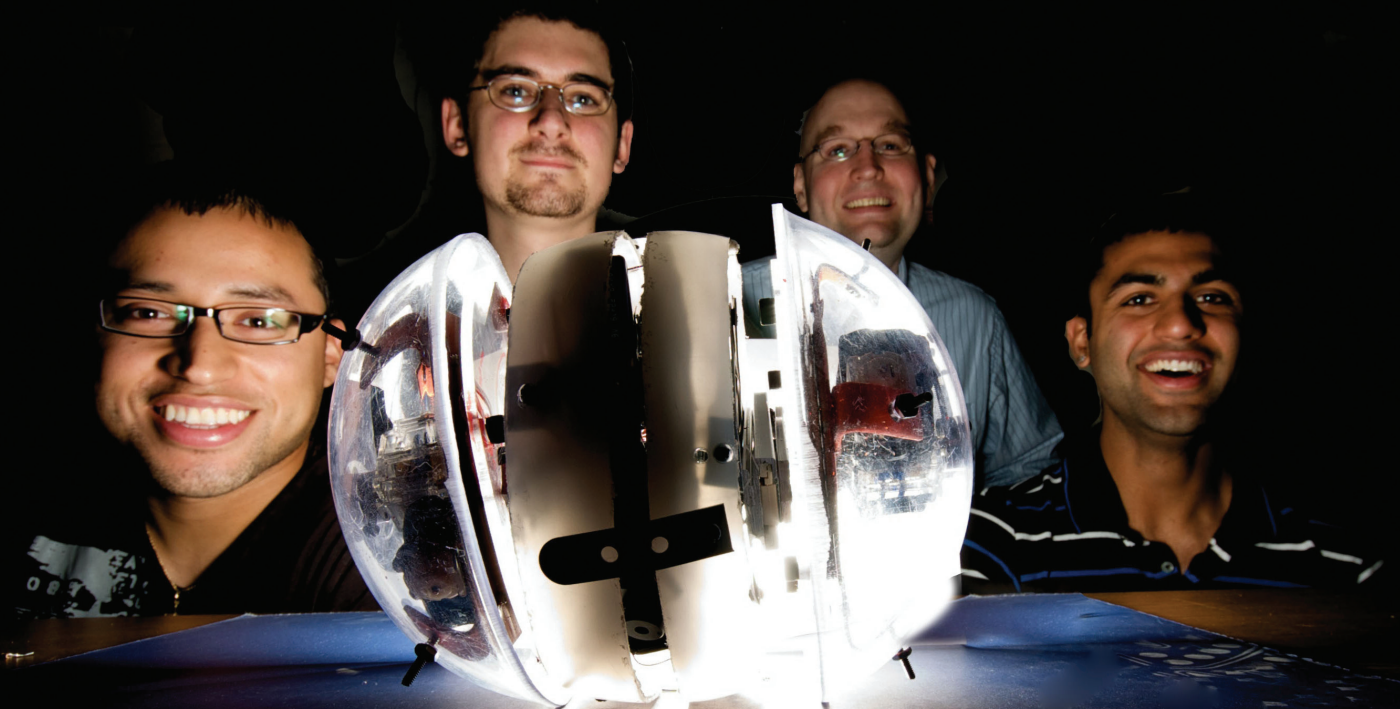


2010-2011

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK



College of Engineering Career Center



**UMASS**  
**AMHERST**

# WELCOME TO THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING CAREER AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**T**he Engineering Career and Student Development Center is here to help prepare students for career and professional opportunities and to provide a place where engineering students, faculty, and employers can meet and develop mutual and beneficial relationships.

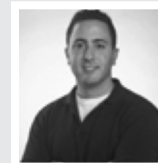


Planning for your engineering career is key to being prepared when opportunities for internships, co-ops, and jobs arise. The Career Center offers workshops for resume and cover letter writing, career fair preparation, and interview skills. Located in Marston 114, we provide sample resumes, cover letters, and thank-you notes to assist you and provide one-on-one counseling between 9:00-5:00 M-F.

Throughout the year we hold a variety of corporate information sessions for companies such as ExxonMobil, General Electric, Abbott Labs, CDM, Raytheon, and Westinghouse. We also work closely with companies to organize networking events, workshops, and plant tours. When you are ready to gain relevant engineering experience, check out our Engineering job board and the UMass Career Center's searchable job database which includes internship, co-op, and full-time positions.

—Cheryl Brooks  
Director, Career & Student Development  
College of Engineering

*“The Career Center was there for me step-by-step through the job interviewing process, and helped me land a career opportunity that truly fits my future career goals and success. At the Center I received productive feedback on everything related to getting the job that I wanted—from receiving critique on my resume to discovering the do’s and don’ts of the job interview. In the increasingly competitive job market, the Career Center has served as a platform in helping me attain the skills and advice essential to getting where I want to be.”*



— Jonathan Labaki '08

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**On the cover:** The student team of Lam Nguyen, Monish Lillaney, Sergio Sian, and Seth Roda produced this fully interactive robotic explorer, codenamed FireBall, for its Electrical and Computer Engineering Department Senior Design Project. Fireball is designed to be released into a potentially dangerous and hostile environment in order to avoid human casualties.

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# CAREER DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

2010-2011

College of Engineering  
Career Center



UMASS  
AMHERST



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# UMASS AMHERST CAREER SERVICES

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**T**he Engineering Career Center works closely with the UMass Career Services Center to host over 90 companies at the Engineering and Technology Fair in the fall. In the spring, students can attend the Campus-Wide Career Fair, ALANA, Life Sciences, or Summer Internship/Co-op Fairs.

Engineering students also have access to other services provided by the UMass Career Services Center, including workshops, mock interviews, and networking events. The UMass Career Services Center maintains an interactive, searchable job board which allows students to search for jobs all over the country as well as international opportunities. The site, found at [www.umass.experience.com](http://www.umass.experience.com), is easy to use and provides detailed information about the employer and specific positions.

## First-Time Login to [experience.com](http://experience.com)

The [experience.com](http://experience.com) portal page provides instructions, but the following overview will give you an idea of what to expect.

To log-in for the first time use the following default user name and password.

user name = **uma + your 8-digit SPIRE ID number**  
(example: uma12345678)

password = **your 8-digit SPIRE ID number**

Follow on-screen prompts to complete any missing information in your record. Red dots indicate required information.

**UMass Amherst**  
**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

# *Career Tools and Services for You*

As a student at UMass Amherst, you have access to many **FREE** career-related resources and programs through your Alumni Association.

*Start taking advantage right now!*



**MaroonCentral** – online directory for professional networking

**CareerBeam** – company & industry database research and personal assessment tools

**Minuteman Mentors** – listing of alumni mentors to contact for guidance and advice

**Campus to Career programs** – etiquette dinners, alumni career panels, and more

**Kaplan** – UMass Amherst portal for discounted rates on test-prep products

**Go to [UMassAlumni.com](http://UMassAlumni.com) • Register on MaroonCentral • Get started today!**

---

## **MAROON** **CENTRAL**

*Student & Alumni Online Directory*

The UMass Amherst Alumni Association is dedicated to providing services and programs that enrich, strengthen, and develop the academic and social experience of the university's student body. Whether you need to decide on a career path or secure your first professional job, there are career programs available through the Alumni Association that can help you now as a student.

### **MaroonCentral**

Make a career connection with over 215,000 alumni through this exclusive online community.

**MaroonCentral** is a free social networking tool offered to UMass Amherst alumni and students to enhance communications and professional development.

An alumni ID is required to register for **MaroonCentral**. You can access your alumni ID by contacting the Alumni Association at [alumni@admin.umass.edu](mailto:alumni@admin.umass.edu) or 800.456.UMASS. All students are encouraged to login to **MaroonCentral** at [UMassAlumni.com](http://UMassAlumni.com) to take full advantage of available information, networking opportunities, career development tools and online services!





**CareerBeam** is a virtual career success center that provides the best company and industry research tools, international databases, and lead generation technology available in the market. **CareerBeam** also has a career development seminar series with assessments, professional resume and cover letter builders and search strategy resources. Search out job leads, FAQs, and links to over 300 career resources. Best of all –it’s available 24/7 at no cost to you!

## Minuteman Mentors

Choosing a career, deciding which classes to take, or relocating after graduation can be overwhelming, but talking with a UMass Amherst graduate can help. The Alumni Association’s goal is to facilitate mentoring networks that offer alumni the opportunity to provide guidance to students.

Through Minuteman Mentors you can connect with alumni for mentoring advice as well as social and professional networking. Reach out to alumni worldwide for information about careers and professions, internships, graduate school, social and cultural activities, and many other areas of interest. You can access Minuteman Mentors on **MaroonCentral**.

## LinkedIn



According to About.com, 80% of successful job seekers said that their network assisted them in their job search efforts. You can start by joining the **UMass Amherst Alumni LinkedIn Group** and start connecting with over 9,500 members already networking there!



Contacts can provide inside information about a company that would otherwise not be available to you and advice on short and long-term career strategies. It is the most powerful career approach for anyone looking for a job.

## Campus to Career Programs



Campus to Career Programs provide relevant resources and information to students through a variety of venues, such as interactive sessions linking students to professionals in the field and by coordinating topic-specific workshops for student groups.



Throughout the academic year, accomplished alumni come back to campus to speak to current students, and share insights from their professional life on a variety of topics. Ongoing topics consist of entrepreneurship, networking, interview skills, salary negotiating, resume writing, career options, business etiquette, etc. It’s never too early to start thinking about career options and to develop the skills needed to be successful after college.

## Kaplan

Kaplan’s unparalleled test preparation courses provide students with expert teachers, proven score-raising strategies, and realistic practice materials. Prepare with Kaplan and save: 10%\* off all GMAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT, OAT, PCAT, DAT, ACT/SAT (classes \$999+) and TOEFL Classroom Courses, Live-Online Courses, Premium Online Courses, Private Tutoring Programs and Deluxe Programs.

*\*To redeem this offer, visit [UMassAlumni.com/students](http://UMassAlumni.com/students) and click on the Kaplan ad. Enter promotion code **MAAA10** during the checkout process. To work properly, the code must be entered in all caps and without any spaces before or after the code. Please note this offer may only be redeemed online through the UMass Amherst Alumni Association.*



# CAREER CHECKLIST

**A**s you progress through your college career, it is important to develop your professional skills and to participate in career-related events. The following is a suggested timeline of specific activities and tasks that will help you to reach your engineering career goals.

## First Year

- Attend company information sessions to learn more about the various engineering careers.
- Access and develop your skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork through both academic and extracurricular activities. Take initiative to start a project and see it through to completion.
- Begin your resume—attend a resume workshop.
- Begin building a network of support through friends, mentors, upperclassmen, staff, and faculty.
- Work hard in your academic classes—companies often base internship offers on student grades.
- Plan a related work experience for the summer between your first and second year. While a research position or an internship would be ideal, other experiences can also be useful. For example, if you are a civil engineer, look for a construction or landscaping job. If you are a mechanical engineer, jobs in manufacturing or at the hardware store could prove helpful.

## Second Year

- Update your resume—add any relevant experience or soft skills that you gained over the previous semester or summer.
- Attend company information sessions to learn more about what companies in your field of interest are doing.
- Attend the Engineering Career Fair in the fall and the Campus-Wide and Internship Fairs in the spring.
- Attend various workshops on resume writing, dress for success, interview preparation or career fair preparation to hone your skills.
- Join and participate in engineering student societies or other student organizations or community service.
- Check out the National Science Foundation’s website: [www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu\\_search.cfm](http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu_search.cfm). Make a list of Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program sites you are interested in and plan to apply (note deadlines!).
- Ask faculty for letters of recommendation for REU applications.
- Explore internship opportunities through the College of Engineering Career Center job board and the UMass Career Center E-recruiting website.

## Third Year

- Update your resume.
- Attend various workshops EARLY in the semester so that you will be prepared for the career fairs.

- Attend the Engineering Career Fair in the fall and the Campus-Wide and Internship Fairs in the spring.
- Attend company information sessions and begin thinking about the type of work you would be doing for a company, the company culture, ability to gain and utilize a variety of skills, as well as the company locations.
- Check out the National Science Foundation’s website: [www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu\\_search.cfm](http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu_search.cfm). Make a list of REU sites you are interested in and plan to apply (note deadlines!).
- Ask faculty for letters of recommendation for REU applications.
- Explore internship opportunities through the College of Engineering Career Center job board and the UMass Career Center E-recruiting website.
- Continue to participate in student societies and organizations—begin to take on leadership roles.
- Attend the Graduate School information session and talk with faculty advisors or College of Engineering Career Center advisors to help make this decision.
- If you decide on graduate school, set up a timeline for studying and taking the GRE, LSAT, or GMAT and for meeting all grad school deadlines.

## Fourth Year

- Polish your resume.
- Attend various workshops to fill any gaps in interview skills, dressing for success, job-search techniques, etc.
- Attend the Engineering Career Fair in the fall, the Campus-Wide Career Fair in the spring, and all information sessions. Make sure you know what recruiters are looking for and be prepared to present your technical and communication skills at these various events.
- READ YOUR EMAIL from the Engineering Career Center. We will send you information about specific jobs, fairs, networking events and workshops on a regular basis.
- Regularly check the E-recruiting site and the Engineering job board for new listings. Stay open to a variety of job options and company locations.
- Follow up with companies you meet at information sessions, career fairs, or interviews. Make sure you present yourself in a professional manner—through phone conversations, email, thank-you notes, or in person.
- Prepare to take the FE exam before leaving school—many companies require this for employment. The deadline to apply for the October exam is September 1; the deadline to apply for the April exam is March 1.

# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF A CAREER FAIR

**M**any 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 “dos and don’ts.”

In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on the ubiquitous freebies, you really haven’t accomplished anything worthwhile (unless you’re a collector of key chains, mousepads and pocket flashlights). It is essential to chat with the company representatives and ask meaningful questions.

Here’s a great bit of career fair advice from Stanford University’s *Career Fair* guide:

“Create a one-minute ‘commercial’ as a way to sell yourself to an employer. This is a great way to introduce yourself. The goal is to connect your background to the organization’s need. In one minute or less, you need to introduce yourself, demonstrate your knowledge of the company, express enthusiasm and interest and relate your background to the company’s need.”

## 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

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.

## 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, “You were so busy that we didn’t get a chance to meet. 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 and, if available, view their company DVD). A little advance preparation goes a long way and can make you stand out among the masses of other attendees.



# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: INTERNSHIPS, CO-OPS, ACADEMIC RESEARCH

**R**elevant engineering experience allows you to apply academic concepts in practice and explore possible career options. In addition, the skills and knowledge acquired through experiential learning make you more marketable to companies.

Reports from a variety of sources show that, compared to the average, students who participate in these programs:

- Do better in school
- Are ahead in preparation for their field
- Are viewed as better candidates in job interviews
- Receive more job offers
- Earn higher starting salaries
- Are more likely to get the job with the employer they want after graduation

Other benefits of Internships and Experiential Education Programs include developing transferable skills such as: communication, critical thinking, teamwork, change management, information technology, leadership, self-managed learning, interpersonal diversity, ethics, social responsibility, and technical knowledge.

## Internship

An internship is a work experience, usually in the summer, related to your major. Most engineering internships are paid and the terms of payment are worked out between the company and the student. The Engineering Career Center and the UMass

Career Center regularly post internships on their job boards. In addition, an internship/co-op fair is held each spring.

## Co-op

A co-op is a three to nine month position related to your major. Engineering co-op positions are paid and take place during the school semester. During a co-op you maintain your status as an enrolled UMass Amherst student but do not pay tuition. Once you have accepted a co-op position, you must meet with the field experience coordinator in Goodell 511 to fill out the necessary paperwork.

## Research Experience

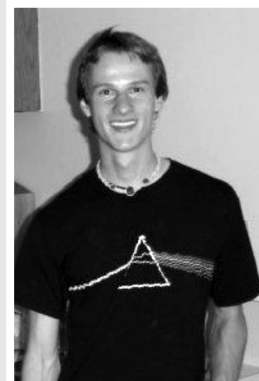
Many students participate in research projects with UMass Amherst engineering professors throughout the semester. These research projects may either be paid or unpaid. In general, faculty look for students with outstanding grades and a demonstrated interest in their specific engineering field when hiring a student.

The National Science Foundation sponsors the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program each year. This program supports undergraduate research through projects that are funded through NSF grants. You must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident to qualify for this program. Last year, approximately 150 academic institutions, national labs and research centers operated a REU program. To search for specific positions, go to: [http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu\\_search.cfm](http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu_search.cfm).

*“My internship at IBM could not be better! I love the job, my manager, and all my co-workers.*

*They had me dive immediately into a very interesting project, one that will be extremely challenging yet manageable in the time frame. The internship system is very organized, with weekly events, an assigned mentor, etc.”*

— Darius Lisowski '09 ME



# CREATING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

**T**he resume serves as a marketing tool to highlight your relevant experience and skills, as well as your accomplishments. Your resume will not get the job for you, but it will, if effective, result in interviews.

Your resume must be concise, easy to read and understand, and use words that are familiar to the reader and have universal appeal. The goals of your resume are to: illustrate achievements, attributes, and expertise to the best possible advantage and minimize any possible weaknesses. Your resume should provide all of the information necessary to allow a prospective employer to identify your transferable skills.

When applying to engineering positions you should demonstrate technical acumen, problem-solving skills, a results-oriented mindset, teamwork, and communication skills.

## The Top 10 Pitfalls in Resume Writing

1. Too long. Restrict your resume to one page.
2. Typographical, grammatical, or spelling errors. Have at least two people proofread your resume.
3. Hard to read. Keep it simple with clean lines and white space.
4. Too verbose. Say as much as possible with as few words as possible, avoid use of jargon.
5. Not enough information. Give dates describing related work experience, be specific about skills, accomplishments, activities, interests, and memberships.
6. Irrelevant information. Customize each resume to each position you seek (when possible). Of course, include education and work experience, but emphasize relevant experience, skills, accomplishments and activities. Do not include marital status, age, sex, children, height, weight, health, church membership, etc.
7. Obviously generic. Tweak each resume according to the job description. The employer needs to feel that you are interested in that particular position with his or her company.
8. Too fancy. Avoid exotic fonts, colored paper, photographs, binders, and graphics. Electronic resumes should include appropriate industry keywords and use a font size between 10-12 points. Use italics and bold face sparingly.
9. Too static. Make your resume as dynamic as possible. Begin every statement with an action verb. Use active verbs to describe what you have accomplished in past jobs. Take advantage of your rich vocabulary and avoid repeating words, especially the first word in a section.
10. Too modest. The resume showcases your qualifications in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward without misrepresentation, falsification, or arrogance.

Career Services

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### CLE Recruits:

Highly motivated intern candidates during the college semester as well as summer opportunities with the potential for temporary West Coast assignments. For more information email our alumni recruiter or visit our website.

CLE Engineering, Inc.  
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Marion, MA 02738

CLE Engineering, Inc.  
250 Bel Marin Keys Blvd.  
Novato, CA 94949

email: [wrocha@cleengineering.com](mailto:wrocha@cleengineering.com)  
website: [www.cleengineering.com](http://www.cleengineering.com)

## ACTION VERBS

### Management Skills

Administered  
Analyzed  
Assigned  
Chaired  
Consolidated  
Contracted  
Coordinated  
Delegated  
Developed  
Directed  
Evaluated  
Executed  
Organized  
Oversaw  
Planned  
Prioritized  
Produced  
Recommended  
Reorganized  
Reviewed  
Scheduled  
Supervised

### Communication Skills

Addressed  
Arbitrated  
Arranged  
Authored  
Co-authored  
Collaborated  
Corresponded  
Developed  
Directed  
Drafted  
Enlisted  
Formulated  
Influenced  
Interpreted  
Lectured  
Mediated  
Moderated  
Negotiated  
Persuaded  
Promoted  
Proposed  
Publicized  
Reconciled  
Recruited

Spoke  
Translated  
Wrote

### Research Skills

Clarified  
Collected  
Critiqued  
Diagnosed  
Evaluated  
Examined  
Extracted  
Identified  
Inspected  
Inspired  
Interpreted  
Interviewed  
Investigated  
Organized  
Reviewed  
Summarized  
Surveyed  
Systemized

### Technical Skills

Assembled  
Built  
Calculated  
Computed  
Designed  
Devised  
Engineered  
Fabricated  
Maintained  
Operated  
Pinpointed  
Programmed  
Remodeled  
Repaired  
Solved

### Teaching Skills

Adapted  
Advised  
Clarified  
Coached  
Communicated  
Conducted  
Coordinated

Developed  
Enabled  
Encouraged  
Evaluated  
Explained  
Facilitated  
Guided  
Informed  
Instructed  
Lectured  
Persuaded  
Set goals  
Stimulated  
Taught  
Trained

### Financial Skills

Administered  
Allocated  
Analyzed  
Appraised  
Audited  
Balanced  
Budgeted  
Calculated  
Computed  
Developed  
Managed  
Planned  
Projected  
Researched

### Creative Skills

Acted  
Conceptualized  
Created  
Customized  
Designed  
Developed  
Directed  
Established  
Fashioned  
Illustrated  
Instituted  
Integrated  
Performed  
Planned  
Proved  
Revised

Revitalized  
Set up  
Shaped  
Streamlined  
Structured  
Tabulated  
Validated

### Helping Skills

Assessed  
Assisted  
Clarified  
Coached  
Counseled  
Demonstrated  
Diagnosed  
Educated  
Facilitated  
Familiarized  
Guided  
Inspired  
Motivated  
Participated  
Provided  
Referred  
Rehabilitated  
Reinforced  
Represented  
Supported  
Taught  
Trained  
Verified

### Clerical or Detail Skills

Approved  
Arranged  
Catalogued  
Classified  
Collected  
Compiled  
Dispatched  
Executed  
Filed  
Generated  
Implemented  
Inspected  
Monitored  
Operated

Ordered  
Organized  
Prepared  
Processed  
Purchased  
Recorded  
Retrieved  
Screened  
Specified  
Systematized

### Stronger Verbs for Accomplishments

Accelerated  
Achieved  
Attained  
Completed  
Conceived  
Convinced  
Discovered  
Doubled  
Effected  
Eliminated  
Expanded  
Expedited  
Founded  
Improved  
Increased  
Initiated  
Innovated  
Introduced  
Invented  
Launched  
Mastered  
Originated  
Overcame  
Overhauled  
Pioneered  
Reduced  
Resolved  
Revitalized  
Spearheaded  
Strengthened  
Transformed  
Upgraded

*From To Boldly Go: Practical Career Advice for Scientists, by Peter S. Fiske*

# RESUME OUTLINE

## NAME EMAIL ADDRESS

**CURRENT ADDRESS  
PHONE NUMBER**

**PERMANENT ADDRESS  
PHONE NUMBER**

### SUMMARY STATEMENT

- A summary statement is a one- or two-sentence description of the skills and qualities that you would bring to the job that would make a recruiter interested in hiring you. It is like an introduction which is supported by the details in the body of your resume. It is a good way to put keywords in the head of the reader, so that they are thinking of them as they read through your resume.
- Avoid self-serving statements such as "...a company where I will be able to advance my career." Show your interest in the company, not what you hope the company will do for you.

### EDUCATION

Institution, Location

Degree, Major, GPA, Date of (anticipated) Graduation

- Traditionally, either education or experience is the first category after Objective/Professional Summary. Which one you choose will depend on where you are in your career and the types of jobs for which you are applying.
- Check with your major department to make sure you have listed degree information correctly.
- It is up to you whether or not to list your GPA. If it is above a 3.0, it is suggested.
- You can include academic honors here or in a separate section.
- List coursework if it is unique for your major and relates to the position for which you are applying, or if you are an underclassman applying for an internship and want to include the engineering courses that you have taken thus far.

### EXPERIENCE

Company, Location (mm/yy-mm/yy of total time employed by company)

Title (mm/yy-mm/yy in that position, if you have held more than one position with same company)

- List experience in reverse chronological order.
- Begin each point with an action verb of the appropriate tense.
- Begin with an overall summary of the project you did in context of the problem you were trying to solve. Then, walk through the process you took to solve the problem in a logical, systematic way, making sure that you include any instrumentation, computer software, or standardized methods that you used. What were the results you achieved?
- Quantify wherever possible—"Increased the efficiency of the process by 20%."
- Make sure your descriptions make sense and have enough detail to be meaningful.
- Make sure to include any communication skills that you used in the project or job such as writing a technical report, giving a presentation, or working in a team.

### OTHER

- Use this section to highlight any additional skills, qualification or experiences. Label this section appropriately (Global Profile, Computer Skills, Certifications, Volunteer Experience, etc.).
- Computer Skills should not contain programs, such as Microsoft Word, that an employer will assume you can use. If you are applying for technology positions and have extensive computer skills, consider placing this section between the Education and Experience sections.
- Volunteer Activities can be listed here or with your experience.
- If you held a leadership position with an organization, consider including your notable duties/accomplishments.
- If necessary, you can list your work authorization in this section.

### GENERAL RESUME TIPS

- Spell check, proofread, read backwards, have someone check your resume, etc.
- Don't include "References available on request." This is assumed by the employer and wastes valuable space.
- In general, resumes should be kept to one page. Individuals with extensive full-time work experience or multiple degrees can extend their resume beyond the one-page limit. The danger of having a long resume is that the recruiter may not make it past your first page.
- Present your qualifications in the best possible light, but do not exaggerate or mislead. Employers will verify the information with your references and educational institutions.
- Resumes should be tailored to the type of position/industry for which you are applying.
- High school information should start to come off your resume when you enter college and be completely gone by graduation.
- Remember the guidelines for scannable resumes, such as avoid italics and underlines, don't fold a resume that might get scanned, and use keywords where possible.
- Don't use smaller than 10 pt. font.

# SAMPLE FRESHMAN RESUME

## Juan Rodriquez

School Address: 123 Mary Lyon, 151 Orchard Hill Road, Amherst, MA 01003 (413) 546-1234

Permanent Address: 123 Strong St. Gardner, MA 01002 (415) 555-9999

Email: jrodriquez@student.umass.edu

- SUMMARY** Hard working electrical engineering student with excellent communication and teamwork skills along an interest in computer programming and design
- EDUCATION** **University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA**  
 Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering Anticipated May 2014  
 GPA: 3.4  
 Abigail Adams Scholarship for Academic Achievement
- RELEVANT COURSES** Intro Electrical and Computer Engineering I, II Calculus I, I  
 Freshman ECE Design Project Physics I, II  
 Java Programming
- ACADEMIC PROJECT** **Freshman Design Project, M5 Lab, UMass** Fall 2010
- Worked on a team of three students to design a low-cost LED-based lamp to be used by people in developing countries
  - Designed the lamp so that it could be recharged by either solar or mechanical power. Measured the output voltage and stored the energy on a ultra-capacitor
  - Presented the design to peers and professor
- WORK EXPERIENCE** **College of Engineering Office of Student Development, UMass** Spring 2011
- Assisted with clerical tasks such as filing, answering phones, organizing and data entry
  - Greeted faculty, students and parents in a professional manner
- YMCA Camp, Gardner, MA** Summer 2010  
 Camp Counselor
- Coordinated and lead the daily activities of 20 children
  - Planned camp events with other camp counselors and assessed campers activities
- VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE** **“Not Bread Alone” Soup Kitchen, Amherst, MA** Fall 2010
- Helped serve lunch to over 150 low-income individuals and families
  - Worked with program director to assist clients
- SKILLS** Computer: Microsoft Office, Visual Basic Java  
 Spoken Languages: Fluent in Spanish
- AFFILIATIONS & ACTIVITES** IEEE  
 Society of Hispanic Engineers  
 Intramural Soccer



# SAMPLE SOPHOMORE RESUME

## Danielle Martin

School Address: 123 Dickinson, 151 Orchard Hill Road, Amherst, MA 01003 (413) 545-9999

Permanent Address: 123 Pittsfield, MA 10120 (415) 555-9999

Email: dmartin@student.umass.edu

- OBJECTIVE** To obtain a summer internship in the field of Chemical Engineering that will utilize my analytical, technical and interpersonal skills.
- EDUCATION** **University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA**  
 Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering Anticipated May 2013  
 GPA: 3.5  
 Abigail Adams Scholarship for Academic Achievement  
 Chancellor Scholarship
- ACADEMIC PROJECT** **Chemical Engineering Car** Fall 2009, 2010
- Worked on a team of three students to find a chemical reaction that aided the movement of a car to a specified distance
  - Implemented car construction and research to find reactant ratios to obtain required energy
  - Helped raise money to fund the car by organizing t-shirt sales
  - Entered car into regional competition and won 2nd place out of 35 cars the first year and placed 3rd out of 38 cars the second year
- WORK EXPERIENCE** **University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA**  
 Chemical Engineering Department, Student Assistant Spring 2010-Spring 2011
- Assisted with Open House activities, gave departmental tours and met with potential students
  - Assisted administrative assistant with clerical tasks such as filing, organizing and data entry
- Peer Advisor, College of Engineering  
 Residence Academic Program Fall 2010-Spring 2011
- Lived with and provided guidance to first year engineering students
  - Organized events to connect students with faculty
  - Worked directly with residence assistants and director of RAP program
- LEADERSHIP** **Sophomore Class Representative,**  
**American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AICHE)** Fall 2010-Spring 2011
- Motivated members to attend meetings and participate in events
  - Helped recruit sophomore students to become members of AICHE
- SKILLS** COMPUTER: Mathcad, Pro/II, MS Office, C/C++  
 SPOKEN LANGUAGES: Fluent in Spanish; Conversant in French
- AFFILIATIONS & ACTIVITIES** American Institute of Chemical Engineering  
 Alpha Beta Gamma Fraternity  
 Horseback Riding

# SAMPLE JUNIOR RESUME

## Jeffrey Johnson

123 Amherst Road Apt. 1, Amherst, MA 01002

Phone: (413) 555-1234 e-mail: jjohnson@student.umass.edu

### Summary Statement:

I am a highly motivated leader exhibiting exceptional communication skills, as well as the ability to work with a team. I have a solid technical background in mechanical engineering, with a particular interest in product design and development.

### Education:

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA

Anticipated May 2012

Bachelor of Science, Mechanical Engineering, 3.2 GPA

### Relevant Coursework:

Design of Mechanical Components, Mechanical Design, Fluid Mechanics, Dynamics, Material Science, Strength of Materials, Thermodynamics, Statics, Calculus, Physics, Intro to Electrical Engineering, Intro to Programming, Statistics, Engineering Problem Solving, Technical Writing

### Relevant Experience:

#### Academic Projects

##### Material Design Project

Spring 2011

- Worked on a team of three to research the mechanical properties of carbon nanotube (CNT) reinforced rubber.
- Used Instron Universal Testing machines to experimentally examine the tensile behaviors of the CNT reinforced rubber.
- Wrote a research paper regarding this experiment and presented results to a group of 50 peers and professors.

##### Design of Mechanical Components

Fall 2010

- Examined the critical stresses that caused a fracture in a part of a masonry stilt produced by the Marshalltown Company.
- Developed a solid model of the stilts using Pro/E.
- Created shear force and bending moment diagrams from free body diagrams to determine maximum bending moments, and wrote a Force and Solid Model Analysis report of the diagrams.
- Analyzed critical stresses using Ansys Workbench and reinforced the results by hand calculations.
- Redesigning solid model such that the critical stresses were removed.
- Wrote a Final Redesign report with teammates that provided a safer design of the component.
- Presented results and new design with teammates to over 40 peers, professors, and teacher assistants, as well as senior engineers at the Marshalltown Company and Ideaz Inc.

##### Mechanical Design

Spring 2010

- Designed and developed a concept to assist golfers planting and setting a golf tee into the ground.
- Used design concept generating and decision making methods such as a house of quality, customer satisfaction curves, and Pugh's method to create the best design.
- Created a solid model of the final design using Pro/E.
- Built and tested a prototype using the university machine shop.
- Won second place in a design competition evaluated by mechanical engineers, professors, and teacher assistants.
- Wrote a paper with teammates discussing the design and development of the product. This report also included failure analysis, reliability, and cost benefit analysis.

### Field Experience

Laboratory Technician, Emory University (References available upon request)

Summer 2009

- Researched ocular tumors by performing molecular experiments on mice.
- Prepared cell cultures and analyzed kinetics of protein production by T cells in immunosuppressive responses to tumors using Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) methodology.
- Contributed as an author to a published abstract.

### Technical Skills:

Pro/Engineer Wildfire • Ansys Workbench • Matlab • Working knowledge of material testing equipment • Microsoft Excel • Microsoft Word • Microsoft PowerPoint • Understanding of medical research equipment

### Achievements and Community Involvement:

#### Boy Scouts of America

1998-2005

- Earned rank of Eagle Scout.
- Held leadership roles in Troop 9 Newton, MA including Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, and Junior Assistant Scoutmaster.
- Led troop to winning spring and fall camporees while serving as Senior Patrol Leader.
- Organized and managed car washes and dinners to raise funds for the troop.

### Interests:

Watching the Boston Red Sox, bowling, golfing, and playing the piano.

# SAMPLE SENIOR RESUME

## Mark Miller

9 Rosemary Street, Ludlow, MA 01928  
781-555-1420 - mmiller@student.umass.edu

<b>Summary Statement</b>	Motivated civil engineering senior with a solid academic background in civil and environmental engineering principles combined with hands-on experience in water, wastewater, design and construction projects.
<b>Education</b>	<p><b>University of Massachusetts Amherst</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Anticipated May, 2011</i></span>  <b>B.S. Civil Engineering Major</b> – 3.1 GPA  ❖ Honors: Dean’s List  Additional Graduate Level Course: Surface Water Quality Monitoring</p>
<b>Relevant Experience</b>	<p><b>Stantec, Westford, MA</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Summer and Winter Break 2010</i></span>  <b>Engineering Intern</b>  ❖ Worked for a global design and consulting firm on a variety of infrastructure projects for the town of Westford, MA  ❖ Surveyed water mains, sewers and lake as part of a comprehensive study on water and wastewater management  ❖ Designed a pump using AutoCad and created a hydraulic model of a fire hydrant system  ❖ Catalogued files and project data using Excel spreadsheets  ❖ Worked directly with senior engineers, construction workers, and town officials to assess needs and set priorities</p>
<b>Academic Projects</b>	<p><b>Senior Design Project</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Spring 2011</i></span>  ❖ Worked in a team of three to simulate a full-scale building site assessment, foundation design, cost estimates, scheduling and productivity management  ❖ Used AutoCad to design all structural components  ❖ Presented results of this project to faculty, teaching assistants and over 40 peers</p> <p><b>Design of Steel Structures and Design of Reinforced Concrete Structures</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Spring 2010</i></span>  ❖ Analyzed the forces on various structures including frames, trusses, beams and arches using both conventional and computer methods such as Risa 2D and 3D  ❖ Used Geotechnical Engineering software for analyzing and sizing foundations</p>
<b>Certifications &amp; Skills</b>	❖ Passed the Fundamentals of Engineering Examination <span style="float: right;"><i>April 25, 2011</i></span> ❖ Proficient in AutoCAD (2007 version), Microsoft Office, Risa 2D and 3D, Geotechnical Engineering Software ❖ Experienced with Total Station (surveying)
<b>Work Experience</b>	<p><b>Adams Coping and Tile, Westfield, MA</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Summer 2009</i></span>  ❖ Mixed concrete, laid tile, hauled material to and from the site  ❖ Worked efficiently while keeping close communication with customers to meet their changing needs</p> <p><b>New England Waterscapes Design, Lynnfield, MA</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Summer 2007, 2008</i></span>  ❖ Stone masonry during swimming pool and waterfall construction  ❖ Installed floating interlocking floors</p>
<b>Activities</b>	❖ American Society of Civil Engineers (2008 – Present) ❖ Ski and Board Club (Winter 2008 – Present) ❖ Baseball, Intramural Softball and Volleyball, drawing/illustration (pencil sketching)

## THE TOP TEN PITFALLS IN RESUME WRITING

1. **Too long.** Most new graduates should restrict their resumes to one page. If you have trouble condensing, get help from a technical or business writer or a career center professional.
2. **Typographical, grammatical or spelling errors.** These errors suggest carelessness, poor education and/or lack of intelligence. Have at least two people proofread your resume. Don't rely on your computer's spell-checkers or grammar-checkers.
3. **Hard to read.** A poorly typed or copied resume looks unprofessional. Use a plain typeface, no smaller than a 12-point font. Asterisks, bullets, underlining, boldface type and italics should be used only to make the document easier to read, not fancier. Again, ask a professional's opinion.
4. **Too verbose.** Do not use complete sentences or paragraphs. Say as much as possible with as few words as possible. *A*, *an* and *the* can almost always be left out. Be careful in your use of jargon and avoid slang.
5. **Too sparse.** Give more than the bare essentials, especially when describing related work experience, skills, accomplishments, activities, interests and club memberships that will give employers important information. Including membership in the Society of Women Engineers, for example, would be helpful to employers who wish to hire more women, yet cannot ask for that information.
6. **Irrelevant information.** Customize each resume to each position you seek (when possible). Of course, include all education and work experience, but emphasize only relevant experience, skills, accomplishments, activities and hobbies. Do not include marital status, age, sex, children, height, weight, health, church membership, etc.
7. **Obviously generic.** Too many resumes scream, "I need a job—*any* job!" The employer needs to feel that you are interested in that particular position with his or her particular company.
8. **Too snazzy.** Of course, use good quality bond paper, but avoid exotic types, colored paper, photographs, binders and graphics. Electronic resumes should include appropriate industry keywords and use a font size between 10 and 14 points. Avoid underlining, italics or graphics.
9. **Boring.** Make your resume as dynamic as possible. Begin every statement with an action verb. Use active verbs to describe what you have accomplished in past jobs. Take advantage of your rich vocabulary and avoid repeating words, especially the first word in a section.
10. **Too modest.** The resume showcases your qualifications in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward without misrepresentation, falsification or arrogance.

### The Three Rs

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

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

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

**Research the position.** The more you know about the position, the better able you will be to sell yourself and to

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

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

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

# EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

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

- Use a meaningful subject header for your email—one that is appropriate to the topic.
- Always be professional and businesslike in your correspondence. Address the recipient as Mr., Ms. or Mrs., and always verify the correct spelling of the recipient's name.
- Be brief in your communications. Don't overload the employer with lots of questions in your email.
- Ditch the emoticons. While a ☺ or an LOL (laughing out loud) may go over well with friends and family, do not use such symbols in your email communications with business people.
- Do not use strange fonts, wallpapers or multicolored backgrounds.
- Sign your email with your full name.
- Avoid using slang.
- Be sure to proofread and spell-check your email before sending it.

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

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

## Thank-You Notes

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

Dear Ms. Jones:

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

Sincerely,  
John Doe

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

## Cover Letters

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

1. **Introduce yourself to the employer.** If you are a recent college graduate, mention your major and how it would apply to the job you are seeking. Discuss the organizations/extracurricular activities you were involved in and the part-time jobs you held while a student, even if they might seem trivial to you. Chances are, you probably picked up some transferable skills that you will be able to use in the work world.
2. **Sell yourself.** Briefly state your education and the skills that will benefit the employer. Don't go into a lot of detail here—that's what your resume is for—but give the employer a sense of your strengths and talents.
3. **Request further action.** This is where you request the next step, such as an appointment or a phone conversation. Be polite but sincere in your desire for further action.

## Tips

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

- Make sure you spell the recipient's name correctly. If the person uses initials such as J.A. Smith and you are not certain of the individual's gender, then begin the email: "Dear J.A. Smith."
- Stick to a standard font like Times New Roman, 12-point.
- Keep your email brief and businesslike.
- Proofread everything you write before sending it.

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

*Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.*



# WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE INTERVIEW?

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

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

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

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

## It Starts Before You Even Say Hello

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

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

## How's Your Small Talk Vocabulary?

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

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

## The Recruiter Has the Floor

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

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

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

## It's Your Turn to Ask Questions

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

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

## The Close Counts, Too

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

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

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

## Expect the Unexpected

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

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

## Evaluations Made by Recruiters

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

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

# ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

## INTERVIEWING TIPS FROM ON-CAMPUS RECRUITERS

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

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

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

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

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


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

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# ARE YOU READY FOR A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW?

“**T**ell 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:

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

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

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

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

*“Can you give me an example?”*

*“What did you do?”*

*“What did you say?”*

*“What were you thinking?”*

*“How did you feel?”*

*“What was your role?”*

*“What was the result?”*

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

## How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

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

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

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

## Don’t Forget the Basics

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

# THE SITE VISIT/INTERVIEW: ONE STEP CLOSER

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

1. An invitation to an on-site interview, often referred to as the "plant trip," is NOT a guarantee of a job offer. It is a chance to examine whether or not you will be a good match for the job and for the organization.
2. If invited to a plant trip, respond promptly if you are sincerely interested in this employer. Decline politely if you are not. Never go on a plant trip for the sake of the trip. Document the name and phone number of the person coordinating your trip. Verify who will be handling trip expenses. Most medium- and large-size companies (as well as many smaller ones) will pay your expenses, but others will not. This is very important, because expenses are handled in various ways: 1) the employer may handle all expenses and travel arrangements; 2) you handle your expenses and arrangements (the employer may assist with this), and the employer will reimburse you later; 3) the employer may offer an on-site interview, but will not pay for your interview.
3. Know yourself and the type of job you are seeking with this employer. Don't say, "I am willing to consider anything you have."
4. Thoroughly research the potential employer. Read annual reports, newspaper articles, trade journals, etc. Many companies have websites, where you can read their mission statements, find out about long-term goals, read recent press releases, and view corporate photos. Don't limit your research only to company-controlled information. The Internet can be a valuable investigative tool. You may uncover key information that may influence—positively or negatively—your decision to pursue employment with a given organization.
5. Bring extra copies of your resume; copies of any paperwork you may have forwarded to the employer; names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of your references; an updated college transcript; a copy of your best paper as a writing sample; a notebook; a black and/or blue pen for filling out forms and applications; and names and addresses of past employers.
6. Bring extra money and a change of clothes. Also, have the names and phone numbers of those who may be meeting you in case your plans change unexpectedly. Anything can happen and you need to be ready for emergencies.
7. Your role at the interview is to respond to questions, to ask your own questions and to observe. Be ready to meet people who are not part of your formal agenda. Be courteous to everyone regardless of his or her position; you never know who might be watching you and your actions once you arrive in town.
8. Don't forget your table manners. Plant trips may include several meals or attendance at a reception the night before your "big day." When ordering food at a restaurant, follow the lead of the employer host. For example, don't order the three-pound lobster if everyone else is having a more moderately priced entree. If you have the "dining jitters," some authorities suggest ordering food that is easy to handle, such as a boneless fish fillet or chicken breast.
9. Many employers have a set salary range for entry-level positions and others are more negotiable. Though salary should not be brought up until an offer is extended, it is wise to know your worth in advance. In as much as you are a potential employee, you also represent a valuable skills-set product. You should know what kind of product you have created, its value and what the company is willing to buy. Contact your campus career center to obtain more information on salaries.
10. Soon after the site visit, record your impressions of your performance. Review the business cards of those you met or write the information in your notebook before leaving the facility. You should have the names, titles, addresses and phone numbers of everyone who was involved in your interview so you can determine which individuals you may want to contact with additional questions or follow-up information. A thank-you letter should be written to the person(s) who will be making the hiring decision. Stay in touch with the employer if you want to pursue a career with them.

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

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

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

# TEN RULES OF INTERVIEWING

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

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

- 1 Keep your answers brief and concise.**  
Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question. Tape yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question.
- 2 Include concrete, quantifiable data.**  
Interviewees tend to talk in generalities. Unfortunately, generalities often fail to convince interviewers that the applicant has assets. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths.
- 3 Repeat your key strengths three times.**  
It's essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company's or department's goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths then they will be remembered and—if supported with quantifiable accomplishments—they will more likely be believed.
- 4 Prepare five or more success stories.**  
In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past jobs and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully.
- 5 Put yourself on their team.**  
Ally yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer's name and products or services. For example, "As a member of \_\_\_\_\_, I would carefully analyze the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_." Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful though not to say anything that would offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.
- 6 Image is often as important as content.**  
What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say. Studies have shown that 65 percent of the conveyed message is nonverbal; gestures, physical appearance and attire are highly influential during job interviews.
- 7 Ask questions.**  
The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you plan how you would answer an interviewer's questions, write out specific questions you want to ask. Then look for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Don't

ask about benefits or salary. The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match.

- 8 Maintain a conversational flow.**  
By consciously maintaining a conversational flow—a dialogue instead of a monologue—you will be perceived more positively. Use feedback questions at the end of your answers and use body language and voice intonation to create a conversational interchange between you and the interviewer.
- 9 Research the company, product lines and competitors.**  
Research will provide information to help you decide whether you're interested in the company and important data to refer to during the interview.
- 10 Keep an interview journal.**  
As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar. Review your presentation. Keep a journal of your attitude and the way you answered the questions. Did you ask questions to get the information you needed? What might you do differently next time? Prepare and send a brief thank-you letter. Restate your skills and stress what you can do for the company.

## In Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## A Final Check

And, of course, your appearance is only as good as your grooming. Create a final checklist to review before you go on an interview:

- Neatly trimmed hair
- Conservative makeup
- No runs in stockings
- Shoes polished (some suggest wearing your sneakers on the way to an interview and changing before you enter the interview site)
- No excessive jewelry; men should refrain from wearing earrings
- No missing buttons, crooked ties or lint

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

## Taking a Casual Approach

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

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

**Fashion Arrests:** 1) Never wear denim jeans or shorts unless the vast majority of others do; 2) Don’t dress too provocatively—you’re at work, not at a dance club; 3) “Casual” doesn’t mean “sloppy”—your clothes should always be free of stains or holes; 4) Workout wear belongs at the gym.

**Play It Safe:** 1) Chinos or corduroy slacks are usually a safe bet for both sexes; 2) As for formal business attire, buy the best that your budget will allow; 3) If you will be seeing clients, dress appropriately for *their* workplace, not yours; 4) Go to the mall—most department and specialty stores have sections devoted to this style of office attire.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED ENGINEERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about the most challenging engineering project that you have been involved with during past year.
2. Describe the most significant written technical report or presentation that you had to complete.
3. In your last engineering position, what were some of the things that you spent the most time on, and how much time did you spend on each?
4. What do you enjoy most/least about engineering?
5. What new engineering specialty skills have you developed during the past year?
6. Do you have any patents? If so, tell me about them. If not, is it something you see yourself pursuing and why or why not?
7. Think of a specific engineering project when you answer this question. What could you have done to be more successful in achieving your goal(s)?
8. Describe a time when you confronted a problem that really tested your engineering know-how.
9. What is your overall career objective? Do you see yourself working in engineering ten years from now? If not, what do you think you will be doing?
10. Give me an example of a time in which you were effective in doing away with the “constant emergencies” and “surprises” that engineers often face.
11. Describe a time when as a member of the engineering department, you were instrumental in building a good long-term relationship with another department within the company.
12. Tell me about your greatest success in using the principles of logic to solve an engineering problem in your last job.
13. Give me an example of a time when you applied your ability to use analytical techniques to define problems or design solutions.
14. To what extent has your engineering background required you to be skilled in the analysis of technical reports or information?
15. Describe a time when you used your engineering knowledge to solve a problem for which there appeared to be no answer.
16. Tell me about a time when you became aware of a hazardous workplace condition. How did you handle it?
17. Tell me about your experience in dealing with routine engineering work. How do you keep from getting bored?
18. I expect the engineer that I hire for this position to be precise – detailed oriented in everything he or she does. What checks and balances do you use to make sure that you don’t make mistakes?
19. Give me an example of a time when you had to teach a skill to other engineers.
20. Some of the best-engineered ideas are born out of an individual’s ability to challenge, others’ ways of thinking. Tell me about a time when you were successful in do this.
21. On your last project assignment, what problems did you identify that had been previously overlooked?
22. How has your present or last engineering job changed while you’ve held it?
23. If I offer you a position as an engineer with us, how do you plan to get off to a jackrabbit start?
24. Give me an example of something that you have learned from a mistake that you made on a job at a client site.
25. Tell me about a time when a project team effort that you were involved in failed.
26. For what advice or assistance do fellow engineers turn to you?
27. Tell me about the most challenging technical proposal you’ve ever written.
28. What factors would you consider in building an engineering department from scratch?
29. How do you communicate priority projects with a team of other engineers without making them feel overwhelmed?
30. Describe a specific engineering project that you were responsible for that required a lot of interaction with a variety of people over a long period of time.
31. What do you get out of engineering that you couldn’t get from any other kind of work?
32. Describe a typical day out in the field in your last or present job.
33. What media contacts do you have that would help us market our technical products/services?
34. What step-by-step criteria do you use to make difficult decisions that involve other engineers?
35. To whom did you turn for help the last time that you ran into a major technical problem, and why did you choose that person?
36. Give me two examples of technical decisions that you had to make on your last job.
37. Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision that affected the entire engineering department.
38. In the field of engineering, priorities often change quickly. Give me an example of a time when that happened. How did you handle it?
39. How can you best use your engineering education and prior work experience to help our company grow?
40. How long have you been looking for an engineering spot? Have you had any job offers yet? If so, why are you still looking?
41. Tell me about a time when you had to take disciplinary action with an engineer who reported to you.
42. Tell me about the last time you lost your temper in the field.
43. What personal characteristics do you feel are necessary to be a successful engineer?
44. What single technical skill or ability is your best asset?
45. What kind of hours did you typically work in your most recent engineering job?
46. What kinds of information would you request or require before you felt you could do justice to a project assignment?
47. Describe two specific technical contributions you would expect to make during the first six months on the job if you joined our company.
48. Tell me about a time when you surpassed all expectations by going “above and beyond” for a client.
49. What have you specifically done to make the work of the engineers who report to you easier?
50. How do you feel about the workload in the engineering department on your present or previous job?

# TAPPING THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

**Y**our off-campus job search should neither begin nor end with the help wanted ads. Studies have shown that only 15 percent of available jobs are ever advertised. It takes much more than merely perusing the classifieds. By employing a number of methods, you constantly increase your chances of landing a job. Some techniques you might use:

**Networking.** Probably the most effective way to meet potential employers and learn about possible jobs is to tap into your personal network of contacts. You might think it's too early to have professional contacts, but think about everyone you know — family members and their friends/co-workers, professors, past employers, neighbors and even your dentist. Don't be afraid to inform them of your career interests and let them know that you are looking for work. They will likely be happy to help you and refer you to any professionals they think can be of assistance.

**Informational interviewing.** This approach allows you to learn more about your field by setting up interviews with professionals. The purpose of these interviews is to meet professionals, gather career information and investigate career options, get advice on job search techniques and get referrals to other professionals. When setting up these interviews, either by phone or letter, make it clear to the employer that you have no job

expectations and are seeking information only. Interviewing also familiarizes you to employers, and you may be remembered when a company has a vacant position.

**Temporary work.** As more companies employ the services of temporary or contract workers, new graduates are discovering that such work is a good opportunity to gain experience in their fields. Temporary workers can explore various jobs and get an inside look at different companies without the commitment of a permanent job. Also, if a company decides to make a position permanent, these "temps" already have made good impressions and often are given first consideration.

**Electronic job search.** One source of jobs may be as close as a personal computer. Various online resume services let you input your resume into a database, which then can be accessed by companies searching for applicants who meet their criteria. Companies also post job listings on websites to which students can directly respond by sending their resumes and cover letters.

Persistence is the key to cracking the hidden job market. Attend meetings of professional associations and become an active member. After you begin the above processes, and your network base expands, your search will be made easier. Employers will appreciate your resourcefulness — and view you as a viable candidate.

## DEALING WITH REJECTION IN THE JOB SEARCH

**A**fter 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

**S**o you want to work for the federal government? You are not alone. Uncle Sam employs approximately 1.8 million civilian workers worldwide. Federal employees receive a generous benefits package, and as of 2009 they earned an average salary of \$72,572. 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. (For a complete list, visit [usajobs.gov/ei6.asp](http://usajobs.gov/ei6.asp).) 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](http://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](http://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, Director of Career Services at Rutgers University. "Applicants who dot all their i's and cross all their t's gain a competitive advantage and rise to the top of the application pool."

Federal agencies require specific information on your resume before it can be processed. The OPM created the USAJOBS Resume Builder in an effort to help applicants create a resume which can be used for most government agencies—go to [my.usajobs.gov](http://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.*



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND THE JOB SEARCH

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

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

## Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Regulations

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

## Importance of Skills and Career Field

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

## Role of Employers

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

The employer (through hiring managers, human resources staff or employment agencies) will most likely use several resources to find workers, including:

- College recruiting
- Campus or community job fairs
- Posting jobs on the company website or on national job posting sites on the Internet
- Posting jobs in major newspapers or trade publications
- Posting jobs with professional associations
- Resume searches on national online services
- Employee referrals
- Regional and national conferences
- Employment agencies ("headhunters")

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

## Strong Communication Skills

You can help the employer make an informed hiring decision if you:

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

It's important to be able to positively promote yourself and talk with confidence about your education, relevant skills and related experiences. Self-promotion is rarely easy for anyone. But, it can be especially difficult for individuals from cultures where talking about yourself is considered inappropriate. When interviewing in the United States, however, you are expected to be able to explain your credentials and why you are suitable for the position.

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

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

## Career Center

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

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

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

*Written by Rosita Smith.*



# SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

**C**areer 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.*

# HOW TO STAND APART FROM THE CROWD

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

## What Makes You Special?

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

## Go Team!

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

## Leadership 101

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

## Art of the Resume

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

## Cover Letter Zingers

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

## Interview Expert

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

## Do's and Don'ts

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

*Written by Jennifer Bobrow Burns, Assistant Dean for Career Services, Quinnipiac University.*

# PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE

**Y**our academic knowledge and skills may be spectacular, but do you have the social skills needed to be successful in the workplace? Good professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company. Not knowing proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job and jeopardize personal and business relationships.

## Meeting and Greeting

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Terry Cobb, human resource director at Wachovia Corporation in South Carolina's Palmetto region, emphasizes the importance of making a good first impression—beginning with the handshake. A firm shake, he says, indicates to employers that you're confident and assertive. A limp handshake, on the other hand, sends the message that you're not interested or qualified for the job. Dave Owenby, human resources manager for North and South Carolina at Sherwin Williams, believes, "Good social skills include having a firm handshake, smiling, making eye contact and closing the meeting with a handshake."

The following basic rules will help you get ahead in the workplace:

- Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Provide information in making introductions—you are responsible for keeping the conversation going. "Joe, please meet Ms. Crawford, CEO at American Enterprise, Inc., in Cleveland." "Mr. Jones, this is Kate Smith, a senior majoring in computer information systems at Northwestern University."
- Unless given permission, always address someone by his or her title and last name.
- Practice a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.

## Dining

Shirley Willey, owner of Etiquette & Company, reports that roughly 80% of second interviews involve a business meal. Cobb remembers one candidate who had passed his initial interview with flying colors. Because the second interview was scheduled close to noon, Cobb decided to conduct the interview over lunch. Initially, the candidate was still in the "interview" mode and maintained his professionalism. After a while, however, he became more relaxed—and that's when the candidate's real personality began to show. He had terrible table manners, made several off-color remarks and spoke negatively about previous employers. Needless to say, Cobb was unimpressed, and the candidate did not get the job.

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

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

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host/hostess indicates the seating arrangement.

- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a *talking* business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Keep hands in lap unless you are using them to eat.
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Try to eat at the same pace as everyone else.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.

## Eating

Follow these simple rules for eating and drinking:

- Start eating with the implement that is farthest away from your plate. You may have two spoons and two forks. The spoon farthest away from your plate is a soup spoon. The fork farthest away is a salad fork unless you have three forks, one being much smaller, which would be a seafood fork for an appetizer. The dessert fork/spoon is usually above the plate. Remember to work from the outside in.
- Dip soup away from you; sip from the side of the spoon.
- Season food only after you have tasted it.
- Pass salt and pepper together—even if asked for only one.
- Pass all items to the right. If the item has a handle, such as a pitcher, pass with the handle toward the next person. For bowls with spoons, pass with the spoon ready for the next person. If you are the one to reach to the center of the table for an item, pass it before serving yourself.
- While you are speaking during a meal, utensils should be resting on plate (fork and knife crossed on the plate with tines down).
- Don't chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.

The interviewer will usually take care of the bill and the tip. Be prepared, however, if this doesn't happen and have small bills ready to take care of your part, including the tip. Never make an issue of the check.

Social skills can make or break your career. Employees have to exhibit a certain level of professionalism and etiquette in their regular work day, and particularly in positions where they come in contact with clients. Be one step ahead—practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.

*Written by Jennie Hunter, a professor at Western Carolina University.*

# IS GRADUATE SCHOOL RIGHT FOR YOU?

**A**t 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, 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.
- 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?

- Most engineering PhD programs offer students a paid teaching assistantship or research assistantship. However, most engineering Master's programs do not. Check with individual departments to make sure you know how they handle funding.
- *Student Loans*: Even if you've taken out loans in the past, another \$50,000 - \$75,000 may be a sound “investment” in your future.

- *Fellowships/Scholarships*: A free education is always the best option. The catch is you need a high GPA, good GRE/GMAT/LSAT/MCAT scores and the commitment to search out every possible source of funding.
- *Teaching/Research Assistantships*: Many assistantships include tuition waivers plus a monthly stipend. It's a great way to get paid for earning an education.
- *Employer Sponsorship*: Did you know that some companies actually pay for you to continue your education? The catch is they usually expect you to continue working for them after you complete your degree so they can recoup their investment.

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

*Benefits of attending graduate school full-time:*

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

*Benefits of attending graduate school part-time:*

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

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

- Identify your true strengths, interests and values to help you discover what is right for YOU—not your friends or parents.
- Keep your grades up and sign up (and prepare) to take the required standardized tests.
- 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.
- 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.
- Investigate creative ways to finance your education—by planning ahead you may reduce your debt.
- Research graduate schools to help you find a good match.
- Investigate the admissions process and the current student body profile of your targeted schools to evaluate your probability for admission.
- Have faith and APPLY! Remember, you can't get in unless you apply.

*Written by Roslyn J. Bradford.*



**ALLOSAURUS** was at the top of the food chain in the **JURASSIC**.  
{I bet he could eat a lot of cookies.}



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