



The Student Job Hunting Handbook

Part 3

Interviewing for Students
and Recent Graduates



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If you're not ready to start interviewing, consider reading our first two guides. The first will help you lay the groundwork. The second will arm you with knowledge to discover jobs that fit your skills and personality.



If you're just getting started, read Part 1 before continuing with Part 2. In Part 1, we discuss tactics and tools to jump-start your journey.

Part 1: Getting Started

[Download Now](#)



In Part 2, we delve deeper into job searching tools, networking tactics, and preparation strategies.

Part 2: Job Searching

[Download Now](#)

Part 3

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Section
1

Build Relationships to Get the Job



They don't grade on networking skills in college.

But in the professional world, your long-term success relies on the relationships you form. For many students, networking can feel foreign. With some practice, however, you will quickly discover the benefits of building relationships. Here are some strategies to get started:

Obvious: Former Professors & Bosses

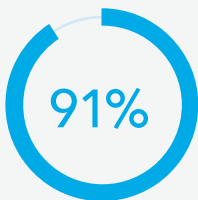
Ask former bosses and professors to provide endorsements, recommendations and to act as references. Make sure you are connected to them on LinkedIn because only your 1st degree connections can endorse or recommend you.

Obvious: Classmates

Stay close with students entering your desired career field. Together, you can discover more contacts, build confidence, and give each other feedback. Strike up a conversation in class, or use LinkedIn's Alumni Tool to find new connections from your university.

Unexpected: Cold Contacts

Recruiters and hiring managers are looking for candidates just like you. Before connecting with them, fill out your LinkedIn profile to capture all the skills and value you bring to the table.



of recent graduates networked during their job search.

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Section
2

Maximize Your Odds of Getting an Interview



"Your network is your net worth, when it comes to getting a foot in the door," says career strategist, syndicated columnist and author J.T. O'Donnell. "Having third-party credibility is critical to improving your odds of getting an interview." Here are some of her favorite strategies for securing an interview, and ultimately a job.

Make Quality Connections

When it comes to your network, quality trumps quantity big time. Use LinkedIn's Advanced Search option to discover potential connections who work in your desired field. Don't be shy. Find the right contacts and nurture real relationships.

Get Face Time at Career Fairs

Career fairs are an excellent opportunity to impress potential employers. Be yourself, ask unique questions, and reach out via LinkedIn after the event to stay top of mind.

Ask Mentors to Become References

Think of your mentors as character witnesses. Former professors and bosses are your best references for potential employers to call during the interview process. It also can't hurt to ask for endorsements and recommendations on LinkedIn.

Map your Skills to the Job

Use your cover letter to map your budding skills to your desired role. Also, add your skills on your LinkedIn profile to attract hiring managers and recruiters.

“Align your long-term development with the everyday needs of a business, and you’ll have a good shot at getting an interview.”

–J.T. O'Donnell



of positions are filled through a referral.

Share



Section
3

How to Reach Out to Recruiters and Hiring Managers



Recruiters and hiring managers are the ultimate doorway to job openings.

They create position descriptions, review applications and select candidates for interviews. Developing relationships with these folks can definitely improve the odds of landing your ideal job. Here are two ways to get in with recruiters:

Start a Relationship With the Company

Most job listings pages on LinkedIn show who posted the job. Reach out to the contact via LinkedIn to ask for an informational or formal interview. Regardless of whether a company is hiring, they will almost always be on the lookout for good talent. Being proactive puts your name at the top of the list and shows you're serious about the organization.

Extract Insider Knowledge

On job listings pages, LinkedIn Premium members get more details on the company, such as which schools it recruits from and what skills employees have. This information can shape your cover letter, interview, and ultimately position you as the strongest candidate.



Section
4

4 Tips for Writing a Killer Cover Letter



While your LinkedIn profile is your introduction to potential employers, the cover letter is your personalized pitch.

In addition to reinforcing the skills on your profile, the cover letter is your chance to show how you stand out from other candidates. Striking a balance between personality and professionalism is essential. Here's how you can do it:

1 Tell a Story

Bring your skills and qualifications to life by putting your career path in story form. Develop a strong opening paragraph that outlines your strongest skills. Next, describe how those skills map to the role you're applying for. Finally, describe where your skills, personality and unique talents will take you.

2 Do Your Research

Show that you've done your research and that you understand the company's goals. Get ahead by using their Company Page to learn more about recent projects and culture. Tie it back to why you'll make a good fit at the company.

3 Keep it Short

Cover letters should be one page or less. Remember, your cover letter is not a reprint of your resume. Expand upon important points, but keep it concise.

4 Edit Endlessly

Print out your cover letter, walk away from the computer and read it aloud. This will help you catch typos, and make sure the letter is clear and conversational. In addition, ask someone else to review it. Fresh eyes will help.

Section
5What to Expect During
an Interview

Common Questions and Preparation Strategies

Interviews can be nerve wracking. Knowing a few best practices can calm your nerves and keep you sharp. The first step is getting familiar with the types of questions you'll be asked. In the following four sections, we'll dig deeper into each question style and share tips on how to answer them. These include:

1 Background Questions

These questions help hiring managers get an overview of your experience, goals and why you're interested in the company.

2 Behavioral Questions

These are designed to uncover your past "behaviors" in different work situations. These questions also help employers decide whether you will fit company culture.

3 Situational Questions

Your answers to these questions should demonstrate your ability to overcome challenging workplace scenarios.

4 Your Questions

Finally, we cover questions you should ask, and how to go about probing for more information.

“It doesn’t matter whether you learned a valuable lesson at a global company, or a corner coffee shop. The important piece is that you learned a lesson.”

– Jodi Glickman,
Harvard Business Review Blogger & Author



Section
6

How to Answer Background Questions



Background questions are typically asked first.

These questions help hiring managers get a sense of your qualifications. This is an open door for you to expand on your experience and outlook. Here are some common questions and tips for answering:

Questions You Can Expect

- “What can you share about your background and work experience?”
- “What are your strengths?”
- “What do you hope to learn in this position?”
- “Why are you interested in this company?”
- “What can you uniquely bring to this position?”

Preparation Checklist

- Prepare to show hiring managers how your expertise, personality and skills add up to huge career potential, and map to the job description.
- Research your interviewers on LinkedIn to get a sense of their background.
- Check out the company’s LinkedIn Company Page to learn more about recent hires and initiatives.

Tip from the Top:



Jodi Glickman

Jodi Glickman is a Harvard Business Review blogger and author, with tons of tips for young professionals. Here, she weighs in on how to answer background questions: "Tell them why you're interested in the role, what unique value you'll bring, and what your future goals are,"

Section
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How to Answer Behavioral Questions



Employers want to know if you have the qualities they seek, which behavioral questions can uncover.

Answers to behavioral questions can be taken from work experience, volunteer positions or sports experiences.

Simplify with the S.T.A.R. Approach

Using the S.T.A.R. framework (Situation, Task, Action, and Results) will take the fear out of answering behavioral questions. Adding some structure will also impress the hiring manager. Use the following:

- **Situation:** Explain the scenario that required your experience.
- **Task:** Briefly identify the task that required completion.
- **Action:** Detail the specific steps you took to complete the task.
- **Results:** Close with the results of your efforts and what you learned.

Questions You Can Expect

- "Talk about a mistake you made. What happened and how did you handle it?"
- "Please describe a scenario in which you were under pressure. What was going on and how did you respond?"
- "Tell me about your proudest accomplishment."

Preparation Checklist

- Categorize your experiences into successes, challenges, leadership moments, teamwork skills and problem solving situations.
- Practice your answers out loud.
- Get comfortable with your strengths and weaknesses. They will ask, and you should be honest.

Tip from the Top:

"It's all about lessons learned," says Jodi Glickman. "Your answers to behavioral questions should demonstrate how you tackled and solved a problem. And of course, what you learned from this situation."

Section
8How to Answer
Situational Questions

Situational questions may sound similar to behavioral questions.

But, instead of asking about past experience, you're presented with a hypothetical situation. These questions generally start with, "What would you do if...?" Here are some common situational questions and actions to help you prepare:

Questions You Can Expect

- “What would you do if the priorities of a project you were working on changed suddenly?”
- “What would you do if you disagreed with a teammate on how to solve a problem?”
- “You’re working on a major project. Halfway through you realize that you’ve made a mistake. How do you handle that while still trying to make your deadline?”

Preparation Checklist

- Practice linking specific situations with your answers from the questions above to skills listed on your resume.
- Revisit a behavioral question, then outline the situation that arose prior to, or after each scenario associated with the question.
- Conduct online research on the organization and make a list of project types and initiatives you find. Use those projects and initiatives to answer the questions above, putting yourself in the company’s shoes.

Tip from the Top:

“The interviewer is looking for someone exceptional,” says Jodi Glickman. “Whether you overcame a difficult situation waiting tables, or at a relevant internship—your story should demonstrate an exceptional ability to overcome adversity.”

Section
9Your Turn to Ask
the Questions

An interview is a two-way street.

You are there to figure out whether the job is a fit too. As your interview winds down, you'll likely be asked, "What questions do you have for us?" This is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have done your homework.

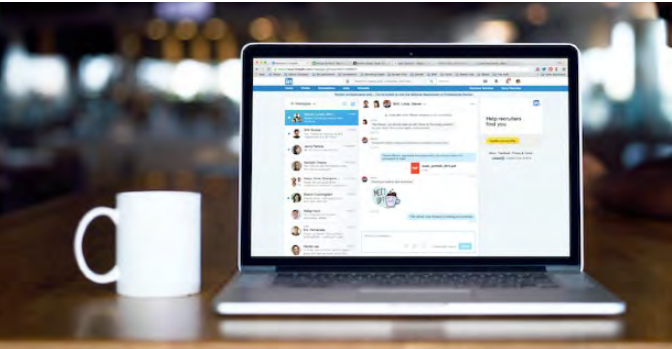
The following do's and don'ts will help you get the most out of every question you ask:

Do

- Ask your most pressing questions first. These could be about the culture, goals of your future team or how performance will be evaluated.
- Ask probing questions. Consider asking which personality traits are most common among the most successful employees, or what employees enjoy most about working there. Ask interviewers about their own career paths. For example, ask them how they decided to go into their field, or what steps they took within the company to attain their current position.
- Ask about challenges. What will make this job difficult? What will you need to overcome?
- Ask for their contact information and whether you can connect on LinkedIn.

Don't

- Don't ask questions to sound smart.
- Don't ask about something you could find online.
- Don't be unprofessional.
- Don't push. If the hiring manager won't answer your question, it's best to leave it alone.

Section
10After the Interview: The
Thank You Note is Not Dead

Preparing for an interview is stressful.

When it's over, you may be tempted to sit back, relax and wait for your phone to ring. Taking a few minutes to send a personalized thank you note to each interviewer is a great way to ensure the positive impression you made stays top of mind.

Email or send a LinkedIn message within 24 hours of the interview during business hours. Demonstrate appreciation for the opportunity and the interviewer's time. After that, include the following:

1 A Personal Touch

You likely established a personal connection during your interview. Highlighting the best parts of the conversation will spark the hiring manager's memory and keep you top-of-mind as they make a final decision.

2 Cover Your Qualifications

Next, write a quick recap of why you'd be perfect for the job. If there were skills you didn't cover, or if the interviewer expressed concern over certain areas, this is your chance to clarify. But keep it concise. No more than a few paragraphs.

3 Demonstrate a Specific Reason for Your Interest

Use what you learned in the interview to call out one or two aspects of the company or culture that you like, and reasons you want to work there.

4 Close with Clarity

Finally, close with a firm reiteration of your interest: "I look forward to taking the next step in the hiring process. Thank you again for your time and I hope to talk to you soon."

5 Be Authentic

Hiring managers are on the hunt for unique candidates. Read your letter aloud. Make sure it sounds conversational, authentic, and unique.

Section
11

Recruiter's Perspective: The Importance of Personality



Personality matters more than most professionals realize.

As you grow in your career, skills can set you apart, but your ability to work with the people around you will ultimately determine success. Here are three reasons why showcasing your personality is so important during the interview process:

1 Your Personality Is a Success Indicator

Your personality is the driving force behind how you think, feel, act, adapt and ultimately work. The stories you share about your past experiences is an indicator for how you will deal with adversity and opportunity. Potential employers want a glimpse into your future successes and failures. Often, the simplest indicator is your personality.

2 Skills Can Be Taught, Personality Can Not

More companies are realizing that skills and knowledge can be gained on the job. However, personality is hardwired. If you come to the table with a personality that matches up with a company's culture, other skills can be learned over time.

3 Culture Is King

Use what you learned in the interview to call out one or two aspects of the company or culture that you like, and reasons you want to work there.

A Final Tip: Embrace Your Personality

Trying to act too professional, pretending to be someone else, or taking on character traits that allegedly lead to a higher salary will lead you to the wrong role. Use insights from personality assessments, and your past experiences to really understand what an ideal environment looks like. Remember, it needs to be a fit on both sides. There's no denying your personality.

Section
12LinkedIn Member
Success Story

Advice from an Expert: Marisa Khoury

As her graduation date drew closer, Marisa Khoury grew anxious. She desperately wanted to land a job at a respectable company. "A lot of my teachers were telling me that everyone already had jobs lined up," Marisa recalled. "But I was having zero luck."

Feeling discouraged, she followed her boyfriend's advice and downloaded the LinkedIn app. Within six weeks, Marisa was starting her first job as an Outside Sales Representative with ADP Payroll Services. Below, Marisa shares her favorite LinkedIn app features and how they helped.

Delivered the Most Current Listings

LinkedIn delivers current and accurate jobs every day. “I knew I wasn’t looking at job recommendations that were filled months ago,” Marisa said. By keeping her finger on the jobs pulse, Marisa was able to apply right when postings went live.

Made It Easy to Explore and Apply

Marisa used the LinkedIn app as her sole resource, which sped up her process. Within a few weeks, she had discovered several jobs at companies that fit her values. “I found opportunities immediately,” she said. “I also loved being able to save and keep track of jobs.”

Attracted Ongoing Job Opportunities

The LinkedIn app allowed Marisa to keep tabs on additional opportunities. Despite her satisfaction in her new role, Marisa knew she’d be making a fresh start at some point. So, she continued to optimize her profile. “I receive messages weekly from recruiters,” she said. “Maybe when I’m ready to move again, keeping my profile fresh will lead to another job offer!”

[View Marisa's Profile](#)

**Section
13****Additional Resources**

We wish you the best of luck as you begin applying for jobs.

If you're just getting started, or need tips for discovering jobs, consider reading Part 1 and Part 2 in our series. In our first guide, we discuss tactics and tools that can jump-start your career journey.

Part 1: Getting Started[**Download Now**](#)

In our second guide, we explore strategies for discovering jobs.

Part 2: Job Searching[**Download Now**](#)