

FIRST STEPS

- ✓ Ask yourself what you are looking for from a job abroad.
- ✓ Determine your strengths, interests, values, and abilities.
- ✓ Explore options and attend events that can inform you about possibilities.

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

Starting a new job or academic program can be difficult, no matter the environment. To prepare yourself for your transition abroad, consider what it is you want out of a job. Evaluate where you are personally, financially, and professional. Think about how the following will change:

- Independence
- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Personal Goals
- Financial Goals
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Professional Goals
- Family
- Languages

Then, ask yourself these questions as you make your decision:

- Why do I want an international job?
- What do I see myself doing overseas?
- Do I want to work only as a means to support my travel to a new country or as a stepping-stone for a future career path?
- What type of unique skills do I have to offer?
- How can I gain experience before I depart?

Moving abroad will open up new opportunities for you, and you will be exposed to different cultures and lifestyles. During your time abroad, you may experience periods of homesickness, stress, or confusion. These feelings are normal, but just remember why you chose to work abroad. Prepare yourself for this change, and think about how you will approach the culture shock you may experience. Here are some tips for when you experience any of these feelings:

- Talk about your experiences with those you meet.
- Communicate with your family and friends regularly.
- Explore your new surroundings.

To alleviate some of the stress and to adapt quickly to your new environment, remember to participate at work and/or school. This will help you meet people, develop better skills in your second language, and further understand the culture of your new environment. The best way to learn about your new city is to immerse yourself. Finding out more about the place you live in will help you find out more about yourself, all of which will help you determine the best work fit for you.

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DECIDING ON YOUR EXPERIENCE ABROAD

Defining Your Experience

Knowing where you want to go and what you want to get out of your experience will aid in your understanding of how to shape your experience abroad. Below is a small exercise and sample statements that can help you develop your own mission statement.

Mission Statement Exercise

I WANT TO...

ACTION VERB (research, design, develop, consult, train. . .)

PRODUCTS/SERVICE/INDUSTRY (health, literacy, agriculture, engineering. . .)

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION (public, government, private, voluntary . . .)

GEOGRAPHIC REGION (Asia, Pacific, Middle East . . .)

Example Mission Statement:

I want to write business articles for a multinational company with economic interests in Spain.

A few things to keep in mind...

- Understand your strengths and limitations. Are you fluent or just conversant in the language?
- Decide what opportunities you would like to have and focus on pursuing those.
- Immerse yourself in the culture. Make sure you are prepared for any challenges you may face by remaining adaptable and looking for ways to connect with others while there.
- Keep your goals realistic; it can often take a while to find the job that's the right fit for you.
- Evaluate where you are personally. What are your options as far as staying or returning?

Types of Jobs

Below are descriptions of the types of jobs you may consider once you determine the nature of work you'd like to pursue (check out our ***Job Search Series Handouts*** on International Careers, Teaching, and Gap Year for specific opportunities and links: <https://career.missouri.edu/job-search-series>).

Short-term Jobs. Short term jobs can be a great way to earn funds while traveling abroad as well as gain a glimpse of another culture. There are many short-term seasonal employment opportunities across the globe. For instance, during tourist seasons, there are always hotel/restaurant jobs. In warmer countries, there are tour representatives, or in the winter you might try ski instruction and chalet work. It is important to keep in mind that there are typically up-front costs for program fees, airfare, and spending money. The majority of these programs are located in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, with a small number of programs offering other locations, lasting a few weeks or months.

Internships. Those looking to make a career working internationally should seriously consider applying for an internship overseas as a first step towards networking in their chosen field of international work. Internships abroad are a great way to gain international experience that will teach you the transferable skills highly valued by companies back home. Internships can either be paid or for academic credit. Internships may be located abroad or in the U.S. with international organizations. Typical duration is a summer or semester.

Volunteering. Doing volunteer work overseas is a popular choice because of the nature of the work. Volunteering in a foreign country allows you to be a part of a process of positive global social change. It looks great on a résumé and is a big confidence booster. You will acquire new skills and knowledge about the world.

Some things to think about:

- Pick the agency right for you. Be sure to do your research about each organization.
- Realize that you may need to fund parts of your experience. Some programs will cover part or all of your living expenses, but this may not be the case with your program.
- Determine how long you will need to save up before you start your experience.
- Think about how long you want to volunteer — you can spend months or years on one project.
- Decide what type of environment in which you would like to work, especially if considering a faith-based organization.

Teaching English. There are many opportunities for teaching abroad. Finding the right program can be a challenge, but remember that there are many countries seeking English educators. Consider which part of the world in which you would like to teach, and narrow down your choices geographically. Many education programs come with benefits, such as housing, food, insurance, and plane ticket reimbursement. Check your specific program for more information. Be sure to be thorough with your research of different programs. Many programs are government sponsored or operate through an exchange program. In addition, there are also several privately run programs available. To gain perspective, seek people who have participated in the program before; they can be a great resource for you. You can locate many of these people by asking for references from the program or through your personal network.

Long-Term and Career-Oriented Jobs. Those seeking international employment should realize that preparation for a position requires extensive training, planning, and research, similar to what a future employer would endure here. Longer-term employment such as Au-Pair (nanny) work can be a good way to experience what a country is really like. You are often required to have certain qualifications and certificates, and placements tend to be done through agencies. Consult with others and see what they recommend. Check out online resources such as GoinGlobal.com, or think about applying to overseas branches of companies that have offices in other countries. EURES, for the UK positions, has long-term and permanent employment prospects on their database. There are also several online employment agencies with worldwide vacancies. Contact the US-based embassy for the country of your choice to find out about work permits, visas, benefits, and necessary qualifications. If it's a permanent move, you will need to ask about residency or 'indefinite leave to remain'. Apply to embassies as far in advance as you can, as it often takes several weeks to process your paperwork. The most readily apparent opportunities for employment are in the areas of aid for developing nations, poverty relief and education, but a variety of jobs are available for candidates with the same kinds of skills that create success within domestic organizations such as: project managers, fundraisers, and accountants.

Where in the World?

Once you've decided on a type of job, consider *where* you would like to work. Looking back at your mission statement, is there a certain language, field, or culture you are particularly interested in exploring while abroad? If so, start there and do a little research, writing a list of possible countries that will fulfill your interests.

For more detailed information about either the region or country in which you are interested, please refer to **the table at the end of this handout** for online resources or the **MU International Center** for country-specific information.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Language

It is important to have some working knowledge of the language spoken in the country which you choose to live. It will make your transition smoother and give you greater confidence while job hunting. Realize that although language is helpful, fluency is not necessarily a determining factor in being hired in some countries. For businesses with large international markets, knowledge of languages is highly desirable, but relevant work experience and a background in technical subjects are also important. Above all, remember that often the best way to improve and master a language is to immerse yourself in it.

Cost of living and relocation expenses

Make sure you research and understand the general cost of living in the country you are considering. Consider how you will budget for the following:

- housing
- transportation
- food
- taxes
- relocation expenses, which include airfare, shipping charges for additional luggage, stocking up on food basics, monthly metro/bus card, visa/passport fees, housing deposit fees, household amenities, and utilities start-up fees

Be sure that you have the financial cushion to absorb these expenses. Allow yourself to plan around the arrival of your first paycheck, which may come within a few days or a few weeks. Plan to have enough in savings for at least 2-3 months' worth of expenses.

Visas and Work Permits

Obtaining a visa or work permit can often prove to be the most challenging element in your pre-departure process. Although the process may be difficult, most who have gone through it will tell you the experience of living and working abroad is well worth the effort.

There are two things to keep in mind during the process:

- Securing a way to enter the country initially
- Obtaining a work permit or permanent residency status after you arrive

It is also important to note the difference in short term and long term visas and permits. Whereas short term tourists sometimes do not need a visa, and student visas are granted relatively easily, work permit visas are normally available only through application by an employer who has offered you a job.

Every country's requirements vary, but there are some general things that can help you get started:

- Contact the embassy and consult your region for information.
- Talk to someone who has been through the process. This is often the best way to learn the system.
- Give yourself plenty of time to submit your application.

Know that there are several agencies and programs that can do the paperwork for you for a nominal fee, and the **MU International Center** is a great resource for more information on visas.

Job Searching

Job searching abroad may be different from job searching here in the U.S. Knowing how to job search in the country you may be working will make the process easier for you. Learn how to network with those overseas and how to consult with companies in order to build connections.

Keep in mind that the type of skills that employers may be looking for may be different from what are often sought-after in the U.S. It is important to start thinking about what types of things you will need to know and what skills you will need to obtain before you begin your search. Research specific companies and talk to future employers. Talk with those who have worked abroad and ask them what the process was like and what you can do to obtain the job you want.

Cultural Differences in the Workplace

Certain rules or protocols will guide job seekers and employees' conduct. Living in a foreign culture allots for a different set of rules than you may not be accustomed to. To be successful in that experience, it is important that you learn and understand these work place differences. Become informed of the work culture of the country you are planning to reside. Again, check the **GoInGlobal** website for great information about living and working abroad.

Money, Banking and Taxes

Economies function differently across the world. With different exchange rates, keep in mind that you may be required to exchange your money while abroad; plan for this by drawing up a budget. Determine what the exchange rate will be in whichever country you are working. Make sure that you can access your funds abroad, or if you will need to set up an account at a local branch. Banks in other countries often serve as the place to get your bus card, re-charge your phone with credits, and pay your bills. Find one close to you that will be able to assist you during your time abroad.

Don't forget your taxes! Be sure to talk with an accountant or tax advisor before heading out. Make arrangements to file while abroad; the most common money-related misconception among Americans abroad is that they do not need to file. While many American residents abroad do not have to pay much tax, this does not remove the obligation to file each year.

In addition there are several agencies that specialize in tax services. For more information, visit the IRS tax guide for U.S. citizens living abroad: <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p54/index.html>

Safety and Insurance

Safety is important on all levels. While no country you live in can offer a guarantee of safety, there are many steps that you can take to reduce the risk of being a victim of a crime abroad. Start by informing yourself of the country's culture, laws, and politics.

When you move abroad, one of the most important parts of your financial security is your international health insurance plan. When considering medical insurance, first find out how citizens of the country where you will reside pay their medical bills, and if the same coverage is available to resident foreigners. Some countries have government-sponsored health insurance that may also provide coverage to foreign residents, while others have a dual system with national health supplemented by private insurance.

In countries where many American expatriates reside, you may find that local private international health insurance companies will offer coverage to U.S. citizen residents at a reasonable rate. International health insurance is generally less expensive than comparable domestic U.S. coverage. Check out <http://www.studentsabroad.com/insurance.html> for more information about coverage abroad.

Resources

Connect to your local international community. Investigate work regulations in your host country for working or studying abroad. The following table should help you with your research.

MU International Center	http://international.missouri.edu/	<i>N52 Memorial Union</i>
Multicultural Center	http://multiculturalcenter.missouri.edu	<i>G107 MU Student Center</i>
Women's Center Language Partners	http://womenscenter.missouri.edu/	<i>2500 MU Student Center</i>
Asian Affairs Center	http://asia.missouri.edu	<i>N49 Memorial Union</i>
AIESEC	http://aiesecus.org	<i>C4 MU Student Center</i>
U.S. Department of State	http://travel.state.gov/	
GoinGlobal	http://online.goinglobal.com/	<i>Access through career.missouri.edu</i>

WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD

As you begin to become more familiar with the ins and outs of your host country, recognize that you are in the process of developing a wide range of transferable skills that you can apply to other situations in the future. The following suggestions can help you to be proactive and to take advantage of career development opportunities once you have begun to adjust to living in your host country:

Network, network, network! Keep a “contacts notebook” to help you stay in touch with the people you meet while you are abroad. Include names, contact information, where you met, what they do, etc.

Take advantage of opportunities to learn about the work culture, local economy, and the job market from your host family and the friends you make during your time abroad.

Do more research on your field in the country you are visiting. Informational interviews, job shadowing, and site visits at local companies are all ways to help you learn about your field in the local country.

Investigate the typical job search process. Types of skills that employers tend to look for, possible costs related to your future job search, and work visa regulations for your country of interest.

Scout local newspapers, news apps and other publications for job postings. They can help you identify which employment sectors have the greatest demand.

MARKETING YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Reflecting on Transferable Skills

Reflect on what you are learning abroad and create a list of the transferable skills you are gaining and utilizing while abroad. For example:

In what ways are you growing and developing as a person (self- confidence, independence, tolerance, empathy, etc.)? Many of these qualities are highly valued by employers, and you will have specific examples and stories to illustrate these skills

What types of cross-cultural learning experiences are you undergoing? By interacting with locals and responding to the demands of living within another culture, you are likely gaining experiences highly valued by many industries operating within a global marketplace.

What communication skills are you developing during your international experiences? As our country continues to become more diversified and the job market becomes more global, bi- or multilingualism will continue to be a skill that can set you apart. But even if you haven't had the chance to learn another language, you can highlight the specific ways you may be learning how to communicate differently within your host country's unique culture and lingo.

Check out our *Guide to Transferable Skills* for more information about the types of transferable skills that employers look for.

International Experiences in Interviews and Résumés

Use your résumé and interview to highlight the various skills you are developing during your study abroad experience. Skills such as communication, decision-making and problem-solving, as well as ability to verbally communicate with others are some of the top skills employers look for when hiring, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Highlighting examples of how you are developing and utilizing these skills while abroad will be extremely helpful for you in the job search process. Check out our *Guide to Résumés* and *Guide to Interviewing* for more information about how to develop a résumé and interviewing responses that incorporate your experiences from an international experience.

Stay connected and continue to build relationships with your newly made contacts both locally and abroad. Be sure to update the people in your "contacts notebook" about your career plans on a regular basis. They may have useful suggestions or may know about specific opportunities in your area of interest.

NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Come to the MU Career Center to talk with someone about your search for international opportunities and how to make the most of your experience.
- ✓ Visit <https://career.missouri.edu> and click on the "Resources" Tab to visit [Mizzou Career Tools](#), where you can search our site for career guides, videos, links, infographics, and more!