

Finding a Terrific Summer Job

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Smith College Lazarus Center for Career Development

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First Steps

Set your priorities. With good planning you can use the summer to accomplish multiple goals including earning money and gaining experience. Strategies for finding or creating internships are in the [internships](#) and [Handouts & Resources](#) sections of the Lazarus Center's website.

Identify how you can contribute to potential employers. Coursework, extracurricular activities, and other positions you've held all add up to skills and interests employers need.

Review your finances. Determine how much money you need to earn this summer.

Target a geographic area. This might be in or near your hometown, someplace where you have friends or family to help with housing, or a new location where you'll need to find your own housing.

Ensure your social media presence is professional. Adjust privacy settings as needed. Google your name; employers often do this and may base hiring decisions on what they see.

Plan it out. Some summer job programs have fall deadlines, but many employers hire closer to the summer. Use J-term and school breaks to research prospective employers and to arrange informational interviews with alums and others in your field of interest. If you intern or shadow at an organization during a break, you may be invited back for a paid summer position.

Write resumes and cover letters that market your skills and interests. Bring your drafts to a drop-in.

Practice a 30-second summary of your skills and interests. Have your personal introduction ready to go, wherever you go. A summer job lead may result.

Consider making a networking card (a business card) with your name and contact information. Ask for other people's cards or contact information as well.

Practice your interview skills. Schedule a practice interview with an advisor. Send a thank you note or email within two days of the interview.

Resources for Your Search

- [Handshake](#), the Lazarus Center's internship and job posting platform.
- Check the websites of interesting organizations to see if they list job openings. Follow up by phone after you've applied to set up an in-person or phone interview.
- Use the *Vault Career Insider* (login via Handshake) and sites in [Career Field Links](#) on our website to search for potential employers by field of interest or industry.
- Use LinkedIn and Facebook to learn more about potential employers. Set up a LinkedIn profile; join the Smith College and other relevant groups.
- Online search, for example, "summer jobs New York City" or "human services agencies Seattle." Create Google Alerts for selected key phrases to automate your search.

Tell people about your job search such as family, friends, contacts from your hometown, former supervisors, and Smith faculty. Describe what you're seeking and where. Gather leads.

Arrange informational interviews with Smith alumnae and others in your fields of interest. Ask them about their work, how they got started, and their suggestions for summer opportunities related to their fields. J-term and other breaks are good opportunities for this process. Alumnae may be found via LinkedIn, the Smith College Office of Alumnae Relations' online community directory, and through referrals from faculty, staff, or peers. Networking basics are described in our guide to [Informational Interviewing and the Art of Networking](#).

Applying for Summer Jobs

While many summer jobs are listed in databases, in print, or on organization websites, **unlisted** opportunities are best discovered through networking and directly contacting organizations that interest you. Use a variety of approaches and resources as you search.

Apply even if you're not certain your 100% qualified. Your skills and experiences need not precisely match an employer's posted requirements for you to be a strong candidate. Emphasize your strengths and interest.

Target a varied range of organizations. For example, if you're interested in psychology, you might look for summer jobs in hospitals, mental health clinics, human services agencies, research centers, special-focus schools, or camps.

Familiarize yourself with an organization before making contact. Browse its website, search online for recent news items, and speak to alumnae or others in the field about it. This will help you decide whether you want to apply and if so, impress the people you contact with your initiative.

When possible, send your resume and cover letter to a specific person rather than "To Whom it May Concern." Phone or email for the name and title if it is not listed on the organization's website.

No job listed? Email or phone the person who heads up your *specific* interest area to ask about a summer position. Explain why the organization attracts you and describe your relevant skills and experiences. If you can't get a name in a specific department, contact the college relations or human resources directors. **Alternate approach:** Email/write the person in charge of your interest area to request an in-person or phone informational meeting. The better researched your inquiry, the more likely the person will be to give you some time.

Additional Techniques

Doing a long distance job search? If you have friends who attend college in or near your target city, ask them to check their career office databases for local job and internship listings. Browse other schools' websites for resources.

Be creative with your search. If you're interested in public relations, for example, don't assume PR firms are the only potential employers. Most organizations have PR/communications departments as well as finance, research, marketing, and IT.

Temporary (temp) work. Most cities have temp or staffing agencies—listed online—for short-term jobs. Some specialize in particular fields. Registering with a few may lead to exposure to new fields and a longer-term job. If there's an employer you'd like to work for contact their HR department to ask where they hire their temps.

Going door-to-door with copies of your resume can be an effective way to meet potential employers. Be polite, patient, and prepared to talk about yourself and your interest in the organization. This approach is especially helpful in fields such as retail, restaurants, and tourism.

Attending job fairs can introduce you to potential summer employers, even if the job fair is for full-time positions. Go professionally dressed, with copies of your resume, prepared to talk about your skills and interests. Collect business cards and make a plan for following up.

Start your own business. Can you teach senior citizens to use a computer or sell items on eBay? Photograph special events? House sit? Design websites? Do home repairs? Teach music lessons?

Every Job Can Build Marketable Skills

Food service, retail, camp counseling, life guarding, and other traditional summer jobs build marketable skills. If you describe these positions effectively on paper and in person, they can serve you well in the future. Example: A major retailer seeking candidates for its buyer's training program cited food service as excellent background. Whatever position you land, look for opportunities to make a positive impact and to show your initiative.

Suggested Summer Job Search Timetable

The following is a **possible** timetable for making summer plans. Deadlines for highly competitive summer job programs and internships may be in the fall. Keep in mind that many organizations hire summer staff closer to the summer, while others make decisions much earlier.

September – October

- Start thinking about your goals for next summer. Do you want to earn a certain amount of money? Test out a career interest? Live in a particular location? Work in a more relaxed setting than during the school year? Build your network? Some combination?
- Consider the skills you offer a potential employer and any issues or organizations that interest you.
- Become familiar with our resources: our website, Handshake, handouts, summer job and internship links, and library resources such as Smith students' Summer Activity Reports.
- Read our weekly email blasts for the latest on position listings received by the Center, our workshops, programs, and employer information sessions.
- Prepare your resume

November – December

- Begin to narrow down what you want to do and where. Consult our field-specific links.
- A small number summer job programs have deadlines during this period. Examples: some journalism/media internships, summer science fellowships, finance programs. The majority of positions have later deadlines.
- Networking is an important part of any search. Ask Smith faculty to suggest people and organizations. Find out the names of alumnae to contact. Re-connect with past supervisors. Develop contacts at organizations that interest you. Arrange informational interviews over a school break or during J-term. Set up a LinkedIn profile and join the Smith College Group.

J-Term

- Many students return to their previous summer jobs to earn money. In addition, you can...
- Try to create an internship. It can be one week to the entire month in length.
- Shadow someone for a day to get a feel for their work and work environment.
- Arrange informational interviews with alumnae and others. (Be sure to keep in touch with them.)

February – March

- Many organizations are hiring summer staff now.
- The summer opportunities coming to the Center increase now, as employers clarify their hiring needs. Browse our emails and Handshake regularly.
- Just starting your planning and networking? That's OK! Many do this over spring break.
- This is prime time to be applying for summer opportunities.

April – May

- Most organizations know their needs for the summer. If you've made prior contact, you'll be in a better position to secure an opportunity. Keep at it and follow up on previous leads and contacts.
- As the semester ends, consider phoning organizations to ask about employment. Some students may land summer jobs after they get to their target location.