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Graduate Employment

333 tips for finding your first job as a graduate

Sue Greener; Tom Bourner; Asher Rospigliosi

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Sue Greener, Tom Bourner & Asher Rospigliosi

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Graduate Employment: 333 tips for finding your first job as a graduate
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Preface

The authors offer this book of tips to achieve two purposes. The first purpose is to support graduates who want some encouragement or practical advice on how to find employment. The second purpose grew from discussions with a small group of graduates of the University of Brighton, with whom the first draft was discussed, and with whom we agreed to give all proceeds, from downloading the book, to charity.

In 2009, there were 2.5 million children under age 15 living with HIV. By downloading this book, you will support UNICEF's Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS campaign raising money and awareness about HIV and AIDS and helping millions of affected children and their families.

By 2015 it is possible that we could have an AIDS free generation. But UNICEF needs your help to get there. The rights of children are being denied because of HIV and AIDS. This is wrong. By downloading this book you will help UNICEF put it right.

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1 Introduction

This book is not intended to be a lengthy read. When you are looking for a job, you already have enough to do. You could set out to read it from cover to cover, if that is what you would like to do, then look at the contents list, which will give you an idea of the ways in which we have grouped the tips.

However, we rather imagine you will prefer to dip in to a book like this; scroll at random to a page and start reading. Or use the contents list to find a group of tips, which address a problem.

Whichever way you use this book, remember that your job is waiting for you, and we aim to help you stay determined to find it. Whatever the state of the world economy, the degree qualification you have, or your aspirations for a career, finding the right job will take determination, courage, and good fortune. We wish you plenty of the latter in your search, and hope our collection of tips offer you some constructive food for thought.

Sue Greener, Tom Bourner and Asher Rospigliosi

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2 Applying for vacancies advertised in the press

Job advertisements in newspapers are an easy way of identifying vacancies. They usually give information on the pay and the nature of jobs, which facilitates job comparison… On the other hand, vacancies advertised in the press usually attract large numbers of applicants, possibly thousands. In other words, using job adverts is an easy way to look for jobs, but it will attract many other graduates, so prepare yourself for some serious competition.

1. **Do not depend on newspapers as your only source of vacancies; not all job vacancies are advertised.** Many employers never advertise vacancies in newspapers. Certain estimates put the proportion of job vacancies advertised in newspapers as low as 10 percent.
2. **National newspapers are the most relevant newspapers for graduate job vacancies, but never rule out regional newspapers.** The best newspapers for managerial, professional and skilled jobs are the national newspapers. However,they tend to carry vacancies for jobs predominantly in the capital, and larger cities. Regional papers are good for more focused job searches, especially for vacancies in national companies, with a strong presence in your preferred region.
3. **Learn about the advertising practices of the national papers.** Most newspapers focus on different types of vacancies on different days, e.g. teaching, media, social services etc.
4. **Use your public library to identify your preferred field of work**. Public libraries take a range of national papers each day, and are therefore a valuable resource for learning about the newspapers you are familiar with.
5. **Use your public library to learn about specialist newspapers,** which advertise vacancies in particular industries. Some specialist newspapers are devoted to publishing vacancies alone. Enlist the help of a librarian at your local public library to help you identify newspapers tailored to your specific needs.
6. **Vacancies advertised in the press generally have a short shelf-life,** so you need to act quickly in applying for any vacancy that looks suitable. Employers who advertise in daily newspapers expect to receive all serious applications within a day or two.

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7. **For vacancies advertised in the press, pay particular attention to how your application looks on paper.** Jobs advertised in the press tend to attract huge numbers of applicants, sometimes even thousands. The better the job, the more applicants it will attract. Employers can only afford to interview a small fraction of those who apply, so they find ways of whittling the numbers down. There are two main approaches. Firstly, they use simple filters, such as class of degree, grammar, and spelling, on the application form. Secondly, they look for applications with features that stand out, for example, backpacking across the Sahara, editing your school or university newspaper, or teaching for a year in a third world country.

8. **Do not deviate from instructions on how to submit your application.** This is a filter frequently implemented to minimise potential candidates; the first test is whether you can follow simple instructions.

9. **Recognise that advertised vacancies may not be real**. Job advertisements are sometimes made to comply with regulations, procedures or agreements. For instance, an internal applicant may have already been lined up for the job, but the advertisement has to be placed anyway, owing to policy requirements that all job vacancies must be advertised externally. In other words, there may be less to an advertised vacancy than meets the eye.

10. **Recognise that internal applicants usually have an advantage.** This is because an employer can know much more about an internal candidate than an external candidate, including their strengths, weaknesses, and potential.

11. **Check for consistency between job title and job description.** Job titles can often be misleading, so pay particular attention to any information describing what the job actually entails.

12. **Treat your application as a two-stage process.** Stage 1 is to be offered an interview. If you get past Stage 1, then Stage 2 is to be selected at interview. If you fail to passStage 1, then Stage 2 is irrelevant. Thus, start by giving all your attention to Stage 1.

13. **Do not be surprised if you do not receive a reply to your application.** If it were a really good job, then there will likely have been hundreds, indeed thousands of applicants. An employer advertising for additional staff may not have the resources to reply to everyone.

14. **Use rejection as feedback, in learning how to secure your job.** The more rejections (including non-responses) you receive, the more likely it is that you are doing something wrong. Study your approach to applications to look for clues as to what you can do differently. If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always got. Being rejected after an interview is a clue that you have learned how to master Stage 1, and now you need to grasp Stage 2.

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3 Avoiding the myths

This section is really important, because false assumptions concerning graduate employment can prevent you finding a job you could enjoy:

15. **Myth 1: To be a graduate is to be a member of a small educational elite.** This may have been true fifty years ago, when fewer than 5% of school-leavers went to university. However, the figure now stands at 40% of school-leavers; a marked difference. Moreover, governments are keen to raise this figure to 50%.

16. **Myth 2: Most graduates find employment with large employers, with well-established graduate recruitment programmes.** These are the sort of employers who still dominate the graduate careers directories, which are distributed for free from university careers centres. They include the Civil Service, the NHS, and the Armed forces, together with the major institutions of the financial, manufacturing and retailing sectors. In fact, these large employers of graduates now employ a small minority, less than one fifth, of the graduates universities produce each year.

17. **Myth 3: A graduate job is any job that is done by a graduate.** There is a mistaken belief that graduates can bring graduate qualities to any job and transform them into graduate jobs. This, simply, does not hold up to scrutiny; picking fruit, flipping hamburgers, or working in a call centre do not offer enough scope for the expression of graduate qualities.

18. **Myth 4: Most employers place greatest value on the most up-to-date knowledge of an academic subject.** We have seen that most graduate job vacancies are open to graduates of any subject area.

19. **Myth 5: Most employers value critical thinking above all other graduate attributes.**

20. **Myth 6: When you find a graduate job, you will be making a transition from the learning stage of your life to the working stage of your life. The basic relationship between university and graduate work is the acquisition of knowledge at university, and its application in graduate employment.** Whether you like it or not, you will continue to learn throughout your working life. In fact, the pace of your learning may accelerate.

21. **Myth 7: If you have not studied for a 'vocational degree', you are more likely to remain an unemployed graduate indefinitely.** Again, this is contradicted by the fact that most graduate job vacancies are open to graduates of all subjects.

22. **Myth 8: For most graduates, finding a graduate job in the current market is hopeless.** Even if you graduate in an economic recession, most graduates eventually find jobs; 7 years after graduating, approximately 85% are in graduate jobs.

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4 Choosing how to search for a job

Dick Bolles suggests there are just 16 ways to find a job: sending out CVs, answering job ads in the press, using government agencies (e.g. your local JobCentre), using private employment agencies, using the internet, asking anyone you know who might know of a vacancy, using former teachers, schools, colleges and universities, knocking on doors of organisations you want to work for, using a phone book company listing to find local and interesting companies, joining or forming a job club, doing a thorough self-audit of skills you have, and which you enjoy using, visiting places where employers find workers (career fairs etc.), applying for Civil Service entrance, studying professional journals in a field that interests you, using a temp agency in the hope of being permanently recruited, and volunteering.

23. **Do not try all these methods at once!** There is evidence to show that you maximise your chances of finding employment if you use more than one, but no more than four, of the above methods. Choose what appeals to you, rather than doing all of them half-heartedly.

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24. **Use active not passive methods. It is very tempting to do the simple passive things first – such as write a CV** (see Tailoring your CV for a specific job) and upload it to an online jobsite and expect things to happen, or buy a paper and hope there are suitable jobs in it. Research proves that doing more active things pays off better than these activities. The methods of job searching, which have the highest chance of finding you a job are: a) doing a thorough self-audit and finding out what you really enjoy and where you might find somewhere to use these enjoyable skills, through serious focused job research, b) working together in a group with others looking for work (job club, action learning set, informal group of friends) but helping each other out with leads, ideas and encouragement, and c) actively identifying, calling, and preferably visiting employers in your chosen area, whether or not they are advertising jobs.

25. **Manage your working hours** Since European Union legislation has led to equal and fair treatment for workers, regardless of type of contract, your options for working hours are no longer limited.. You might find it hard to decide on one major career step into a full time job, which will demand most of your energy and time. On the other hand, that may be exactly what you want on graduation – a great first brick in the foundations of your career. Nevertheless, if the ideal full time job is not showing itself too quickly, or if you have a range of interests and do not want to put all your eggs into one basket, consider a flexible working contract. Options include part-time, zero hours contract/retainer, project work, consultancy, tele-work, or job-share. Alternatively, look for the kind of work, which occupies part of the week, and leaves some space and time for another part-time job or leisure activity. Flexible contracts are not the traditional way to begin a graduate job, but increasingly, qualified graduates are building portfolios of work, which allow them more freedom to organise their time. Consider working from home, or incorporating different part-time work elsewhere. This does not make life easy, but it might be the tailor-made solution to meet your individual needs.

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5 Completing an application form

While you will require a CV for most job applications, you may find that a specific job requires you to complete an application form. This has both benefits and drawbacks. The form provides you with an explicit structure, and this can help with ticking the boxes that the recruiter has identified as important. The form may also indicate weightings for these boxes, by suggesting how much space to allocate to the various sections. A drawback of this structure and weighting is that it requires you to discuss each aspect the recruiter has identified, and may not allow you space to show off other skills. The process of completing an application form has much in common with tailoring your CV for a specific job.

26. **If it is an online form**, save it to your computer, or at least prepare your text using a word processor. It is all too easy to spend time filling out an online form, to then lose everything if the browser crashes, or moves you to another page.

27. **Use a word processor to help with spelling errors, but make sure you always proof read** the document, too. A spell checker will not help if you have used the wrong word or phrase in the wrong context.

28. **You may be able to copy** parts of your CV into an application form, but make sure you answer the question, rather than mindlessly copying and pasting. Always read the instructions and labels carefully.

29. **Use the job specification**. Download any available details about the job. This may include separate documents that relate to the job description, person specification, and possibly a departmental or organisation description.

30. **Identify the key requirements**. As you go through the job description and person specification, use a highlighter to identify exact words and phrases used to describe the job requirements, and potential employee.

31. **Use their words to describe yourself**. Find the phrases they use to describe what they want, and apply these, truthfully, to your own context.

32. **Never say anything you do not mean** or cannot justify. However, do not be shy of selling yourself either; this is your chance to tell them exactly why you should do the job.

33. **Do not be afraid to spell out information explicitly**. Interviewers do not always have time to draw connections, so do this for them to maximise your chances of success.

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6 CV presentation

As well as being reader-friendly, your CV needs to look professional. If an employer is swamped with applications for a good job, then the interviews are likely to go to those who produce the most professional-looking CVs.

34. **Head the page 'CURRICULUM VITAE'.** This is especially important if it is accompanied by several other documents (covering letter, application form, testimonial etc) as it helps the reader find essential information quickly.

35. **Use A4 paper.** A4 paper is the standard size of paper used in organizations; it is the easiest to handle and file.

36. **Word-process your CV.** You may be tempted to hand-write it, as this is can be more personal. However, a hand-written CV is also far more difficult to read.

37. **If you photocopy your CV, make sure you reproduce perfect copies.**

38. **Try to provide all the information on one side of one sheet of paper.** Longer CVs take longer to read. If you want to produce a longer CV, then produce a one-page executive summary as well, so that when the person-who-has-the-power-to-give-you-an-interview reads it, they can decide whether or not they want to plough through the longer version.

39. **Use black ink.** Remember that CVs may need to be copied if, for example, there are several people on your interview panel. Black produces the best photocopies.

40. **List any vocational qualifications separately from your academic qualifications.** This may include qualifications, such as a first aid certificate. Keeping academic and non-academic qualifications separate makes the CV easier to follow.

41. **If you present the information on your CV in chronological order or reverse-chronological order, be consistent with all the information on your CV.** In other words, never use chronological order for one section and reverse-chronological order for another.

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7 CV content

A CV (curriculum vitae) is a concise statement of your personal details, education, experience and achievements. It is sometimes termed a resume or a bio (short for biography). As a prospective employee, it is your 'shop window'. Its purpose is to provide a prospective employer with an executive summary of your background. It should do so in a way that can be absorbed by a potential employer as quickly and easily as possible. Here is a check-list of the main items on a CV:

42. **Personal details and contact information** This should include: (1) full name (first name, followed by any middle names ,and then your surname), (2) full postal address (you may include a university address and a parental address, so you can be contacted at all times), (3) telephone numbers with different day and evening numbers, (4) email addresses (so you can be contacted via your computer).

43. **Educational details and qualifications** This part should include schools and colleges attended, subjects studied, and qualifications and grades obtained.

44. **Experience** (including part-time and vacation work) Include the name and address of employers, job titles, and brief details of your main responsibilities.

45. **Achievements** Focus on any achievements that provide evidence of your capacity and willingness to learn in varying circumstances. This may include backpacking abroad, working on your college newspaper etc.

46. **Interests** These help to differentiate you as an individual. Again, focus on those interests that emphasise your capacity and keenness to learn in different situations.

47. **CVs are laid out in a 'formulaic' way to make the information as quick and easy as possible for the reader to absorb.** This is important because for any job there may be hundreds of applicants each submitting a CV. The formulaic aspect of CVs means that readers generally know where the information they are looking for will be found. In general, a CV opens with personal details and contact information, followed by educational history and qualifications, experience including work history, achievements, and finally, interests. You can distinguish yourself by deviating from this formula, but only at the cost of desired readability. If you do decide to deviate significantly from this pattern, make sure the benefits outweigh that cost.

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8 Documenting your work experience

Certain prospective employees have been known to exaggerate (or even falsify) their experience to secure the job they want. As a result, employers increasingly expect evidence to support claims of experience. Work experience, and skills based on work experience that can be documented are more valuable than experience and skills that are difficult to prove. Keep a file, which documents your experience. This also indicates a methodical and organised approach to work.

48. **Keep a written record of all past jobs** What should you include? As much as possible of (1) name and address of employer, (2) description of main duties, (3) main responsibilities, (4) reason for leaving, (5) name and address of someone who can vouch for your experience.

49. **Keep any certificates you accumulate** safe. Even if these are skills, such as first aid courses, or internal training courses, they all count. They are evidence of your work experience and enthusiasm.

50. **Ask your employer or supervisor for an 'open' testimonial.** An open testimonial is a reference that is headed 'To whom it may concern'. This is always worth having, because employers sometimes disappear. The person who supervised you may move on, forget about your employment, or may simply be difficult to contact.

51. **Keep any commendations or thank you letters from past clients.** If these were sent to the organisation rather than to you, do not be afraid to ask for a copy.

52. Maintain contact with your supervisor and other close employees, who are in a position to give you a 'closed' reference, i.e. a reference that you do not see. These carry more weight than open references with potential employees. As soon as possible after leaving, send a 'thank you' note to your supervisor to help to ensure you are remembered, and a few Christmas cards a couple of years after you leave is a pleasant way of staying in contact.

53. **Hold on to any evidence of particular achievements, such as documentation that of target achievement.** This could include documents of achievements such as 'employee of the month', or a bonus for exceptional performance.

54. **Keep induction manuals and training handbooks.** These can provide evidence of what you have covered, and can also serve as an aide-memoire to you.

55. **File evidence of any project to which you contributed.**

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9 Dress for success at interviews

In a simple choice between graduate job applicants who are similar in other respects, appearance and dress can tip the decision in your favour. The relative growth of service industries emphasises the importance of this, as they place more importance on dress and appearance than other industrial sectors.

56. **The more important appearance/dress is in doing the job for which you are being interviewed, the more important it is likely to be in the interview.** For example, interviewers for a job that involves meeting potential clients or customers are likely to be very concerned about how you present yourself at the interview. Additionally, remember that the job for which you are being interviewed may not involve meeting potential clients, but it may lead on to such a job. The interviewers will be aware that this is the normal progression. Interviewers generally have a longer term perspective than just how you will perform in the job for which you have applied; they are also likely to be interested in your potential for more senior positions in the longer term.

57. **Wear the same sort of clothes you would expect to wear when employed on the job itself.** This will help the employer to visualise you as actually doing the job.

58. **Ask yourself what first impression your appearance and dress convey**. First impressions are important, and it has been said that you never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

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59. If a job (now or in the near future) involves engaging directly with customers or clients, ask yourself, 'what impression would my appearance/dress make on a customer or client?' If you fail to ask this question of yourself, it is certainly one that will be of importance to the interviewer(s).

60. **Dressing in the same way as your peers is a way of being accepted. We all know this is true in social situations.** If you want to be one of the in-group, then it is usually necessary to look like one of the in-group. An interview can be viewed as a ritual through which you are seeking entry to a particular in-group; you want to enter into an organisation, and into a particular group of employees. If you are successfully employed, maintain this throughout your contract period.

61. **Avoid looking untidy or over-casual for an interview.** The reason for this is that interviewers are looking for clues about how you will work. If you look untidy or disorganised, this is a clue that you are untidy or disorganised in your work. If you are over-casual at the interview, this is a clue that you may be over-casual in your work and, in particular, with clients or the person to whom you report. Interviewers are looking for these sorts of clues; it is precisely what interviews are for. (In other words, interviewers are likely to project your appearance onto the way you will work).

62. **Ask yourself if your appearance and dress reflect where you have been in your life, or where you want to go, i.e. you history or your future.** Just because you have had a particular appearance in the past does not mean you have to stay faithful to it It may have been appropriate for the contexts and situations in which you have been in, which are different from the contexts and situations towards which you are now moving. Your appearance/dress may have been appropriate for your circumstances as a student, and now you can ask whether it is time to let that go and move on.

63. **If you are really not sure what constitutes appropriate dress for a particular interview, adopt the 'safety first' policy and dress in the 'standard interview uniform'**. Here is the 'standard interview uniform' for male graduate interviewees: dark suit (grey or dark blue with faint stripes) with conservatively striped white shirt (no pullover), and black shoes which are well polished. A grey or blue sports jacket with grey trousers is an acceptable alternative to the suit. The 'standard interview uniform' for a female graduate is rather less standard: a suit with matching jacket and skirt, or a blouse with a collar and a skirt below or on the knee, with a conventional jacket and black, sensible shoes. If you are in any doubt, the safety first rule is to err in favour of conventionality, rather than looking trendy or fashionable.

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64. Be aware that there are also times to disregard the interview uniform completely and look precisely the way that most pleases you. When is this the right policy? In all the following situations: (1) when you do not need the job, (2) you want to test the veracity of employer statements that 'we don't mind how you dress', (3) When you care more about how you dress and how you look than whether you get the job, (4) when the employer is looking for people who think 'outside the box' and you want to project an unconventional image, (5) when you want to find employment with an employer who does notplace importance on how you dress/look, (6) when you want to convey a particular impression, and the way you dress and other aspects of your appearance will contribute to that impression. The bottom line is that your appearance and dress will have an impact on the likelihood of your success at an interview, so give it some thought. It may only be a negative effect, i.e. the right dress/appearance is very unlikely to get you the job, but the wrong dress/appearance can prevent you from securing it.

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10 First or last job

Your first job as a graduate is very unlikely to be your last job. Many graduates move on quite quickly from their first job as a graduate, and may have several jobs in their first seven years after graduation.

65. **Think of your first graduate job as work experience**. If you are only looking for a first job as a graduate, look for a position where you can broaden your horizons and learn new skills.

66. **Treat your experience of looking for your first graduate job as practice** to help you learn about the graduate labour market, and the job-searching process itself. This will probably take some of the stress out of looking for your job as a graduate, because it will feel more like a rehearsal than the real thing. It will also shift the focus from the graduate employment to learning about graduate employment, and give you permission to experiment and make mistakes. It is perfectly normal to make mistakes when we are learning something new.

67. **When applying for your first job ask about opportunities for training and development.** Asking in an interview about opportunities for training and development informs the prospective employer that you are keen to learn. Furthermore, training and further education can be expensive, so it is a considerable perk of any job and should never be wasted.

68. **Expect to change jobs. The phenomenon of lifetime employment is rapidly disappearing.** Even jobs that seem secure now could disappear within a few years. The safest job is the one that enables you to gain skills, qualifications, and experience that can be applied in many different sectors of the economy.

69. **Consider taking a lesser job as a stepping stone** to the job that you really want. A part-time, temporary or contract post can be a half-way house on the journey to reaching full-time graduate employment. It is usually easier to obtain a permanent job in your preferred field of work from a position of partial employment or employment in less targeted work, than from a position of being unemployed. The longer you remain unemployed, the stronger this point becomes.

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11 Getting a higher qualification

You may decide to do a higher degree. This is one way of signalling to employers that you are good at learning, and if you graduate at a time of rising and/or high unemployment, it can be an attractive option. It also opens up a wider range of jobs in institutions for further and higher education. If your motives for doing the Master's degree are mainly vocational, you will probably be considering doing a Master's degree, which can be an expensive option.

70. **Consider doing a Master's degree in the area of your undergraduate degree.** This is the natural option if you are aiming at subsequent employment in an institution of further or higher education. It will increase the range of jobs to include subject-dependent vacancies, and test your knowledge of recently updated practices, for example.

71. **Alternatively, consider studying a higher degree in an area different from your undergraduate degree, such as an MBA.** This will not only signal versatility in learning, but will also widen the range of your employment options.

72. **Consider studying for a Master's degree while you are working.** There are an increasing number of Master's degrees available on a part-time basis, which increases the attractiveness of this option. Try to persuade your employer to support you in so doing. *Equally, consider finding part-time employment while you complete a part-time Master's degree.* Sometimes it is easier to find employment for two days per week, than a full-time post. This allows you time to study on a part-time basis. In this way you can gain work experience, as well as a higher level qualification.

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12 Getting active

Sometimes we need a little help from our friends. Getting active in the pursuit of employment does not have to mean endlessly editing your CV, There are other, more valuable ways you can connect with people.

73. **Ever considered becoming a non-executive director?** This may sound rather grand, but graduates of any age have a lot to offer in an unpaid capacity to small charities or private sector businesses, in terms of either business or technical expertise. Many job-related skills learned at university are vital on a Board of Directors, and such boards, if they are new start-ups, small voluntary sector organisations, or social enterprises need help and clear thinking skills, for which they cannot afford to pay. In return, you gain employment awareness, and a very fast insight into some of the problems facing organisations today.

74. **Make full use of your alumni organisation.** You may have been to one university or more, but any that you have studied with will consider themselves responsible, to some extent, to maintain contact with you and to support your professional development and job search activities. Alumni associations have a vested interest in staying in touch with you. At some point, you could be very valuable to them, either for fund-raising, publicity, or for supporting and mentoring other new graduates. Never dismiss this opportunity to stay in touch. Your university careers service will continue to support you if you make use of it. It's a simple way to obtain internet access, check current graduate job listings, gain advice, and network with others at events.

75. **Get together with friends**. On your own, there are only so many ideas you can have and work on at a time. There is creativity in numbers. Some of your friends will already have jobs – stay in touch, they may know of other openings which might suit you. Do not succumb to job envy; they may have obtained theirs by luck, systematic planning, or simply being less fussy about what they wanted to do and where they wanted to do it. It is too easy to lose touch with others who could be useful to you, just because we do not feel we have achieved so well. Your chosen career, is far more important than short-term job competition. Your friends might be the way to find that special job; their recommendation at work may be useful, and they may also be able to give a more honest picture from the inside of an organisation.

76. **Get together with others looking for work.** This might be a formally organised Action Learning Set at your university or college. Or, if there isn't one, you could start a group or club to meet and work on job searches together. This not only helps to keep you positive, but also allows you to learn from others' experiences, actions or lack thereof, chance ideas, or helpful advice. Remember that Action Learning principles, such as meeting to reflect on, discuss, challenge and commit to actions, giving equal time to everyone, questioning to help people reframe and revisit ideas and attitudes, can all be adapted and used at group meetings, provided you are all committed to supporting each other.

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13 Getting out there

With all the technology we have at our fingertips today, it may be tempting to sit at home and click for a job. Usually, it is not quite that simple. In any case, staying within four walls for a significant length of time can not only be unhealthy, but also positively depressing. Venture out and enjoy what you can do.

77. **Make looking for work into a job**. This is a popular tip for those who have lost a job, but it can also be applied for those seeking work after graduation. The practical effect is that most jobs have regular working hours and a change of venue – both of which can be achieved by adopting a local library, internet cafe, or simply a different room at home which becomes a "workplace". Behaving as if you have a regular job – identifying set work times and a place for example – can sometimes focus your mind for the search ahead.

78. **Find a local library or use your local university library**. It is often possible to gain temporary membership of a local university library, if not, your local library may be good. What is the point here? To discover resources and access you may not have realised were available.

79. **Don't give up the sports or other activities you enjoy.** You need to stay fit for a job search, and variety of activity is vital for mental health too.

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14 Honing (up) your CV

The easiest way to produce a good CV is to do it in two stages: (1) produce a first draft, (2) make improvements to it. Here are some suggestions as to how to improve it:

80. **Ask a friend or family member to read your CV and give you feedback.** Ask them for the 3 positive points, and 3 ideas for possible improvements. Then, amend your CV in the light of this feedback.

81. **Check for redundant information.** Information that was relevant for the last job you applied for may be irrelevant for this one, or at least need adapting.

82. **Check intelligibility of abbreviations.** If in doubt, replace them with their full versions.

83. **If you are a mature graduate, delete or minimise any old information.** Retain it only if it is very relevant to the particular job for which you are applying.

84. **Emphasize and justify your willingness to learn in your new job and to embrace situations that involve personal and professional development.**

85. **Triple check your CV**. Human input, preferably from an objective source, surpasses that of computer spell checkers.

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15 How to convince a prospective graduate employer that you are willing and able to learn

Do not be surprised if graduates from universities that require the highest entry qualifications, and graduates with the highest degree classifications, find it easier to find graduate employment. These are both clear signals to an employer, projecting ability and willingness to learn. Research shows that six months after graduating, this group have significantly lower rates of unemployment, and a significantly lower percentage are in non-graduate jobs. The differences are not stark, however, indicating that employers also look for other factors. Other than your class of degree and the university you attended, how else can you signal that you are willing and able to learn? Here are 7 ways:

86. **Provide evidence of success in a hobby that demands learning, e.g. playing a leading role in amateur dramatics at your university, playing chess for your university team, or learning the saxophone.** These all indicate an aptitude for learning, and are therefore contenders for inclusion in your CV.

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87. **Provide evidence of challenging situations.** For example, if you have undertaken student volunteering or work experience that requires learning, this looks valuable on your CV.

88. Produce a CV with a wide range of other experience and accomplishments. This also indicates you are willing to put yourself in different situations that require learning. That is why the fact that you back-packed across South America, or have been the sports editor of your student newspaper, is important information to a potential graduate employer.

89. **Reflect on your learning methods and strengths; maximise this on your CV.** For example, "I enjoy learning to use software packages", "I enjoy new experiences and new challenges", or "The part of my degree I enjoyed most was the final year dissertation, when I was able to plan and manage a project from start to finish."

90. **Consider your talents and strengths; illustrate these using evidence.** Refer to section on Identifying your strengths for more details.

91. **Research any potential employer, the organisation and the job. This is especially important before interview.** Revealing at interview that you are ignorant of the organisation or the job, signals that you have not been able or willing to find out, which, in turn, signals you are not keen to learn, whatever your need to learn to succeed in the job.

92. **Can you think of any other ways to signal that you are willing and able to learn?** If you can, it will ameliorate your chances of finding graduate employment.

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16 How employers recruit

Get into the mindset of those employers you want to work for; they have a vastly different perspective on the job search issue. For them, a vacancy can be something which is easily and regularly filled, or something that is causing them a real problem.

93. **Most employers begin to fill vacancies by looking within their organisations.** This sounds like a problem for a new graduate – how do you put yourself in the right position for the job you want? The answer is simple: someone you know might already be in there – talk to them. Make it clear that you are interested in working for the organisation, and make sure they realise that means putting forward your name and/or CV when the time comes.

94. **Aim for any job at the organisation you really want to work for** – such as a temporary job, a project, consultancy etc. However, do be wary of accepting a job, which is vastly different to your ultimate career choice. First impressions are crucial, and it can be hard to discard a "temp" clerical image, if you are trying for a high-powered executive job.

95. **Employers like proof that you can do the job.** So is that Catch 22? Without the job you don't have the proof, without the proof you don't get the job. A more positive approach would suggest you develop a portfolio of evidence – just as an artist would develop a portfolio of paintings and sketches to show their potential and current expertise. You may have graduated already with a portfolio of achievement of some kind. Or, you may be able to add to one or start one with examples of work you have created or been part of (project plans and outcomes, posters of events you co-ordinated, videos or photos of work achieved, spreadsheets of relevant calculations). Clearly, if you haven't worked in this type of job before, you are looking for portfolio evidence from other parts of your life (university, college, school, leisure activities, teams you have contributed to or led, community service of any kind, family projects). Never take the portfolio to the interview to wave around unnecessarily. Nevertheless, most employers today use "behavioural" interviewing, i.e. they ask for evidence of successful behaviours related to the job for which you are applying. Offer to show them evidence from your portfolio.

96. **The eight second CV**. It is true that most employers will give your CV very brief attention, particularly if you have sent it in relation to a job advertisement, as it will be part of a pile of CVs. The employer's main job (or that of their HR department) will first of all be to discard as many CVs as possible. Thus, there must be nothing on your CV which causes them to notice and discard. Such negative triggers may be a gap in education or work experience, which is unexplained, a lack of a qualification specifically requested in the job ad., a poorly presented, crumpled CV, or one with grammar or spelling mistakes.

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97. **Complete every section in an application form**. As above, little attention will be paid to application forms with incomplete sections. Application forms are used to ensure the required information is provided. If it isn't, they are discarded instantly.

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17 Identifying your strengths

This can be far more demanding, yet rewarding, than may initially seem to be the case. Whilst you may find the first list of skills and experiences comes easily, as it will be largely descriptive, the rich reward will come if you can re-describe your same skills to highlight past successes. Think openly.

98. **Describe your achievements differently.** For example, use terms such as work experience, group projects, techniques, technologies, skills, individual learning, clubs and societies, rather than job titles and course names. This will make it easier to show actions rather than descriptions

99. **What opportunities have I used fully?** For example, did you participate in sports or cultural societies at university? Did you take on job training in your work experience?

100. **What opportunities have I missed?**, More importantly, consider what you have learned from this. When describing your work experience – be specific. Quantify, quantify, quantify. From the mundane, such as your attendance record, to any positive feedback you received from your employer.

101. **Use verbs, not adjectives**. When showing what you have to offer, try to give brief examples, that show what you actively 'did', rather than what you passively 'were'.

102. **When describing a group achievement, clearly identify what you contributed**. Be specific. What did you do? Did it succeed? How do you know it succeeded? Can you identify other benefits from the group activity? Did you resolve a conflict? Did you draw out a weaker colleague?

103. **Do not be afraid to include travelling achievements.** Some of the most important life lessons are learned in a foreign context. Was it a good investment of time and money? What can I use in a job context?

104. **Do not forget voluntary work or community involvement**. This could include ways that you have helped your family or friends. What did you need to learn? What was difficult? What did you get praised for?

105. **For interests, pastimes and hobbies ask yourself: what have I done outside of study and work** this week, this month, this term, this year or indeed while at university?

106. **What do I read**? Be careful how you approach this one! Does it pinpoint off strengths relevant to this potential vacancy? Remember not to put "reading" as a hobby, unless you are prepared to discuss specific books and genres with your interviewer.

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18 Job ads

Whether you are looking at print media (newspapers and magazines) or web sites (company sites or agency sites), it is easy to be discouraged after you have read the first hundred! Try to find ways to keep the activity of reviewing job ads fresh for you.

107. **Study job ads rather than scanning them**. Put your academic skills into action by writing a comparative study of jobs ads in your chosen field. What do they have in common? What distinguishes them? Which media carry similar types of job in your field? Usually, when looking for a job, we scan adverts very quickly, and reject them. Delve deeper into the industry that interests you, considering each position.

108. **Look for the key facts which constrain your choice of job.** Looking through endless job ads can be very time-consuming and repetitive. Make sure you know the things about a job, which will make you reject the ad – look for these first. For example, there may be a location you want to avoid, or a type of job which you have tried and really disliked, or perhaps there are specific anti-social hours which are simply inconvenient. While you do need to keep your options open as much as possible, make a list of these limiting factors, and make sure you review the ads for these first, to save you time.,

109. **Take lots of breaks when you are reading through job ads.** After a while, they will all look the same and all feel inappropriate. Frequent breaks may help you pick out the possibles with more clarity. Make notes of any interesting organisations you might like to work for, even if the advertised job isn't suitable for you. You can always visit their website or talk to them about other potential vacancies.

110. **Look for the gaps**. What is it that the employer or agent is NOT saying in the ad? Do they not mention hours of work, or training etc.? The gaps may be significant for your choice.

111. **Where else can you find job ads?** We have mentioned print media and websites, but you can find jobs through visiting company locations, your friends in employment can have access to internal information on notice boards, and even word of mouth. Be alert for any channel of communication with potential to deliver a job ad.

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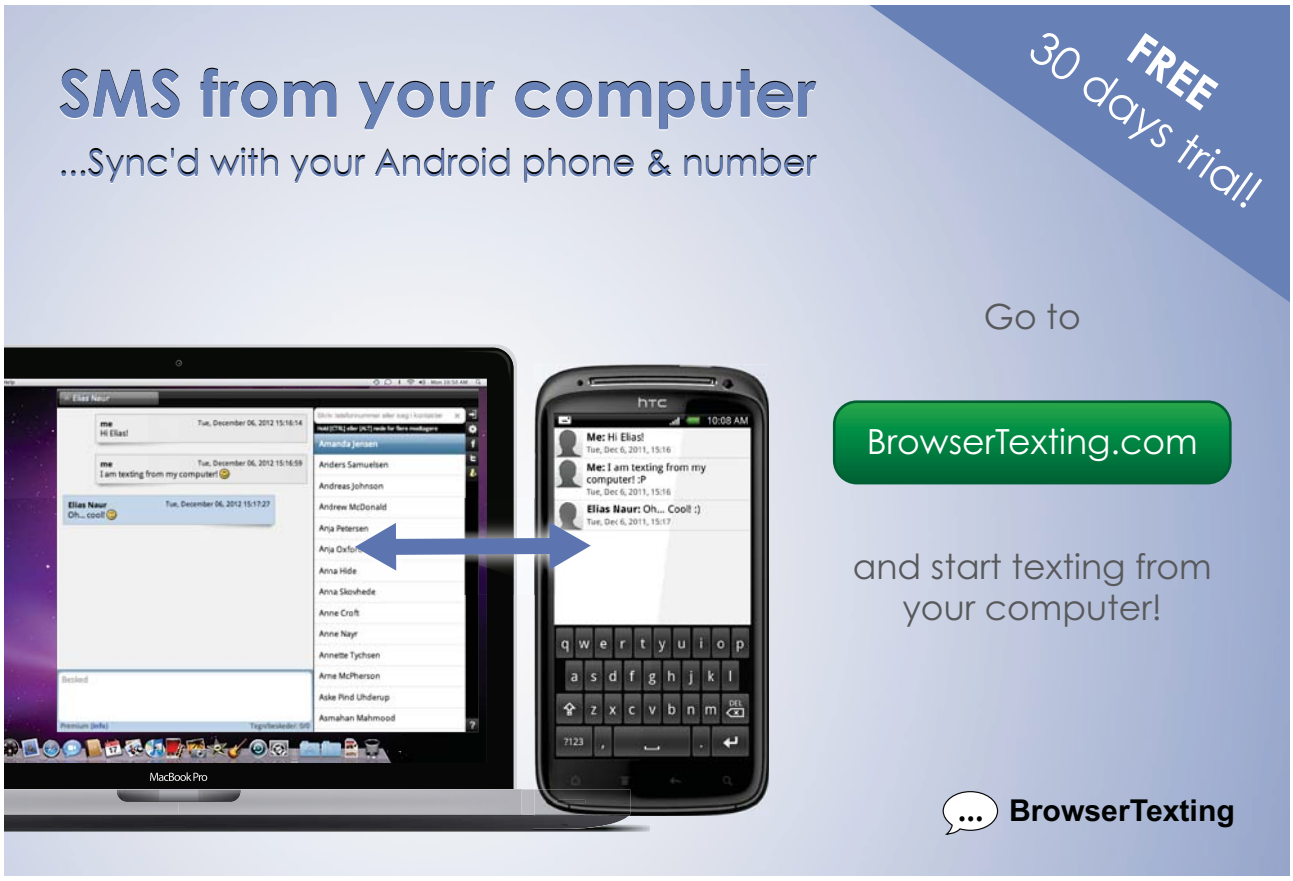
19 Learning your way out of graduate unemployment

Graduates' distinguishing feature is their volition to learn. How can you make your comparative advantage in learning work for you when you graduate?

112. **You don't stop learning when you leave university.** That may be the end of your formal education, but it is the start of a period of intense, informal learning. Whether or not you secure a graduate job quickly, you will learn as much in your first year after university as you did in any of your years at university. However, itwill not be planned and managed by your tutors. You'll be learning about the graduate labour market, how to get the sort of job you want and how to make the most of whatever job you do get. And it is you who will be planning and managing your own learning.



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113. **Reframe the problem of finding graduate employment as one of learning your way out of graduate employment towards the job you most want.** As a graduate you will be using your primary asset, aptitude for learning, to move towards your goals in the field of graduate employment. This will be your first test as a graduate of how ready and willing you really are to learn. To succeed, you will have to study the problem, and like all good learning that is likely to result in some new knowledge, skills and attitudes.

114. **Recognise that reframing the problem as one of learning your way out of graduate employment towards the job you most want, amounts to learning how to plan and manage the early stages of your graduate career.** One of the recurring themes of this book is that learning how to plan and manage your graduate career is a very smart move indeed for graduates.

115. **Be as clear as you can about your learning objectives.** If you appreciate that you are likely to be looking for new employment at various times in your graduate career (especially in the early years) then your learning goals will go beyond simply 'learning to find my first graduate job', to include broader outcomes, such as understanding the graduate labour market, how to recognise your aptitudes and achievements, and how to market them effectively to potential employers, etc. In other words, recognise that you are acquiring career management knowledge and skills that will continue to have value even after you have found your first job as a graduate.

116. **In addition to your own aptitude for learning, what other learning resources do you have?** Well, to start with, there are books and other printed matter which can be helpful, and experts to talk with (such as the people in the careers advisory service of your university or in your nearest university) and people with relevant current experience (such as other newly graduated students), and a huge number of websites that can be helpful.

117. **After that, there is the learning you will gain from your own experience in the graduate labour market (and from your first job(s) as a graduate).** To distil the most learning out of this experience it helps to talk with friends about your different stories, to compare notes and make sense of it all.

118. **Study trends in the graduate labour market** Graduates are entering an increasingly diverse range of jobs (partly because there are more of them).

119. **Graduates are no longer a small elite**. Nowadays about 40% of school-leavers go on to Higher Education and within a few years this is likely to rise above 50%. Here are some of the changes around graduate employment.

    a) Increasing reliance on selection centres
    b) Increasing reliance on IT-based recruitment; not many years ago the internet played an insignificant part in the process of graduate job search…and now it is crucial.
    c) Reduced importance of the milk-round (i.e. the percentage of graduates who get employment via the milk-round (careers fairs) has fallen)

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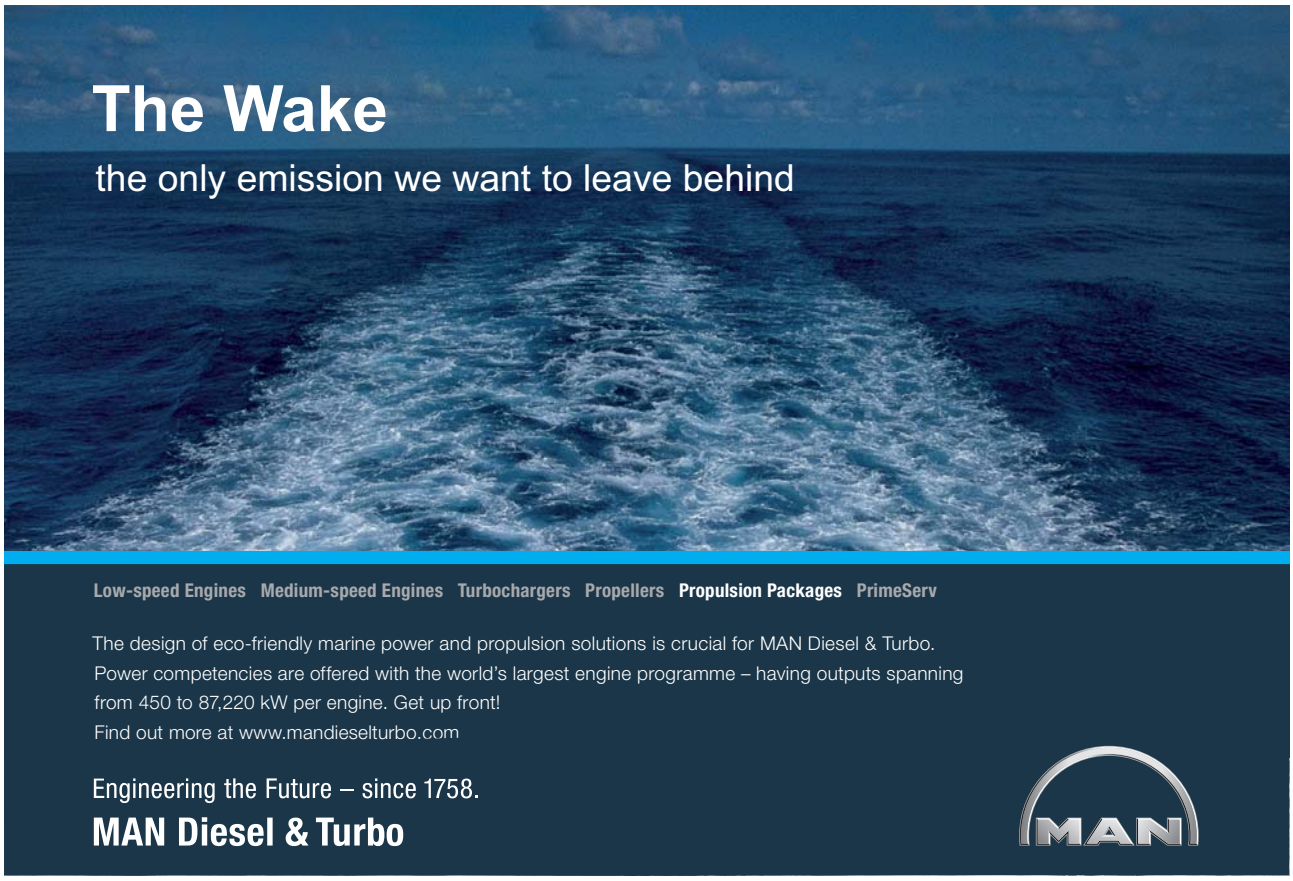
d) Graduates are increasingly employed in knowledge-based parts of the economy (and the number of knowledge-based parts of the economy has risen and continues to rise).
e) Most graduates were male…and now most are female.
f) Most graduates held jobs in blue chip organisations with graduates? that visited universities…and now they don't. Not clear.
g) Degree courses were once available in a very limited range of subjects and now the range is huge.
h) Many more graduates find employment in jobs where a degree is not a strict requirement and only later move into so-called 'graduate jobs'.
i) Many more students do Masters degrees than in the past.
j) More graduates are combining part-time or fixed term employment with free-lance work.
k) More graduates are combining work with further study on a part-time basis.
l) Increasing use of agency-based work.



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20 Making an impression

Much impression management is about how you look when you walk through the prospective employer's door. But long before that, they may have found a quite different picture of you, online…

120. **Review your online presence or digital profile.** Do a thorough and objective analysis of your Facebook, Linked In or Ning site. What does it say about you to an employer? They might come across it or even actively look for it. Consider a bit of housekeeping and judicious editing.

121. **Always think before you upload a photo.** Great to share personal photos with friends, and if you take real care you can ensure that only your friends can see them. But it is very easy to forget to check the visibility of what you upload, depending on the privacy settings of different sites. So take care – more employers today are searching for evidence of your past life online, so photos which are a bit too revealing are out of the question if you are serious about a career.

122. **Think about the kind of information you have on your sites.** Are you happily telling the world about personal relationships, faith, hobbies? If you are going to go to the trouble of tailoring every CV and application to a specific job or sector, as you should do, then what is the point if a quick web search would reveal very different information about who you are?

123. **Remember that point about plagiarism in your studies?** Social network sites are good places to recommend links to other people's ideas and work, but take care not to infringe copyright – consider using only images with Creative Commons licensing if constructing a wiki or webpage for example.

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21 Making the most of your CV

Your CV provides a prospective employer with at-a-glance information about you as a prospective employee. The main objective of a CV is to get you an interview. CVs are often used by employers to filter out people *not* to interview. A good CV will not get you a graduate job but a poor CV can prevent you getting one.

124. **Make sure you keep your CV up-to-date.** You will normally need to edit your CV for every job application.

125. **Recognise that different jobs will almost certainly require different CVs**. Tailor your CV to each job you apply for. For example, you need to highlight the experience, qualifications and achievements that are most relevant for different jobs.

126. **To a greater or lesser extent your prospective employer will project the qualities of your CV onto to you.** The employer will not have met you when they get your CV and so will look for clues about you from the CV. If your CV is unprofessional and sloppy, that is how you will come across to the employer. Instead, you want your CV to be evidence that you can work professionally and to a high standard.

127. **Make sure you give your full contact details.** Sometimes interviews are called at short notice and are given to people who can be contacted immediately.

128. **Do not use abbreviations unless you are 100 per cent sure the reader will understand them.** If in doubt, avoid them completely.

129. **Avoid gaps in your educational or work record. If there are any (e.g. when you were travelling or unemployed) include them and indicate what you were doing.** Gaps create suspicion, and there is a danger that a prospective employer will infer the worst.

130. **Date your CV.** This shows you have taken the trouble to update your CV for this application.

131. **Keeping CV copies on file.** This isn't the only time in your life when you will need to keep updating your CV, it will happen again. So take a little care to title your CV files clearly. You might want to save the CV file not only to show the date at which you updated it, but also the company or sector for which you amended it. Then if, in the future, you need to remember how you tailored it for a specific type of job, you can easily find the right version.

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22 Making the most of your University Careers Service

A degree in any subject can lead in many different directions. Even if you have chosen a subject, such as accounting, which is directed at a particular vocation, you do not have to follow that particular career route. Remember that most vacancies for graduates ask for graduates of *any* subject. The people in your university careers service have the information to help you explore which direction(s) you might explore after graduation. Here are some tips to help you get the best from them:

132. 13**Take up your entitlement to free careers guidance.** Your university careers service is a valuable resource, yet many students fail to use it. The staff in your university careers service will know about short-cuts and pitfalls of which you may be blissfully unaware.

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133. **Do some homework**. It pays to help the people in your university careers service to help you. If you go along to an interview with a careers counsellor in your university careers service and you say you haven't got a clue about what you want to do next, they are not really in a position to help you much. Although, even then they could tell you where past graduates in your subject have found jobs and what steps you can take to begin to narrow down your options. It is much better, however, to consider possible options and research them (from the library or the web).

134. **Be open to alternatives and ready to change to your mind**. Recall again that most graduate vacancies are open to graduates of any subject. So, whatever subject your degree is in, you are not locked into any particular choice of career.

135. **Recognise that the role of careers counselors is to persuade you about particular choices of career**. They are there simply to help you explore options. You do not have to defend your career preferences, but just make sure you listen to what they have to say. Afterwards, you can decide what contribution it makes to your plans for finding graduate employment.

136. **Explore what resources are available from the offices of your university careers service**. You can do this by just looking around, but a more effective way is to ask one of your university careers counsellors in a careers counselling interview. It is just one of the things they will know a lot about.

137. **Find out about special events**. These might include, for example, careers fairs, open days, meetings with employers, work experience and events focused on student volunteering.

138. **Recognise that your university careers service is just the first step**. It is only one element in a job-hunting strategy. Afterwards, you will need to do your own research, but hopefully your university careers service will have given you a steer, some useful information and some useful ideas.

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23 Miscellaneous tips

139. **Recognise that your social skills are also business skills**. You may regard skills, such as the ability to get on easily with people and be persuasive or be a good host, as particular social skills. Nevertheless, they are also important skills within organisations, particularly as very few jobs involve working alone. In the context of employment, they are termed 'people skills', and can be a very attractive asset to employers

140. **Never ignore basic skills**. You may think that with your higher level university degree qualification you have moved above the basics such as spelling, coherent writing, grammar, simple numeracy etc. Such hubris will not serve you well when you are seeking employment. These basic skills remain of importance to most employers. They take the view that if you fail to get the basics correct, like spelling on your CV, then your degree cannot really be worth much.

141. **You will find it easier to succeed in your new job if you like it.** People who are successful in their work often spend every waking moment working because they really enjoy it, and often continue to work past retirement, even though they could easily afford to retire. So finding a job that is enjoyable and fulfilling may be more important than finding a job that pays well.

142. **Identify what you want from your graduate job, in terms of your own values.** We don't all want the same thing from a job. That which one graduate regards as 'stimulating', another sees as 'stressful'. That which is a 'challenge' to one graduate is a 'problem' to another. One graduate wants to be fully engaged by the job, and another wants to switch off when they leave work at 5 pm. Have a look at the following list and identify the 4 aspects that are most important to you – and then rank those 4 aspects:

    a) Stimulation
    b) Money
    c) congenial social environment
    d) Self-respect
    e) Respect from others
    f) An opportunity to be creative
    g) An opportunity to make a difference and contribute to something larger than yourself
    h) An opportunity to use your skills
    i) A chance to learn and develop
    j) Challenge
    k) Hands-on experience

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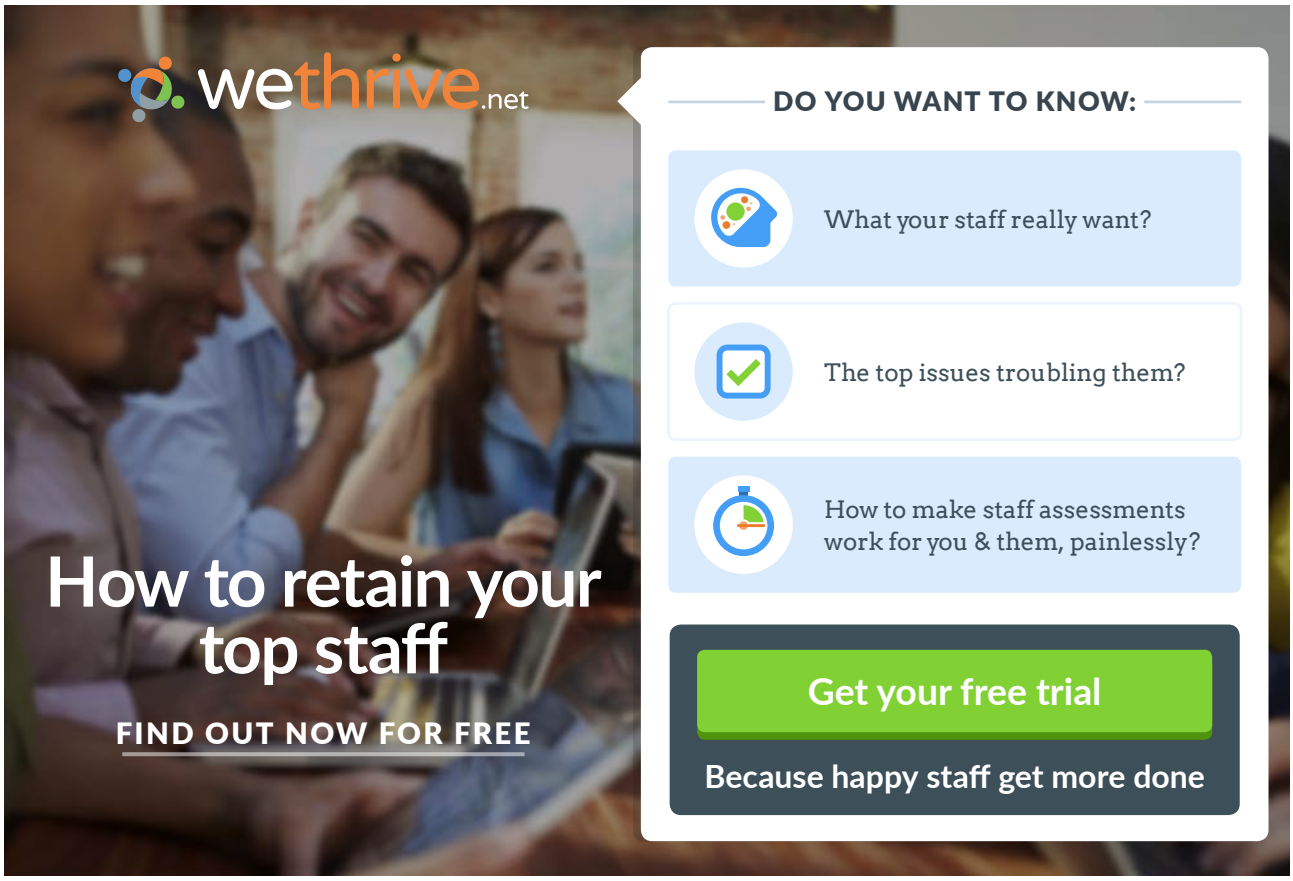
l) Status
m) A career
n) Opportunity for promotion/advancement
o) Variety
p) The opportunity to become a member of a team

143. **Know yourself.** The three big questions when searching for a job are (1) what have you got to offer? (2) what do you want from a job? (3) how can you use what you have to offer, to secure a job that offers what you want from a job? Clearly it is necessary to answer the first two questions before you can answer the third question. The first two questions are fundamentally about knowing yourself. Question 1 ('what have you got to offer?') involves taking stock of your talents, strengths, skills, aptitudes and other positive attributes. Question 2 ('what do you want from a job?') involves exploring your needs, preferences and values and prioritising them in the context of potential employment.

144. **Ask someone to proof-read your CV, accompanying letter, completed application form and any other documentation you send to a prospective employer**. It is difficult to proof-read our own work as we know what we meant to write, so that is what we tend to read. Other people read without our preconceptions so they find it easier to spot errors.



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24 Online skills

You may well be excellent at shopping online and connecting with your social network. Even so, you might find some tips here which help when searching for jobs.

145. **Computer readiness**. Now is the time to review your computer access, because internet access and basic computer record-keeping and word-processing are going to be important to your job search. You can access the web at public places if you have wi-fi. If you have 3G, you can access it anywhere, but that is an expensive route. If you have no computer at home, or no internet access at home, ask at your university careers service to use their facilities, find a job club locally, or ask everyone you know if they have an old pc or laptop which still works which you could borrow or buy. Or use your local library's internet? Internet searching is going to be an integral part not just of your job search, but also of developing your identity – make sure you can regularly get online and be accessible there.

146. **Different parts of the Internet useful for job searching**. The World Wide Web is clearly the place you will spend most of your time when searching for jobs. However, there are other areas on the Internet which are also useful. Usenets or newsgroups, for example, are used by special interest groups to chat and share information. Most of them will be no use at all, but if you are interested in a specific profession or job, which is a little out of the norm, then finding a relevant newsgroup will put you in touch with other enthusiasts or professionals in the field – a good way to network (see pages in the Networking folder). One way to find relevant newsgroups is to visit http://groups.google.com. Listservs (or email group lists) can also be helpful by getting you in touch with specific groups of people relevant to your choice of career path. This is quite a popular way for people in a wide geographical area (sometimes world-wide) to ask among the group for someone to help with a project or to recruit.

147. **Portals or gateway sites**. This is a bit like the difference between waiting for a bus at the side of a road and going to a bus station. The latter is likely to be a bit more organised, and be the place to find and choose the routes you want to take towards your job. A straight Google or Yahoo! search is going to yield many thousands or millions of hits which will exhaust your energy long before you have found the best routes to take. A portal or gateway site will concentrate your energy a little, and present to you advice, articles, job listings, relevant weblinks, without having to spend so much time surfing. Time is critical to job searching, and surfing is the best way to waste it. So, try a website book such as that published by Bourner, Rospigliosi and Greener, which has collected good quality sites of information on the Web, and/or use a portal site, such as www.prospects.ac.uk. Similar portals in the US and Canada include. www.job-hunt.org, www.jobstar.org, www.jobhuntersbible.com, or www.rileyguide.com.

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148. **Using directories for website search**. Why use generic directory sites? Effectively these act as encyclopaedias of the Web. For graduate job searches, they provide ways of exploring information about careers or jobs you might be interested in, by learning what is out there, and how things work. The Open Directory Project at www.dmoz.org offers such a directory, which does not self-organise according to popularity of hits, nor sponsored advertising. There is a UK section and this can be an avenue to discover the huge range of organisations in a field which interests you – UK or world-wide. Other directories online include http://lii.org – the Librarians' Internet Index and http://dir.yahoo.com.

149. **Searching with search engines.** Google is probably the best search engine around today, and it is rapidly becoming the search engine of choice for almost any request online. What about bing? It claims to do more… However, it is worth remembering that different search engines use different ways of indexing websites, present them differently to you on screen, and that they will none of them necessarily find every web resource on your search term. Google may be your first port of call when performing generic searches for organisations, job descriptions, skills advice, training courses etc. Google will show sponsored matches separately (clicking on them gives money to Google). In 2009, Google had indexed approximately 8 million webpages, more than twice as many as other search engines. If you are looking for a deeper search, use more than one search engine, so add http:/search.yahoo.com or a clustering search engine such as www.ask.com or http://clusty.com which clusters results under sub-headings, rather than using a strict hierarchical relevance or popularity rating, as used by Google and Yahoo engines. In the initial stages of a search, you need breadth rather than depth to see what is out there. For this purpose, it can help to use a metasearch engine such as www.dogpile.com or www.kartoo.com. Such metasearch engines search the indexes of several search engines including Google etc. The www.kartoo.com engine is particular interesting in the way it presents information visually – try searching with kartoo for Museum jobs or HR jobs and see what we mean.

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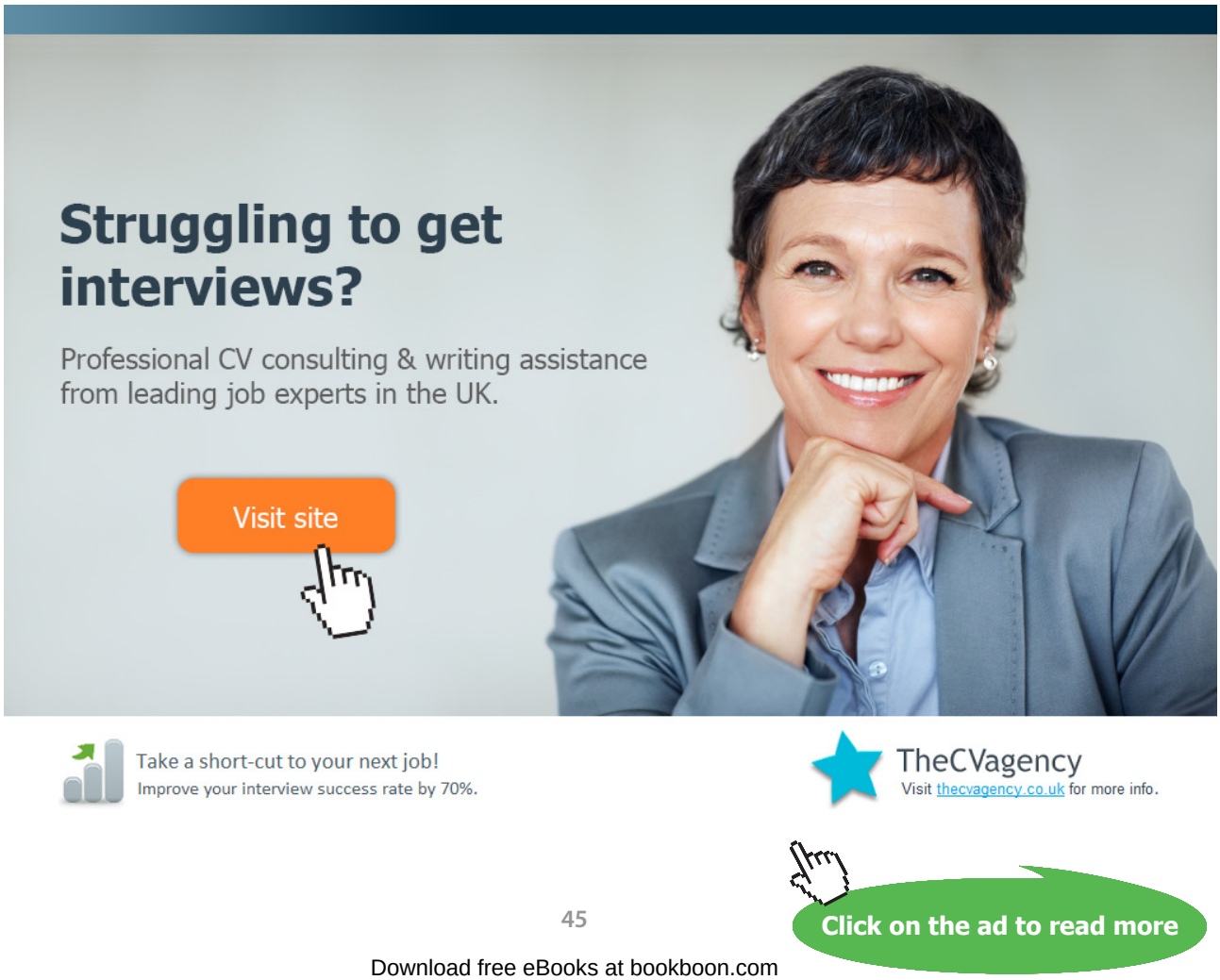
150. **Searching with databases**. Search engines do not find everything, as we have just pointed out, so another place to look for information on the Web is to find specialised databases which contain what you want. Sometimes, search engines will know where these databases are on the Web, but will not search inside them either because their owners make it inaccessible to search engines, or because the search engine has a policy of not searching databases. So how might you find them? You could try the directory sites such as the Open Directory Project mentioned above. Or you could use a search engine and add the word "database" or "archive" to your search terms (e.g. Human Resources AND database). You could mine URLs: if you find a URL with a question mark within it, then delete that part of the URL from just before the question mark to the end and press Enter. Sometimes, the question mark is a sign that the web page is sitting inside a database and this would take you to that database. Or, you can use the search engines' own map of links to webpages it finds. For example, in Google choose the WonderWheel view to see graphically the links embedded in the index to the website you are viewing. These links are clickable, and can lead you directly to relevant links or databases, rather than having to hunt through the full text of the website.



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151. **Supersized job sites**. Everyone has heard of Monster, one of the biggest job sites on the internet. Does that mean it is one of the best or the worst places to start? There are arguments for both points of view. Size of job site matters to employers with vacancies to fill, since they will expect that supersized sites will attract more traffic, so more likelihood of finding the person they want. Monster and some of the other large jobsites such as Totaljobs.com and Yahoo! Hotjobs will attract vast numbers of users, so your application/CV may not find it easy to stand out from the competition. On the other hand, your perfect job might be there and you can use simple search tools on the sites to find it.

152. **What kind of jobs are advertised online**? Mostly either hard-to-fill jobs (otherwise they would be filled by networking, local advertisement within company etc.) or sometimes even fictitious jobs. Why the latter? There are jobsites and organisations (recruiters, agencies etc.) out there who will post fictitious jobs in order to gain your contact details, largely to sell on to employers on their own behalf. Don't be too cynical, but check carefully before committing too much to the application.

153. **Use a specialised job search engine**. We have all used search engines such as Google and Yahoo!, but there are also specialised search engines which just look for job listings on the internet. Try sites such as myjobsearch.com, jobrapido.co.uk, workhound.co.uk, check4jobs.com, or if they have disappeared by the time you read this, just Google search for job search engines.

154. **Never pay for what is offered free**. Why would any graduate fall for a paid for service to find a job, when there is so much advice and search help offered on the internet for nothing? Clever marketing usually. Remember that the original ethos of the internet was free collaboration and sharing. Since then, people have found a million great ideas for making money out of its use, and one of those will be to hook you in to spending money in your job search. Use a good websites guide, or simply invest time in your own searching. The personalised, tailored service being offered to find the job of your dreams is likely to be no more helpful than your own efforts with smart searching. You can usually find free alternatives, so look for them.

155. **Remember what the internet is good for**. Use the particular advantages of the internet to bookmark the websites you find most effective (perhaps using deli.cio.us or similar). This is what computers are great at, sorting and collecting data, and finding it again. When you are searching for a job, you will visit dozens of websites and some will stick in your mind as useful. Bookmark them so you can get back to them. If you submit your details to any, bookmark them and keep a note of the passwords you set in the process. Or, perhaps you could build a blog or webpage for yourself in which you list and link to the good sites you find.

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156. **Can they find you**? It sounds obvious, but you need a stable email which will stay available when job searching. It is the easiest way to register interest in a company or with an agency, and it does mean you have to check that box very frequently. Think about the email address you choose – what image does it give of you? john@pinkknickers.co.uk is hardly going to impress the average employer!

157. **Personal webpages**? You can use these to present a professional image tailored to your chosen job field, and the web allows imaginative use of video, photos and designs to do this. This will be particularly relevant for jobs in creative arts, but for any job, you can make your web presence business-like and professional. This does mean limiting personal data, especially things relating to private life (photos etc.). See these as CVs. Already explained earlier.

158. **Niche job boards focus your search**. That will seem obvious to you, that if you look at a law job board, you will generally find legal jobs there, so if that's what you want, you don't need to waste your time on general job boards. Employers think this way, too. In the past, they would have advertised in professional print publications. Now, they mostly post their jobs on niche boards, which relate to the type of job on offer. These boards have fewer jobs than the supersized sites, so opportunities in your area may be scarce, but easier to find.

159. **Network online with care**. As mentioned previously, social networking sites such as Facebook tend to encourage personal revelations, and these are not necessarily conducive to professionalism. On the other hand, sites such as LinkedIn are focused on creating a professional network and can build rapidly. Networking can be a very efficient way of finding a job. Use this alongside other search processes to make best use of your time.

160. **Email courtesy**. One of the great things about email is the way it costs you so little time to be courteous. If a company or individual offers you a lead, or an interview, then email a thank you letter swiftly. Simple to do, but effective in distinguishing you from most job-seekers.

161. **If you are active on the web, then you will get lots of spam**. Never open, click on, or reply to unsolicited emails. Search engines and spiders are clever and will pick up your job searching activities, sending you commercial opportunities via email. Don't respond, as they are unlikely to help you and very likely to import viruses etc.

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25 Preparing for an interview

You have probably been through some interview practice at your university, or perhaps you have even done assignments on this or helped others. Check the following tips to see if there is anything new for you here.

162. **Don't set foot in a company without a good knowledge of what they do.** Failing to research the basics shows lack of graduate-ness.

163. **Look around the company website**, and see if you can get access to the annual financial statements or specific information in the public domain.

164. **Research, with subtlety, members of the interview panel** if you are provided with their names in advance.

165. **What kind of thing do employees wear?** Make sure you don't stand out too much when you arrive.

166. **As far as possible, travel the interview route the day before** – so you can be sure of arriving in good time.You don't want to arrive sweating, panting or desperate to find a toilet.

167. **Allow time in your journey for delays**, security procedures at the company and finding your way to the interview room.

168. **Prepare answers for a range of predictable questions** such as:

    a) Why do you want this job/to work for this company?
    b) Why should we appoint you?
    c) How have you prepared for this interview?
    d) Have you applications for other jobs, and if we offer you the job today, are you ready to accept it today?

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26 Preparing your CV for online use

Surely you only need one CV? Not true. Different media as well as different employers should prompt you to look more carefully at how you prepare this vital document.

169. **You need to have at least have three versions of your CV**, a print version, a plain text version, and an email version.

170. **First create your print CV,** then reformat it for email and plain text.

171. **A plain text CV can be produced by simplifying the format** and then saving your print version as text, (in Word save as TextCV.txt)

172. **To simplify your print version:** remove references to page 2, continued, or anything else based on the physical, paper CV.

173. **To simplify your print version:** use capitals to emphasise headings (as you will not have bold or underline) but do not use very heavily. Minimise this to the section headings.

174. **To simplify your print version:** remove bullet points. You can replace them with asterisks (*) or a plus sign (+).

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175. **To simplify your print version:** replace curly quotes with straight ones. Microsoft Word uses characters like curly quotes, which are not part of the plain text character set. You can correct this in Word, by highlighting the entire text and in the Format menu, under Options, choose "replace curly quotes with straight quotes".

176. **Finally, proofread your print version:** there may be sections that become confused if it was in a table, or used tabs, so read through very carefully. You may need to restructure some items for them to make sense. Additionally, look out for any other complex characters that Word has tried to translate into text. They may now appear as a small box, or an upside down question mark.

177. **Use the plain text version to paste into web forms,** where a job application requires you to fill in a form.

178. **Finally, produce a version perfect for email.** Open your plain text version in Word; to ensure the lines are at a correct length to not wrap in a standard email client, select the entire text and set the font to Courier 12 point. Then, in the Page Setup menu, set the left and right margins to 2 inches. Now when you save as plain text with a new name (such as emailCV.txt) make sure you choose the "Insert Line Breaks" option when Word asks about file conversion.

179. **When you email a CV to a potential employer**, make sure you put a useful and explicit subject line to the message, such as "*CV for* [*your name*] *applying for job* [*job title here*]".

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27 Protecting your mobility potential

If you are immobile, you are vulnerable to changes in the economy, including decline in the sector in which you find employment. What can you do to protect and enhance your mobility potential?

180. **Develop transferable skills**. The most transferable skill of all is to be good at learning.

181. **Consider work which you can do online**. Lots of opportunities here for mind-blowing routine data entry, so try to avoid this if possible, unless it gives you an entree to a company which interests you. Instead perhaps consider jobs which only need you to attend for part of the week, so travelling becomes possible.

182. **Look for opportunities to do different kinds of work**. This gives you different kinds of work experience, which is an asset in the graduate labour market.

183. **Seek out training opportunities**. Those that offer documentation, such as certification, are particularly valuable as the documentation is evidence of determination to continue learning.

184. **Become a lifelong learner**. The term 'lifelong learner' has become a popular one. The reason for this is that it captures the idea that as change continues to accelerate, we all need to adapt; that means learning.

185. **Look for jobs that favour multi-skilling and multi-tasking, rather than work that is too specialised**. This allows you to gain more responsibilities and develop skills that can be used in other jobs.

186. **Avoid 'career-blindness'** This is where you identify a job you like the thought of and pursue it to the exclusion of other opportunities. Try to keep an open mind and consider a wide range of possible jobs.

187. **Take a long-term view of graduate employment**. The graduate job market is changing fast. The job you are interested in now may be completely different in 10 years time; it may not even exist. Similarly, over the next years, jobs will emerge that don't exist now. It is very difficult to make predictions about the graduate labour market and graduate jobs 10 years in the future and beyond. Don't just plan for next year, adopt a planning horizon that extends over at least the next 5 years.

188. **Keep your options open and have a 'plan B'**. You may find that your choice of career path turns out later to be unsuitable for you, loses its appeal, or has hidden pitfalls. It is worth having a reserve career path in mind, and better still, to have a ranked short-list of alternatives.

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28 Publications

Quite apart from the World Wide Web, which is probably a primary source of information for the job seeker, there are also many targeted publications in print which can be of help. Traditionally, a newspaper situations vacant column would have been the primary source for new jobs. Increasingly today, there are dozens of specialist publications which might be useful.

189. **Your alumni association will probably produce a regular magazine or newsletter**. While this may not include job advertisements, it will promote services which are useful to you, and it will help you track down networks and events for networking, which may lead you to jobs.

190. **Annual directories of graduate employers** include Prospects Directory, Hobsons GET directory, and the GTI TARGET series.

191. **Your local library or university library will carry commercial directories for finding organisations in a chosen sector or industry**. Such directories include Kelly's Directories, Yellow Pages, Kompass, and LexisNexis.

192. **University careers services frequently produce vacancy bulletins;** drop in to any university careers centre to find them.

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193. **There are still jobs in local newspapers** if you are looking in a defined area, but be aware that larger organisations are more likely to use online media.

194. **National newspapers often publish vacancy sections relating to specific industries on particular days**. Go online to their sites to find out which days are the best ones to purchase the print version of the paper, to find specialised vacancies.

195. **If you belong to a professional body, their journal or magazine will carry vacancies**. They will also carry news of major organisations in the sector, especially where new facilities are being set up or new operations launched; the latter events are opportunities to try speculative application. Don't try to save money by allowing your memberships to lapse – it may be harder or more expensive to get back in later, and the professional network the body provides is invaluable in job searching.

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29 Reading job advertisements

A great deal of time and effort usually goes into writing job advertisements. This implies that you need to spend time and effort reading them. Sometimes, specialist copywriters are used to try to ensure that the ad (1) is attractive to suitable job applicants, and (2) is unattractive to unsuitable job applicants. Reading job ads carefully and critically reduces the likelihood that you will waste time and effort applying for jobs which are unsuitable for you.

196. **Examine the job-title carefully, and if in doubt, research its meaning on the web.** A term such as 'director' can be quite misleading; it can cover employment ranging from the directorship of a company, to a job requiring a relatively low level of knowledge and skills.

197. **Be aware that the salary level is often a good indication of the level at which the employer is pitching the job.** If it looks much too high for someone with your experience, knowledge and skills, then consider whether it is worth you investing time and effort applying for it.

198. **The word 'must' usually indicates something that is not negotiable.** If the advertisement says, 'must be fluent in German', then fluency in French or Spanish is very unlikely to be acceptable.

199. **Try to work out what the profile of the 'ideal' employee would be, for the specific job advertised.** Whoever prepared the job advertisement almost certainly had in mind a profile of their ideal candidate for the vacancy they want to fill. Look for clues as to what that might be. Then check out how clearly you fit that profile…or can be made to fit that profile.

200. **Decide what you think are the key requirements for the job.** Then you can emphasise in your application how you satisfy them.

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30 Recruitment agencies

This is the place to which graduates often turn when immediate prospects are looking less hopeful. A recruitment agency has all the right connections to employers, and may prove a useful route in to the job you want.

201. 20**Don't sign on with too many agencies**. For a start, it will be difficult to be available at all the times different agencies may call you for interviews or to visit companies – this way you end up letting them down and they are unlikely to work hard for you again.

202. **Agencies often specialise in particular sectors, functions or industries** so be choosy about what interests you. Use www.rec.uk.com run by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation to identify specialist agencies.

203. **Treat the agency as if it were a prospective employer**. It is not a service run entirely for your benefit, the agency has a professional interest in maintaining excellent working relationships with employers. If you fail to turn up to arranged appointments "because it's only an agency", they will in turn be less committed to finding you work.

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204. **Some agencies provide additional services** – sometimes paid for – to help you with industry jargon and specialist requirements, or simply to support you with interview practice or CV buidling.

205. **Build a relationship with your recruitment consultant, promote your skills and knowledge, and share your goals honestly with them**. It will be important they know you as well as possible when they are matching you with possible jobs.

206. **Most agencies run websites or job boards online**. As with houses promoted by estate agents, the same vacancy may appear on several job boards. Registering with too many of these boards can make it difficult to remain organised, and you may end up applying for the same job more than once. Use your academic judgement to review the range and relevance of vacancies advertised before registering.

207. **Check and update your online CVs and those lodged with High Street agencies regularly,** as each temporary or permanent job or experience may alter the balance and attractiveness of your CV.

208. **Use the experience of job interviews and feedback on your CV** to improve it, and ensure the best version is promoted to all agencies and job boards.

209. **Don't expect lots of leads from agencies**. They represent vast numbers of people and there may be many others in the queue who are just as qualified as you are. Work at the relationship and be persistent but professional (not desperate) in your regular communications with agencies. This is only one part of your strategy to find your dream job.

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31 7 ways to discover your talents and strengths

The more talents, skills, qualifications and experience you can offer an employer, the more successful you are likely to be in the graduate job market. This section focuses on your talents and other positive attributes. Most people are not fully aware of their talents and strengths, yet these are key assets. Here are seven tips to help you to identify the full range of your talents and strengths:

210. **Feedback.** Ask other people who know you well, particularly your family and friends. Rather than just make a general request that can easily drift into a rudderless conversation, it is best to be specific about what you want with a question, such as 'I'm trying to develop my CV and I'd be grateful if you could help me by giving me feedback on 5 talents, and/or other strengths that you see in me.'

211. **Start with your weaknesses.** Identify your weaknesses, and then look for the strength behind each one. For example, 'stubbornness' suggests that you may also have 'determination and tenacity'. 'Impetuous' indicates that you can be 'proactive', and so on. In the right context, each weakness can be a strength.

212. **Follow on with your achievements.** Identify your achievement and then explore each achievement for the talents and strengths on which the accomplishment depended. You can use questions such as, What talents/strengths do I have that made that possible? What talents/strengths contributed to that level of outcome? What talents/strengths made me want to accomplish that? We are not talking about earth-shattering achievements here, like climbing Mount Everest. We are simply looking for any time in your life when you did something which made you feel good and gave you a sense of a accomplishment. Note that the point of reference is yourself, not other people. It doesn't matter whether or not it impressed other people, only whether it pleased you.

213. **Reverse chronological scan.** Divide your life into segments of 4 equal parts and then, (1) identify your main activities in each of those years, starting with the most recent 5 years, then (2) identify any achievements associated with those activities, then (3) explore which of your talents/strengths contributed to those achievements possible

214. **Variation on chronological can: you could use 'places you have lived'** instead of time-periods if that makes most sense to you.

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215. **Focus your search.** Partition your experience into particular domains to structure your search for talents/strengths. It can be much easier to identify your talents/strengths if you can narrow the search down to specific domains. For example, you could look for talents/strengths in the domains of 'people', 'information/ideas' and 'things'. Then you can ask, (1) which of my talents/strengths are mostly to do with people? (2) which of are my talents/strengths are mostly to do with ideas or information? (3) which of are my talents/strengths are mostly to do with things?

216. **Here are some more ways of partitioning your experience into different domains to focus your search**:

    a) Work, leisure and learning
    b) Body, intellect and spirit
    c) Doing, being and having
    d) Self and others (What are my strengths in dealing with myself? What are my strengths in dealing with others or dealing with the outside world more generally?)

217. **On-line questionnaires.** There are some helpful on-line questionnaires designed to help you identify your talents and strengths. Here are couple of examples of on-line questionnaires that you can Google: (1) Strengthfinder 2.0, and (2) VIA signature strengths questionnaire.

218. **Use checklists of talents/strengths.** You can find partial lists of talents/strengths in books on job-finding, career-management and career-life planning. They are only partial because they naturally focus on attributes that convey advantage in finding employment, and also because a full list of all possible talents/strengths is arguably unlimited!

219. **Start by asking yourself 'what do I like doing?'** This can be a good starting place because most of us like doing the things we are good at, and we tend to get better at the things we like doing. So looking at things you like doing can give you clues about what you are good at for any talents, skills, aptitudes or strengths you use in so doing. Also, if the purpose of this exercise is to find employment, then the question, 'what do I like doing?', is a sensible place to start.

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32 Staying positive

Looking for a job is not something we do once and solve forever. This might make you feel low, since you may not be enjoying the experience so far! But you can see this as a positive – every time you take job searching seriously, you learn more about yourself, you collect information about your skills, you get better at CVs and applications and interviews, you learn more about the kinds of jobs out there, you can grow in your views, aspirations, and ideas. Job changing and searching frequently broadens the mind as we move from a job-context or study-context, which gives us specific horizons, to a wider menu of possibilities. It is highly unlikely these days, that the first job after graduation will be your only job and organisation. You are likely to change career as well as job several times in your working life. So that huge – shall I or shan't I decision about this job offer or that one, is not the be-all and end-all of your life. It's just the next stage of learning.

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220. **Job search is not a science, it is an art.** Certain people seem just to walk into the right job, they have a knack apparently of being in the right place at the right time. That can be pretty dispiriting for new graduates, and job-changers, who seem to do the reverse – only hearing about great jobs after they are filled, endlessly receiving rejection letters, or lacking invitations to interview. Neither of these pictures is fact. There is no one right way to look for a job and to get one. We can be systematic about searching, but not scientific in the sense of proving which is the best set of techniques and how to use them. Treat the process as an art, something creative which you can keep improving; something unique to you, which will be yours, your way of getting a job. There is no shortage of advice out there (and in here!) if you need support, but your way of looking for a job is something only you can create, and only you will reap the reward.

221. **It isn't just luck.** Sometimes it does feel as if luck plays a big part in finding and successfully gaining the job you really want. It is true that luck does play a part – bad as well as good. But by being systematic, positive and determined about the process, you will minimise the uncontrollable luck involved. If you simply post a CV on a few job sites and sit back – luck will play a big part and most of it will work against you – the statistics of success here are very slim indeed. If you work actively to understand yourself (see Your skills so far), to make a good impression (see Making an impression), to be systematic and professional about paperwork (see Tailoring your CV for a specific job), and to stay determined to pursue your own thoughtfully identified goals, you can rely less on luck, or at least be in the right place to profit by it.

222. **How long can you stay positive?** If finding a job is taking much longer than you thought, it is easy to become despondent and begin to believe it just isn't possible to find the right one. If all that is driving you right now is hanging on for the right job, that doesn't leave much room for self respect. How about building a horror floor? A horror floor is simply imagining the worst that can happen, to make it feel real. Then it doesn't feel so worrying. If you didn't get a job for the next year, what would happen? Would you spend the whole time looking at the postbox and inboxes? Surely not. Make life happen for you, with or without the job. Face the worst and work out how to live it, rather than survive it.

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33 Study the graduate labour market

Learning more about the graduate labour market allows you to make better decisions about what steps to take to make the best start to your new career as a graduate. Knowledge is power and the more you know about the world of graduate employment, the more power you will have to make prudent decisions about finding graduate employment. Here are 7 ideas for how you can gain more knowledge about the graduate labour market:

223. **Buy books on the subject**. Here are a few examples:

    a) Roberts, Leila (2006) After you Graduate: Finding and getting work you will enjoy, Berkshire: Open University Press.
    b) Stephen, Ryan (2008) The Real Guide to Getting a Graduate Job, Lake District Press.

224. **Read at least one of these books carefully, highlighting key points**. And skim-read at least one other. These books contain much valuable information about finding graduate employment

225. **Get a sense of the range of on-line sources of information about finding graduate employment**. A book that will give you a good sense of what is available on-line is by Bourner, Greener and Rospigliosi titled '101 web-sites to help you find graduate employment'.

226. **Explore the resources that are available from your university's careers advisory service**. As well as providing access to graduate careers advisors, your university careers advisory service is a treasure chest of information and knowledge about finding graduate employment.

227. **Use your critical faculties**. Unlike the material you have been reading during your studies at university, most of the information you find about graduate employment is likely to be biased and partial. It was not produced to give you a disinterested understanding of the graduate labour market. This will be your first test of how well your university education has sharpened up your critical faculties. As you look at it ask yourself, 'why was this produced and for what purpose?' The challenge for you is to distil knowledge that is useful to you, from materials intended to serve some other outcome.

228. **Keep in touch with other graduates and compare notes**. By pooling your information in this way, you can benefit from each other's experience and learning about the graduate labour market.

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229. **Use what you know about how to learn to uncover knowledge about the graduate labour market**. Suppose your university course had required you to complete the following assignment as a final piece of assessed coursework: 'Describe and evaluate recent changes in the graduate labour market.' How would you go about the research for that assignment? In other words, treat this as a final year assignment on your degree course.

230. **Develop a list of question that you would like answered about the graduate labour market.** Here are a few examples:

   a) Why do employers want to employ graduates at all?
   b) What exactly is the 'graduate employment premium'?
   c) How does 'the milk round' work from an employer's perspective?
   d) What percentage of graduate job vacancies are open to graduates of any subject?

231. As you gain experience with the process of graduate job searching, some of your questions will be answered and you will, no doubt, develop other questions. It is worth making a note of them.

232. **Look for articles in the press concerning the graduate labour market and issues, such asgraduate employment, unemployment and employability.** Articles in newspapers are likely to be up-to-date. This is important, as the graduate labour market never remains static.

233. **Take with a pinch of salt the advice of people who graduated many years ago.** If your parents or other family members are graduates, they are likely to share with you their own experiences of finding graduate employment. Listen attentively, but bear in mind that their experience was many years ago, probably decades ago, and the graduate labour market was very different then.

234. **Google for keywords such as 'graduate job'.** The web is not the most reliable source of information, but nevertheless it is a good source of up-to-date information.

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34 Tailoring your CV for a specific job

While it is important to have a generic CV ready to submit where requested, there are times when a CV will need to be tailored or customised for a specific job. The likelihood of this increases if the job is asking for special skills, but even for a general position, a CV that relates closely to the job, is more likely to tick the right boxes with the employer. What do we mean by tick the right boxes? Well, if you put yourself in the place of the recruiter for a moment, you will see that as they read through the submitted CVs, they will have a list of criteria that allow them to decide who to call for interview. In tailoring your CV, you are attempting to make this easy for them, by making it evident in what ways you meet their criteria.

235. **Arrange items in your CV in the same order as they have chosen**. Make it easy for the recruiter, as they go through your CV, to see how you meet their criteria.

236. **Highlight the most important matches in your covering letter**. Take the items that they have asked for, and put them in the covering letter using their words.

237. **Online CVs**. At the end of your CV, include a list of relevant keywords – this is picked up by various types of software on job sites and by employer's application sifting software. Make sure the keywords directly relate to the job, and change them regularly.

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35 Times to apply

Traditionally, large employers who rely on a fresh source of new graduates each year, would make annual campus recruitment visits. However, new technology has changed the face of recruitment, and websites are the main place for applications, meaning that there is less emphasis on an annual deadline. Some employers do still retain the annual cycle though, so check websites for details of application dates.

238. **Annual graduate recruitment is a seriously planned process aimed at those in their final year about to graduate**, or those who have just graduated. If you have taken a break after graduation for travel or work experience, this can be attractive to future employers, and if you want to do this but also want to secure a job, it may sometimes be possible to gain a commitment to a place for after your break.

239. **Annual schemes may start opening in October**, for recruitment the following summer or autumn.

240. **Applying online may mean there is a literal all year round process**, or more likely, that online applications are the first sifting stage for the recruitment process, and there will be a programme of interviews/assessment centres repeated at certain times of year – this arrangement will be unique to the company and should be found on their website.

241. **Application processes for large companies take a considerable time**. Following online application, there may be psychometric or aptitude testing, telephone interviews, a face-to-face interview panel(s),and an assessment centre where groups of applicants will compete for a number of places.

242. **Clearly, such applications can be time-consuming** since, while online tests and telephone interviews can be juggled around current study or work timetables, interviews and assessment centres may involve considerable travel and time to attend. This may be relevant if you have choices about when to start application processes and personal commitments, for examplea booked family holiday.

243. **Small and medium sized employers are likely to recruit "as and when"** they need staff, and this may be frequently, throughout the year. Recruitment may be triggered by staff leaving, or the creation of new teams or roles.

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244. **Apply speculatively**. If a large employer's recruitment scheme dates have just passed, but you really want to work there, then apply regardless. You will need to be particularly persuasive, approaching the company with a targeted CV and covering letter, which sets out why you may be of value to them, and how you would like your information to be matched to particular types of vacancies or parts of the business. Many progressive companies like to maintain talent pools, which saves them time if they suddenly need a number of new staff. By being in such talent pools you may receive updates of company news and job opportunities; you may also be able to fulfil the early application process, so that upcoming jobs can be applied for swiftly.

245. **Never give up on the search, even if you feel you have found the right job.** Stay alert to potential job opportunities, which you might pass on to others, or which may come in useful for yourself. Network, and ask your friends and familly to keep their eyes open for possible job opportunities – it is easy to pass them on quickly through email or instant messaging, so you can meet deadlines.

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36 Try to see things from the perspective of the graduate employer

If you can understand graduate employment from the perspective of the employer of graduates, you will increase the likelihood of attaining a graduate job. If you can really appreciate what graduate employers are looking for from graduate employees, it will help you to present yourself as effectively as possible in the market for graduate employment. Important – but has been said earlier on.

246. **Recognise that most graduate employers place less value on the skill of thinking critically, than the academics at your university.** For example, in the most systematic study that has been undertaken of what graduate employers look for in graduate recruits, employers were asked to assess the importance they attached to each of a list of 62 graduate attributes, and 'critical ability' ranked 32 on the list behind such items as dependability, co-operation, drive, self-management, flexibility, initiative, time management, self-confidence, persistence, planning ability, and ability with information technology.

247. **Realise that although the ability to write for an academic audience is a skill that is vital to those going on to become professional academics, most graduate employers do not particularly value the ability to write in an academic way.** In fact, some see this as something to be 'unlearned', as new graduate employees acquire alternative communication skills, such as writing business reports, executive summaries, and other forms of organisational communication, which require rather different abilities. This may be disappointing to you as you probably spent some time learning how to structure an academic paper and reference your sources correctly.

248. **Recognise that most graduate employers place relatively little value on the morals? and attitudes that a good university education seeks to develop, i.e. a questioning attitude, disinterested enquiry and intellectual curiosity (i.e. a desire to learn for its own sake).** The belief that these attitudes are prioritised by graduate employers has not been supported by studies of what graduates look for in graduate recruits. In fact, if anything, they seem to prefer attitudes towards the other end of the 'disinterested observer' spectrum, such as commitment and proactivity.

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249. **Remember the answer to this question: If it is not the knowledge, skills and attitudes that graduates bring with them by virtue of their university education, then what is it that most graduate employers value in graduate employees enough to pay them a 'graduate premium'?** The answer is that most graduate employers believe that, on balance, graduate employees are more able and more willing to learn than non-graduates. In other words, they are prepared to pay graduates a graduate premium because they think that in general, graduates are better at learning new things than non-graduates.

250. **Understand why graduate employers expect that, on balance, graduate recruits will be better than non-graduates at learning**. The short answer is that they have proved their ability and willingness to learn by successfully completing a degree. Because they have had to demonstrate an aptitude for learning to be accepted onto a university degree course, i.e. they have had to satisfy entry requirements that test their ability and willingness to learn at school, and they have spent the whole of their undergraduate years, at least three years of full-time study (or full-time equivalent), in which they are required to do little else than learn, they are specialists in the practice of learning. An undergraduate degree can be viewed as an apprenticeship in learning. Graduate employers are looking for graduates who are prepared to learn. Note that the term, 'prepared to learn', can be unpacked into, 'able and willing to learn'. Ability to learn and willingness to learn go together. People who are good at learning tend to be more willing to learn, because the cost (mostly in terms of time and effort) of learning is lower to them, and because people tend to enjoy doing that which they they excel at. You will enhance your prospects of finding graduate employment if you can convince graduate employers that you are good at learning, and are always willing to learn more. This is such an important issue, that the next section contains seven tips for doing just that.

251. **Look at yourself through their eyes.** What would you do with a graduate fresh out of university if you had a business to run? Would you trust them immediately with a critical project? Or, would you want them to prove themselves willing and committed first? Graduates often have to offer a little proof of commitment before they become accepted and trusted. If that means doing something you think is menial, do it with humility. Consider every task you are given as a test of commitment and ability; throw yourself into it and prove you will do what it takes to earn trust.

252. **It is not just the boss you need to impress.** Give some thought to your new colleagues, how would they feel about you? Will they see you as competition? Arrogant and lacking experience? Full of theories and short on common sense? These are all misconceptions and prejudices that many employees will have about graduates in their first job. It is not hard to impress, provided you show yourself open to learning from them. Value their experience and use it to learn your way into the organisation – that is what you are good at, learning. Try to leave your own views about people without a degree education behind – the combination of your learning ability and their experience could be a winning combination if you are prepared to work with them.

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253. **You will not be the only one new around here**. When we first join a new group of any kind, we tend to assume that everyone else knows their way around and we are the only new person in town. This sometimes makes us feel inadequate, focussing on our own lack of knowledge – and it can make us behave inappropriately. Control this reaction if you can, remember that in most workplaces, some people will be quite new like you – look for them and see if you can make alliances, help each other by passing on what you learn about how business is conducted in this workplace.

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37 Unsolicited applications, unadvertised jobs, speculative approaches

Sometimes, employers don't recognise early enough that they have a vacancy to be filled or that there is a person out there who could make a real contribution to their organisation. For example, if a company, or part of the company, is expanding, there will come a time when more people would be of value, and this is not yet recognised. If someone suitable makes a speculative application at this time, it is likely to be welcomed.

254. **The big advantage, from your perspective as an applicant, is that your speculative application has no competition,** and from the employer's perspective, the benefit is that it saves the expense of recruitment. It does, however, take more effort and more research from you in finding organisations with unadvertised vacancies. In other words, unless applications are targeted carefully, the strike rate is not high.

255. **Target growing organisations.** These are the ones that might be finding it difficult to fill their vacancies. Paying attention to the news, especially in the financial press, can help you identify organisations that are growing.

256. **Target small employers.** Successful, small employers often donn't advertise vacancies, because they are too busy and do not have time to recruit new staff. Sometimes it is no-one's job in a small organisation to recruit new staff.

257. **Target employers who have recently won new contracts**; theyare most likely to be looking for additional employees.

258. **Target organisations in 'sunrise industries'**. (Needs an explanation). They are likely to foresee expansion and the need for more employees in the future, so even if they don't really need additional employees at the moment, they may view hiring a suitable person now as an investment in the future.

259. **Target new business startups and new ventures reported in the news, as well ascompanies that are diversifying into new areas.** This requires you to scan the News sections of publications to identify recent developments.

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260. **The best way to apply for an unadvertised job is by letter**. Telephone and personal applications can put people on the spot, and they are likely to solve their problem by saying 'no' straight away. A letter can be considered at a time that suits the employer and may trigger thoughts about whether an additional post is worthwhile.

261. **Write a short letter to introduce yourself and offer your services for 'any appropriate vacancy'.** Long letters are unlikely to be read, but do say enough for the employer to get an idea of what contribution you could make to the organisation. Include a short (one, two page maximum, CV).

262. **Avoid being too specific about the type of work you are seeking.** There may be more than one potential vacancy emerging.

263. **Ask the employer to contact you for further details.** It is very unlikely that your initial letter will give the employer all the information that they need.

264. **Address your letter to the manager of a department or, in the case of a smaller company, to the managing director**. This is better than sending it to the personnel or HRM (Human Resources Management) department, which tends to process vacancies rather than deciding to create a vacancy. Try to find out the name of the person to whom you are sending your letter, eitherfrom a receptionist, switchboard, or web-site.

265. **Avoid apologising for making a speculative application**. This will make you seem less confident and more tentative. Employers tend to favour applicants who are confident and enthusiastic.

266. **There is a surprisingly large number of unadvertised vacancies, but you need to work hard to find them**. Some organisations rarely, or never, advertise vacancies, but prefer to fill them by informal means. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your ingenuity, tenacity and ability to research. It may be helpful to view this as a research project: 'Examine the graduate labour market and discover the names of 20 organisations, which are likely to recruit staff without advertising vacancies'.

267. **Lastly, remember that this approach can have long-term consequences**. Staff may not be needed now, but they may be needed in four months time. So ask that your letter be kept on file in case a vacancy arises later.

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38 Using the internet

The internet has massively increased the range of jobs that graduate job search can cover and has reduced the time and effort required to make an application. On the other hand, it means that there are many more applications for every job, so that there is more use of crude filters like class of degree, to whittle down the number of applications to a manageable number. An increasing number of vacancies are being filled through internet applications, which, in most cases, has become the norm. Many of the tips in this book are about using the internet, and more particularly the Web effectively, so this section covers a few basics.

268. **Make a list of synonyms for each of the keywords you use to search.** For example, if you want a job in finance, then closely related words include banking, insurance, accounting, brokering etc.

269. **Before you go for an interview at an organisation, be sure you study its website in advance.** As it is so easy to learn about an organisation from its web-site, the interviewer(s) will expect you to have done your homework.

270. **When you are using a web-site to find out about an organisation, check when it was last updated.** Not all information on the websites of all organisations is fully up-to-date.

271. **Most organisations publish vacancy information on their websites.** This means you can not only find out more about the details of the vacancy, but you can also identify the range of vacancies in the organisation.

272. **Remember that the web is particularly valuable for tracking down jobs overseas.** Organisations usually include information on their websites about vacancies in overseas branches, and sometimes their subsidiaries too.

273. **If you don't find what you're looking for with one search engine, then try others as well.**

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39 What kind of organisation should I work for?

Some organisations regularly hire graduates fresh from university careers fairs and from annual application rounds. However, at the time it can be difficult to weigh up one organisation against another, and work out what you want to be involved in. Let's not forget that organisations are professional bodies which specialise in self-promotion, that is how they sustain their activities – so at a first glance, they are all competing for your attention. Even if you are looking for a job some time after graduating, the range is huge and complex. These tips compartmentalise types of organisations to help you decide what is right for you.

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274. **Do you want to choose a global private sector organisation such as Diageo or Toyota**? These have job opportunities in many countries of the world, potentially high salaries, the potential for career development in-house, and a product range you can get to know before choosing your employer. You will, initially, and perhaps for some considerable time, be a small part of a very large organisation and will benefit from standardised and consistent approaches to managing people, and graduate recruitment schemes offering structured development for you. They also offer a range of career specialisms once you are established with them. Because of their business models in a turbulent world, they can also be ruthless about performance, and you will probably need to commit a big part of your life to working there. Furthermore, large employers are more likely to want staff to be mobile, so personal commitments to family or a local community may be difficult to keep.

275. **What about a small or medium-sized private sector organisation (with up to 250 employees**)? This is less stable potentially than a large one, though nothing is guaranteed whatever size of company you work for. A smaller organisation may see you as less dispensable, more important to their business and give you a wider range of opportunities to work in different parts of the business in a shorter time. Equally, they may have definite plans for you which keep you in one function. Get to know as much as you can about them from public domain information, and preferably try to talk to someone who works there.

276. **Public sector organisations can be huge, such as the NHS, or much smaller and focussed on a particular service or kind of user, such as local authorities, schools and colleges**. They deliver goods or services by or for the government, and exist to serve the public interest. They will usually have well supported entry schemes, and offer good training and development opportunities. They are certainly not a job for life (they can be – headteacher?), though their pension provision might be good compared to some private sector employers. Additionally, don't expect a safe, simple , or reliable job. Change is endemic in the public sector, particularly as government policies dictate changed values and priorities, as well as services offered, and staff to deliver them.

277. **Small private sector businesses – with perhaps one or two principals in the business (usually owners) can be attractive**, as they will be paying you for your graduate skills and will see you as providing essential input to the business. However, structured development schemes are less likely, so you may have to work hard to get further training and/or development, or pay for it yourself. There may be a sense of freedom in a smaller business, but family-owned businesses can also be stifling, especially if you don't see eye-to-eye with the family members.

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278. **Third sector organisations may include large national and international charities such as Red Cross or Oxfam, but they also include opportunities to make a difference in a small local voluntary organisation, which works for specific beneficiaries and has an active impact on them.** Not-for-profit organisations will need similar managerial and functional expertise, but will not usually be in a position to pay as much as the private sector. Experience in this sector will be important for entry, so volunteering in a relevant field can help you gain employment.

279. **Do you want to work in a local organisation?** This will cut down the choice drastically, unless you live in a major urban centre, but may help with living costs and travel costs if you are at home or living with friends.

280. **Though your initial ambition may be to work locally and live at home to absorb costs, it may prove easier to investigate public transport links to nearby cities and towns, which are likely to have wider job opportunities.** It is too easy to get downcast when a thorough trawl for local jobs draws a blank. Follow the train line or bus routes to see how far you could go for work and still live at home, and how much you would need to earn to cover the commuting.

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40 The criteria of a good CV

If you were going to assess your CV, what mark would you give it out of 100? In order to assess it, you need some criteria against which to evaluate it. This section provides you with such criteria.

281. **Complete.** Does it have any missing sections? Have you missed out anything significant from any of the sections?

282. **Conveys information in a way that is quick and easy to absorb.** The person-who-has-the-power-to-give-you-an-interview will probably have very many CVs to scan, and the ones that are hardest or slowest to read are likely to be discarded.

283. **Looks professional.** If your CV looks professional then you are likely to come across as a professional person, which is an important criterion. Spelling errors, for example, indicate that you have not taken the trouble to proof-read it properly.

284. **Reader-friendly.** For example, if it contains any obscure abbreviations then you should mark it down on this criterion.

285. **Fit for purpose.** Its purpose is to provide a prospective employee with an executive summary of your background, as someone they would gain from employing. How well does your CV achieve this purpose?

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41 What the job can offer me and what I want from the job

If you are seeking your first graduate job, you may feel pressure to take whatever is available, but it is in your interest, and in the interest of the employer, that you think about what it is you want from a job (besides pay, and even that may need to be considered in light of your career aspirations, see tip 1).

286. **Consider the question, "what do you want from this job?" – your answer may make a difference**. These same considerations may also furnish you when an interviewer asks, "do you have any questions?".

287. **Pay – what is the minimum acceptable**? There may be a trade-off between less now, for more later (including experience, training and promotion), or more pay now, with fewer opportunities to develop a career later.

288. **Is there a structured and transparent promotion scheme?** Do pay increases relate directly to staff appraisal or professional development?

289. **Does pay relate directly to performance?** Do you want it to? This highly depends on the genre of work you will be doing.

290. **Learning opportunities** – does the job offer learning? Does doing the job allow you to gain formal qualification (such as NVQs or chartered status)? Does the job require you to take formal study (perhaps in your own time)? Does the job pay for private courses?

291. **Promotion opportunities** – Does evidence of experience in the job open opportunities for advancement?

292. **Does the company have investors in people (IIP)?** In the company information, does it see this standard as important?

293. **What facilities does the company offer**? Canteen, library,sports facilities, parking, or transport links.

294. **What about the social environment**? Are there opportunities to meet people you may have something in common with? You may be spending a large proportion of your time in your new job, how will it compare with university as a place to make friends? Will you be working alone or working in a team? Or, how much contact can you expect with the public?

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295. **What is the company's reputation, amongst its customers within the industry, its suppliers, its neighbours and community, and the broader public?** Is this a company where management muck in, or is there very clear demarcation between the different parts of the company? Is there a formal company dress code, or are there practical requirements for dress? Do you like what this implies and tells you about the job, and the company?

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42 Work experience: how some charitable organisations can help

When people are considering possible sources of career help, charitable organisations do not usually spring to mind. However, a number of charitable and voluntary organisations are involved in career advice and development. Some have a particular focus, such as ethnic or women's groups, whilst some are concerned with the wider community. Not all these services are fully utilised because this aspect of their work is not widely known. However, the quality of their help is usually of a high standard.

296. **Research the Voluntary Agencies Directory and similar publications to see if there are any that can help you.**

297. **Consult your local library.** You local library should have a copy of at least one directory of charitable and voluntary organisations (such as the Voluntary Agencies Directory) in its 'reference' section. If you have difficulties finding what you want, ask one of the librarians and remember that different librarians specialise in different areas, so don't be surprised if you are passed on to the librarian who can help you most. Ask if there is a librarian who has responsibility for training and development, employment, or careers advice. Ask also if there is a librarian who responsibilities cover areas like charities, third sector organisations and voluntary organisations.

298. **Visit your national employment service.** This is worth doing though you may have to be determined to find help here.

299. **Use the web to track down these services**. Try adding key terms such as 'career help', 'career development', and 'finding employment' to terms such as 'charity', 'voluntary organisation' 'foundation' and 'charitable organisation'.

300. **Consider your individual circumstances and look for charities that provide help with employment/study opportunities, and training/development for people in your situation.** There are, for example, charities that assist women from ethnic minorities and also ones that focus on students from particular backgrounds.

301. **Make enquiries through your local authority**. Your local authority will have careers specialists who may be able to help you find the charitable organisations you are looking for.

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43 Work experience

It is widely believed that work experience is an asset in finding graduate employment and career development. This section therefore contains ideas regarding work experience and making the most of it.

302. **Recognise that all work experience is not equal.** If you do a sandwich degree with a year's relevant work experience integrated into your degree course, it will undoubtedly enhance your career prospects. If, at the other end of the spectrum, your work experience is a short period of part-time work stacking shelves in a supermarket that, in itself, is unlikely to have had much positive impact on your career prospects. In general, the sort of work experience that is most valuable to a new graduate is, (1) long-term rather than short-term, (2) full-time rather than part-time, (3) integrated into a course of study, and (4) the source of significant learning.

303. **Consider doing Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).** This is a particularly attractive option if you're not sure if you want to travel overseas for a year, broaden your work experience, or get a job straight away. With VSO you can do all three at the same time. By spending a substantial period of time in one place overseas, you will not experience 'tourism myopia', i.e. developing a limited and superficial view of where you go overseas; you will reach a deeper understanding of the people and their problems in the place you are based. There are various alternatives to Voluntary Service Overseas, it would be worth checking out these alternatives by searching for opportunities with charitable organisations abroad.

304. **Do some other voluntary work.** Ask local societies, charities, clubs and other voluntary organisations if you can help out in ways that will enhance your work experience. You don't need to offer specialist qualifications or skills, but if you can that will be a bonus. For example, if you have completed a degree in information technology or computing, then you could offer to help set up or improve their web-site. If you have completed a degree in accounting, you could help with their finances, etc.

305. **Ask professional associations and societies for sources of work experience.** Work experience is not always easy to find. Professional organisations can be a good source, and they often have links with professional bodies abroad.

306. **Remember that it is down to you to make the most of your work experience.** Work experience is an informal way of developing your employability, so usually there are no clear objectives or targets about what you will learn. You therefore need to take responsibility for obtaining maximum value from it.

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307. **Ask lots of questions.** Take advantage of the fact that you are new, to ask questions. Remember that as far as the organisation is concerned, you are there to work, but as far as you are concerned, you are there to learn and the work is the means to that end. Asking questions is one of the most powerful ways of learning in an unfamiliar situation.

308. **Take advantage of any available opportunities for training and development.** It doesn't matter whether it is a qualification-based course or not, it doesn't matter whether it is purely internal or not, and it doesn't matter whether it is short or long. It is all grist to the mill of your learning from work experience.

309. **When you have completed your work experience, write a reflective account of the experience.** This should start with a description of what you experienced, include your feelings and your thoughts, and end with a list of lessons you drew from the experience (starting with what you learned about yourself, your talents/strengths, and your preferences and dislikes).

310. **Ask politely for a letter from your employer or supervisor, briefly explaining the tasks you have undertaken**. This is an example of documenting your work experience, for which there are good reasons. To help you think about documenting your work experience, we have devoted the next section to it.

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44 Your first days in a new job

The person to whom you report is probably the person who will have most influence on your next steps in employment. They will be recommending you for promotion, or not, or they will be writing a reference for you for your next steps into a new organisation.

311. **Try to understand what is important to them.** A good way to do this is to ask them. Then you can look for ways to assist.

312. **Try to bring solutions rather than problems**. Your boss will already have plenty of problems and probably enough people to bring more. You will get noticed if you seem to be looking for or providing solutions.

313. **The biggest mistake you can make is to never make a mistake.** The new graduate in a new job can view a mistake as a disaster – but the person who never made a mistake, never made anything. The worst mistake you can make is to be so risk-averse that there is no possibility that you will ever make a mistake. View mistakes as pitfalls form which you can learn. Consequently, distil all the learning you can from each mistake.

314. **Take responsibility for outcomes**. Don't hide from responsibility behind the fact that you are the newest or youngest employee where you work. The sooner you learn to take personal responsibility, the quicker you will become a respected and mature professional.

315. **Be careful in your written communications, particularly the less formal ones, such as memos and emails.** These provide lasting evidence of your maturity and your professionalism.

316. **Find yourself a mentor**. If this is a job in which you intend to stay long enough to seek advancement, then seek a mentor in your organisation or industry. Seek advice from someone who has succeeded, so they can help you to succeed. Check whether your organisation has a mentoring scheme. Some professional bodies offer mentoring schemes so it is well worth checking that out too. Otherwise, use informal ways to find a mentor. People are more likely to be willing to act as a mentor than you think, because most people like having someone to look up to them. It is flattering to be asked to be a mentor; it is pleasant having someone listen attentively to your advice, and it is also pleasant to be able to share lessons from your own experience.

317. **Recognise the importance of interpersonal relations**. Most students study, complete assignments and are assessed on the basis of individual work during school, college and university. Most work within employing organisations is done in a group or departmental setting. Indeed, the essence of organisation is to combine the contributions of individuals to realise joint outcomes. Hence, learning to get on with work colleagues is essential.

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318. **Recognise the importance of teamwork**. An employing organisation is a way of combining the work of groups and of individuals. Your contribution to the organisation will be assessed by your contribution to your group at work. A fruitful attitude to teamworking is to see the problems of other people in your group, as your problems.

319. **Develop your network** Your current employing organisation is unlikely to be the last organisation that employs you. Most jobs are obtained by personal contacts and networks (in the USA it is about 65%). Places you can network include alumnus groups, on-line groups, professional bodies, and trade associations.

320. **Network within your own organisation**. Access to interesting work as well as promotions depends on who you know as well as what you know. Make contacts within your current organisation.

321. **Build goodwill**. People will be much happier to help you if they see you as someone who will help them. If you help other people in your organisation, you will develop a network of people who are likely to think of how they can help you when the opportunity arises.

322. **Staying in touch**. Networking is not just about making contacts; it is also about building relationships with these contacts. Develop a system for keeping in touch with your contacts.

323. **Avoid burning your bridges with anyone.** It is a small world, so keep your enemies to the minimum.

324. **Develop yourself.** In the best of all possible worlds, your employing organisation will recognise your worth and realise the importance of developing your potential. If not, you need to do the job yourself. A good place to start is to work out a development plan for yourself, even if it is very provisional and subject to amendment in the light of emerging circumstances.

325. **It is never too soon to begin thinking about where your present job will lead you.** What are the options for your next move? Which options look most promising?

326. **Look for as many learning opportunities as possible**. What training or development is needed to arrive at where you want to go next? Are there courses on offer which could build your CV in the direction you want to go? How can you make the most of informal learning, particularly about the particular sector in which you are now working?

327. **Look for a niche to make your own.** If you have an area of specialisation within an organisation or an industry this can be a valuable source of comparative advantage. It is even better if you can find an area of specialisation that will be in more demand in the future.

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45 Six extra bonus tips: Reviewing Your Skills so far

328. **Ask people close to you what work they might see you doing.** Most of us don't like to accept advice from those close to us. However, they sometimes do have a point of view about us, which is valuable. Consider asking for their advice, but then retreat and write it down, bring to thought your academic skills, and treat this advice as though you paid a professional for it: analyse it, and see what good ideas might come from it.

329. **What gets you in the zone?** If you have a hobby, interest, passion, consider this as a source of information for your job search. What activities does this involve that you enjoy, or find stimulating? What skills and expertise have you developed through this activity which might transfer to work? This can help to build your CV and identify what you are looking for in a job.

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330. **What, where, how?** This is a method attributed to John Crystal, which is intended to help you understand where to start your job search, by getting to know your own skills and needs better. "What" means identifying your transferable skills – that sounds jargon-ish, but it means look seriously at what you enjoy doing and list the skills involved. For example, if you enjoy cooking – think about a time you last enjoyed cooking and work out what skills it entailed. It could have included planning (menus, new recipes, suiting individual tastes), last minute coping strategies (when you didn't plan or decided to use anything you found in a cupboard), entertaining (others during the cooking, or during the meal), presenting (table layout, food presentation, colour co-ordination, serving) and so on. The idea is to think back to events in your life where you have enjoyed using any kind of skill and developing lists or maps or pictures of them. As the lists grow, you will have a clearer idea of what you enjoy doing and how these skills might transfer to work. The key here is not to list skills just because you are good at them, but to focus on the ones you enjoy (you are going to be spending a lot of your life at work!). "Where" means the environment in which you thrive best. This may be the geographical location in which to look for work, or a simple city/town/rural choice. You might also think about the kind of workspace you enjoy most – lots of people or by yourself – open offices, big spaces, small spaces, outside etc. You might consider whether you want lots of variety of environment – work involving travel or regular changes of venue (eg consultancy, selling, researching), or whether you are happier in a regular place.

"How" means how you put into practice your chosen "what"s and "where"s. This involves research to find the kinds of job title, profession, career, employers that might offer this kind of work. Once you have decided on the type of work/job and employers, then you need to work on how to find the people in these organisations who can employ you – real names. Then make contact.

331. **What have you learned from university about your relationship with time?** Are you a last minute person? Do you work best at certain times of day? Do you need to make lists to keep track? Remember when you left assignments until the last minute, because "I always work better under pressure"? Well think about this. You have learned certain ways of getting by at uni. Now you are in job search mode, review those skills. What don't you like about the way you use time? Could you consider doing stuff as soon as it comes to your attention? Otherwise, last minute may be far too late to respond to tentative opportunities, or preparation for interviews.

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332. **You and money.** What skills do you have as a graduate? Some graduates have had to learn the hard way how to budget and do just enough paid work to meet the bills. But you still may have a significant debt to carry forward. That shouldn't put you off as this is a common burden for graduates these days. However, there will be expenses around job searching which cannot be ignored – particularly ensuring you handle travel and appearance to impress. Some interviews are offered with very little notice, and that can be expensive on train fares or bus fares. Some companies will pay travel to interviewees, but this is not the norm. So plan now how you are going to find the money to get around the country to interview. Get interview clothes by asking for these as birthday gifts, or find smart clothing from charity shops. Start thinking not just about how to eke out money until you get a job, but how to fund starting work until the first month's pay arrives. Maybe a new financial strategy?

333. **Self promotion.** While at uni it is possible you may have valued fitting in with the crowd, being one of the group. This is a useful skill in social situations and new situations, but one you may need to unlearn for selection processes. What matters then is to stand out from the crowd – make sure you are memorable without being dismissed as too extreme. Apply some thought to this – who are you in relation to the crowd of people wanting a job – what makes you special and how can you stand out in group discussions, presentations etc at assessment centres?

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46 Final message

If you have actually read through all the tips in this book, we hope that you are not too exhausted to continue with your job search! The collection of tips is offered in the hope that somewhere on these pages, there is a small piece of advice which will help you in your search both now and in the future. Or, perhaps you will have found here some tips to share with others as they seek for new jobs. As a graduate, you have already shown determination in achieving your degree. You have an ability and willingness to learn, which employers value. That job is out there – don't give up until you have found it.

Sue Greener, Tom Bourner, Asher Rospigliosi
2010

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