

Preparing for Your First Job After College

How long does it take a recent college graduate to find work? The answer depends on a lot of things. Some graduates are lucky enough to have secured a job while still in their senior year, while others may be looking for work many months after graduation.

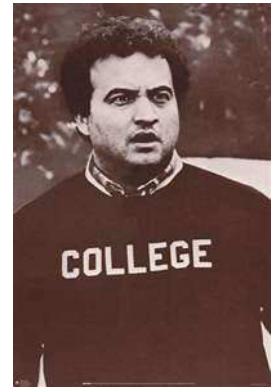
Here are some suggestions to help land a job upon graduation:

1. Start early.

If you wait until you graduate to look for work, that in-and-of-itself is working against you. Students need to begin readying themselves for their first job upon graduation as soon as they begin college.

2. Join clubs.

You need to become active in clubs associated with your major (i.e., an accounting club, not a toga party club), and you should take official positions within those clubs. This demonstrates commitment, initiative and leadership, among others.



3. Intern.

Students should intern each summer, beginning with the summer between their freshman and sophomore years. Further, students need to make it relevant with their field of study. An accounting major working as a supermarket checkout does not carry the same weight as an accounting major working for an accounting firm, or the neighborhood CPA. This not only helps hone on-the-job skills that complement textbook learning, it starts building a network for students.



Volunteer for free if need be, but get relevant experience.

4. Study.

When in school, its nose-to-the-grindstone; get a stellar GPA. A degree is not a free ticket to a job.

5. Get a mentor.

Students need mentors in their desired profession, and it can't be your mom or dad. Often, companies send executives to speak at colleges on a variety of topics, and student associations frequently invite guest speakers from industry, so align yourself with an executive with whom you feel you can relate and bond. Keep in touch with these mentors regularly - though not too often, lest you are viewed as a pest.

6. Learn how to job search.

Leverage your college career center to the fullest, and learn how to job search. Never wait until graduation and simply apply to ads and mail resumes. As we all know, hundreds of resumes are submitted for each advertised position, so following this route is simply leaving your job hunting process to chance....chance that your resume will actually be read, chance that your resume will stand out from the crowd, and more. The career centers is an excellent resource for you to learn how to network, how to write resumes, how to write cover letters, how to take interviews, where to research for jobs, how to negotiate salary, and more. The career center should be your best friend while in college.

7. Volunteer.

You should also demonstrate community involvement; hiring companies like this. Volunteer for charities while in school, tutor elementary or high school students, do fundraisers, walkathons...serve homeless in soup kitchens. This will help you stand out from students who passed the time playing the latest video games or partying.

8. Stay current.

Learning in the classroom is fine for fundamentals, but students must read up on all the latest breaking news in their field. Networking or going on interviews not being able to hold a conversation on the latest front-page news related to your field of study doesn't demonstrate a serious commitment to advancing your career.

9. Maintain reputable on-line identity.

Be PROFESSIONALLY active on reputable sites. Get noticed.

10. Connect with alumni from your school.

Most alumni are always willing to help others from their alma mater, so find ways to build connections with alumni from your college while still in school. All colleges have an alumni office that could help put you in touch with alum with similar interests and pursuits as you.

11. Buddy-up.

Form job search clubs with fellow students. Meet regularly and share with each other your individual results since the previous meeting, and activities planned until the next meeting. Just knowing that you will have to report your search activities to fellow members of your job club will help you stick to your plans and not procrastinate.

12. Use multiple search channels.

Don't attack your job search with just one approach; use all resources available to you concurrently, including your career center, on-campus career fairs, public career fairs, networking, job posting sites, library research, societies and clubs, and any other channel related to your sought-after profession.

13. Temp.

If you were unable to secure a job upon graduation, temp in your field. This not only brings in some income, but it shows commitment and dedication, and helps build valuable networking contacts.

14. Maintain a log.

Keep detailed records of all research, networking calls and meetings, cover letters and resumes mailed or emailed, interviews, and more. Jot down notes from all meetings and interviews - positive and negative. These will help you improve on the next round, especially if you note a pattern developing that might be working against you, e.g., repeated feelings of nervousness during interviews, multiple occasions when you were unable to answer questions of a similar nature, etc.

15. Stay positive.

Hard as it may be, you must always keep a positive and upbeat attitude. You need to learn early on that life will deal you many challenges, but you can never let disappointment come across in networking or during interviews. No one will hire a sad-sack.

Good luck....!!!



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