

SMITH COLLEGE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

# YOUR JOB SEARCH

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## Getting Started on Your Job Search

**The mission of your job search is to market yourself.** To successfully do this, you need to know what you offer, what employers are looking for, and how you both fit together. To get started:

- √ **Concentrate on planning your first step after Smith, not an entire career.** Many graduates take short-term jobs while looking for more permanent employment, and move on after a year or so in their first full-time jobs. Your career will take shape over time, not immediately.
- √ **Reflect.** Think about what you enjoy doing, what you've accomplished, what interests you and why. Meet with a career advisor to take a personality quiz (MBTI), skill inventory, or just talk.
- √ **Determine when you want (or need) to begin a full-time job.** Right after graduation? Two or three months later? Sometime within a year? This decision is important in timing your search.
- √ **Choose a target location.** You may have a first and second choice, but beyond this, it's hard to search effectively in several regions at the same time.
- √ **Examine your finances.** Use our handout, *Housing and Budgeting*, and research the cost of living in your target location(s). If you've saved some start-up money, you'll have more flexibility.
- √ **Make sure your online presence is professional.** Review your Facebook profile and remove compromising photos or video. Google yourself. Employers and networking contacts will, too.
- √ **Break your search down into steps and set goals that work for you.** Schedule time for your job search each week and then try not to stress about it. Have confidence—it will work out!

## Background Research and Prep

- √ **Research different fields and entry-level jobs before launching your search.** Browse our library and ask for help from a CDO advisor. Use these CDO and other online resources:
  - *E-Access*—CDO database of jobs, internships, and campus interviewing events. Read lots of job descriptions. What skills are required? Does the work sound interesting? Why or why not?
  - *Career Field Research*—CDO-compiled links by field
  - *Spotlight on Careers*—profiles of 30+ careers with related professional associations and job sites
  - *Vault Online Career Library*—enter through E-Access for in-depth industry profiles and jobs listed by field and city; see [Vault.com](http://Vault.com) for more industry profiles
  - *LexisNexis*—access through Neilson to research trends, organizations, and people in the field
- √ **Arrange informational interviews.** Most people enjoy talking about their work and offering advice to those starting out, and this process will build your network:
  - Smith alums can be an excellent source of advice and information. Find them in the Alumnae Association of Smith College online directory (access using your 99#).
  - Ask faculty, former supervisors, friends, and family to suggest others with whom to talk.
  - If you've seen an article about someone, read their bio on a website, heard them speak, or read their work, email or write to request an informational interview.
  - Read our guide, *Informational Interviewing and the Art of Networking*, for specifics.
- √ **Your goal? Focus your search.** From fashion magazines to biotech firms, employers want to know why you want to work for their organization and in their field. Allow 2-3 months for this phase.

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## Tools for Your Job Search

**A resume and cover letter are an essential marketing team in your job search.** The cover letter introduces you and your resume, and the resume gives a more complete overview of your experience and qualifications. Together, these documents show where the match is between you and the position, and determine if you'll be interviewed. For details, see our guide [Resumes and Cover Letters](#). Bring drafts to drop-in hours for review as often as you like.

**Create a networking (aka business) card** for conferences, job fairs, lectures, or when traveling.

**Practice your interview skills.** An applicant who interviews well may receive a job offer over someone more qualified on paper. Read our guide [Interviews](#) and practice with a CDO advisor.

**Create a system to keep track of your networking contacts, job applications, and follow-up actions.** This can be an Excel spreadsheet, card file, or whatever works for you. Stay organized.

## Techniques for Finding Jobs

**Use a variety of strategies; don't rely on any one approach or too few applications:**

√ **Use E-Access.** Search by keyword, job function, industry, or location to maximize your results.

√ **Apply directly to employers.** Address your application to an actual person, not "To Whom it May Concern." No name? Look on the website, email, or phone and ask. If your skills don't exactly match a job description, apply anyway if you have relevant experience. If an employer has two jobs that interest you, it's OK to apply for both, but write different cover letters. Beyond two, you may seem unfocused. Consult the CDO or the employer's human resources for advice.

√ **To identify employers in your target field and location** use field-specific websites/directories the *Vault Online Career Library*, and search online. Ask professionals in your field for suggestions. If you don't see entry-level jobs on an organization's website, call and ask if there are any.

√ **Industry- and city-specific job databases are often more effective than large, general job sites.** Refer to the field-specific links on the CDO website and search online. While it's fine to post your resume on job boards, doing so is no substitute for connecting directly with employers.

√ **Professional association websites and journals** often have job boards, conference notices, and industry news. Associations can be easily found online (ex: Google "museum associations") or by asking professionals in your field of interest. Association resources may be free or fee-based.

√ **Many job functions cut across a variety of fields.** Jobs in PR, marketing, communications, finance, IT, and other operations are available in a range of organizations. Search creatively.

√ **By some estimates, 80% of jobs are discovered through networking**, a technique essential to most job hunts. Networking is NOT asking for a job, but while networking you may:

- Hear about jobs before they're posted; be offered access to an employer's internal job board
- Learn about conferences and other networking venues; be referred to a colleague
- Find out about online/print resources and strategies to aid your search

√ **Network in-person as well as online.** Sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook are great ways to connect but use them in addition to, not instead of, face-to-face connections.

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√ **Interesting employer, but no jobs available? And no alum or other connection?** Find out who heads up your **specific** interest area—look on the website, consult field-specific news, LexisNexis, or phone and ask. Send a resume and letter saying you’d like to meet to discuss their experience in the field and hear their advice on getting started. Mention something specific—a news release you’ve read, a talk you’ve heard them give, their new book. (Sample in our informational interview handout.)

With no Smith or other connection to the person you’re writing, the letter must be compelling enough to catch their attention and persuade them to take the time to meet with you. If the recipient doesn’t respond, follow up to try to arrange an in-person or phone conversation. If they can’t meet they may be able to suggest someone who can.

√ **The CDO offers seniors many ways to connect with a variety of employers and jobs:**

- *On-campus interviews* are held both semesters
- *Employer information sessions*—background prep for campus interviews
- *On- and off-campus job fairs* and *Five-College interviewing*
- *Resume referral*—the CDO collects resumes to send to employers requesting them
- Browse E-Access and the weekly CDO e-news, “What’s Happening @ the CDO,” for jobs and employer events and deadlines.

√ **You may be able to “temp” your way to a permanent job.** Ask an organization’s human resources department whether they hire their own temporary workers or use a particular agency.

√ **Paid, one-year, post-BA opportunities,** are ideal if working for a year before grad school or testing out a career interest. Search E-Access for these positions, often called fellowships. If you lack experience, interning or volunteering—even part-time—may position you for a job if one opens up.

√ **Some fields use newspaper classified ads to hire.** Go to [www.newslink.org](http://www.newslink.org) and check.

√ **Job hunting from a distance?** Try to visit your target city during school breaks to network. Ultimately, you may need to move, find short-term work, and continue your search. Read the news and online classified ads for your target region. Career office websites in your target location may offer good local links and resources, too.

### **Once You’ve Applied...**

√ **Follow up.** A confident call or email can keep your resume at the top of an employer’s pile. Ask if your inquiry has been received and try to set up an interview. If an ad says “No calls please,” don’t.

√ **Don’t get discouraged.** A job search requires preparation, follow-through, and persistence. The hiring process can take weeks, even months. Keep applying, networking, and following up.

### **Congratulations! You Have an Offer!**

**It’s typical to ask for a few days or even a week to consider an offer.** Express your enthusiasm for the job and agree on a specific date for your reply. If you have other applications pending, call the employers to see when they expect to make a decision. Once you accept a job and have a formal offer in hand, withdraw other applications. This is an important professional courtesy.

**If the job sounds great, but not the salary, you may be able to negotiate.** Research the salary range for the field and location in advance so you can suggest a range. Use the salary links on our website, read the negotiation guidelines in our handout *Interviews*, or consult a CDO advisor.

## Job Search Timetable

Start of Job Search	6 months	5 months	4 months	3 months	2 months	1 month
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**Timing a job search is a very individual matter** taking into account when you want begin a job, the amount of time you can devote to your search, and the field/location you've targeted. Most employers don't interview on college campuses, so you must research and apply to them closer to the time you want to be employed.

**Employers' hiring processes differ widely.** They may list jobs and conduct interviews several months in advance or begin the hiring process just weeks before they want an employee to start.

**Allow at least six months for your job search.** Set goals for yourself—daily, weekly, monthly—whatever works for you. Your job search timetable may be very different than other students'—this is OK.

**The following is a very general time frame, not an absolute.** Use it to pace the steps of your job search and make it more manageable.

### √ At least six months from the time you want to be employed:

- Meet with a CDO advisor now (or any time) to discuss your search
- Begin researching fields, entry-level jobs, salary ranges, and locations—read online and in the CDO library
- Start to arrange informational interviews—this will build your network and is critical
- Revise your resume—gear it to your field of interest. We can help!

### √ Five months before:

- Conduct more in-depth research of fields that interest you
- Increase your informational interviewing and networking
- Develop a list of organizations where you'd like to work; bookmark their career/employment pages
- Develop a list of field-specific and association job sites; bookmark these, too—you'll be checking them often!
- You may try to arrange a short-term internship or shadow someone whose career interests you—this might during be a school break, with an alum, or someone else you've met networking

### √ Four months before:

- You guessed it—more networking!
- Do you need to tweak your resume? Practice your interview skills? Now's the time.
- Draft a cover letter and have it reviewed during drop-in; customize your basic format for each employer
- Check organization and field-specific websites for openings—some employers have a longer hiring process than others, so you need to stay on top of things

### √ Three months before:

- Many employers post jobs 2-3 months before the start date—your application activity should pick up
- Regularly check your bookmarked websites for job posts
- Get back in touch with contacts with whom you had informational interviews; tell them you're actively searching for a job; ask if they'd be willing to keep you in mind if they hear of opportunities

### √ Two months before:

- Some of the employers you've applied to will be interviewing—have a practice session with a CDO advisor
- Keep applying—check your favorite websites regularly
- Continue networking—you can contact organizations even when there are no jobs posted

### √ One month before:

- Some employers are just posting jobs, others already doing follow-up interviews—stay organized
- Stay focused—keep actively applying, interviewing, and networking
- You may be getting offers—if not, don't be discouraged. It takes time and persistence to find a job and you will succeed.