

Employers Give Advice

It's never too late to start your job search – and it's never too early, either. Graduating and job hunting are something you'll do in your senior year. However, much of the stuff that employers look for in job candidates – relevant work experience, for instance – will take time. So, if you get started on your job-search as a freshman, sophomore, or junior, you'll enter the job market with a distinct advantage. Here's what employers say you can do now to make yourself the top notch job candidate:

Keep your grades up. Good grades alone won't give you the edge over your competitors, but employers expect all of their candidates to have good grades.

Join campus organizations and get involved in extracurricular activities. Hold an office, chair a committee, become a leader. Employers look for leadership, interpersonal, and teamwork skills in the candidates they hire. Your campus activities will give you these kinds of experiences that you can use to demonstrate your ability to fit into the work force.

Serve an internship or participate in the cooperative education program. Either or both will give you work experience relevant to your field of study and give you a distinct advantage over job candidates with no work experience. In survey after survey, employers say that work experience is one of their top requisites for interviewing and hiring. Surveys show that many employers look first among their student workers when trying to fill an open position, so your part-time work could turn into a full-time job. Surveys also show that employers value experience, even if it is earned with a competitor.

Acquire computer skills. No matter what major or your career goals, you'll likely need computer skills to perform your job. Computer skills may also lead you toward career paths you didn't know were open to you. For instance, liberal arts majors with good computer skills may find a niche at software companies.

Develop your oral and written communication skills. Join an organization that encourages public speaking; write for your campus' literary publications; take a course that emphasizes communication. For the past three years, employers have elected communication skills as the most important skills a new employee can have. While they may not always top the list of desired skills, oral and written communication will always rank on the scale.

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