

# Climb to Your Career in Four Years

Where will you be in four years? Will you be ready to join the work force?

Maybe you have your future planned: You know what you want to be after graduation and you have an idea of how to get there. Or, maybe you aren't even sure what you want to major in—never mind know what kind of career you want to have after college.

No matter if you're decided or unsure—if you're planning to graduate in four years and find your place in the work force, take steps now to reach your goals. It's never too early (or too late) to start. But—the earlier you start, the easier it will be to prepare!

First, develop the habit of stopping by the career services office on a regular basis. Check in a few times during your freshman year, more often during your sophomore year, frequently during your junior year, and weekly during your senior year.

Here's a timeline to guide your progress:

## Every fall

- Make an appointment to talk with a career services counselor.
- Check your career center's website for a calendar of dates and times of career development and job-search workshops and seminars, career and job fairs, and company information sessions.
- Update your resume and have it critiqued and proofread.
- Join professional associations and become an active member to build a network of colleagues in your field. Find a student version of your professional association and take leadership roles.
- Subscribe to and read professional journals in your chosen field.

## Freshman year

Asking questions, exploring your options (up to 30 hours)

- Schedule an appointment at the career services center to familiarize yourself with the services and resources available.
- Take interest and career inventory tests at the career services office.
- Start a career information file or notebook that will include records of your career development and job-search activities for the next four years.
- Identify at least four skills employers want and plan how you will acquire these skills before graduation. Visit your career center for information on the skills.
- [Scan the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#), which is filled with information on hundreds of occupations. Check out career-search books in the career center library.
- Familiarize yourself with your university's career center home page—a good source of tips and articles to help with your job search.
- Take a resume writing class and explore other career planning workshops. Write your first resume.
- Attend on-campus career and job fairs to gather information on potential careers and employers.
- Explore your interests, abilities, and skills through required academics.
- Talk to faculty, alumni, advisers, and career counselors about possible majors and careers.
- Join university organizations that will offer you leadership roles in the future.
- Collect information on cooperative education programs, internships, and summer jobs available through the career services office.
- Consider volunteer positions to help build your resume.

## Sophomore year

Researching options/testing paths (up to 60 hours)

- Schedule an appointment with a career services counselor to bring yourself up-to-date on what's needed in your career file.
- Update your resume (with your summer activities) and have it critiqued in the career services office.
- Begin a cooperative education program or consider internship, summer, and school-break job opportunities that relate to your interests.
- Read at least one book on career planning recommended by career services staff.
- Explore at least three career options available to you through your major.
- Take a cover-letter writing workshop.
- Review your progress in learning four (or more) skills employers look for in new hires.
- Research various occupations in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) and materials in the career center library.
- Attend on-campus career and job fairs and employer information sessions relating to your interests.
- Identify organizations and associations in your interest areas for shadowing opportunities and informational interviews.
- Join at least one professional or honorary organization related to your major to make contact with people in the professional world.
- Work toward one leadership position in a university club or activity.
- Begin to collect recommendations from previous and current employers.
- Put together an interview outfit.

## Junior year

Making decisions/plotting directions (up to 100 hours)

- Schedule an appointment with a career services counselor to have your updated resume critiqued.
- Narrow your career interests.
- Review your participation in a co-op program or explore internship opportunities with a career services professional.
- Participate in interviewing, cover-letter writing, and other job-search workshops.
- Practice your skills at mock interviews.
- Review your progress in learning four (or more) skills employers look for in new hires.
- Attend on-campus career and job fairs and employer information sessions that relate to your interests.
- Take leadership positions in clubs and organizations.
- Consider graduate school and get information on graduate entrance examinations.
- Ask former employers and professors to serve as references or to write recommendations to future employers.
- Complete at least five informational interviews in careers you want to explore.
- Shadow several professionals in your field.
- Research potential employers in the career library and talk to recent graduates in your major about the job market and potential employers.
- Start your professional wardrobe.

## Senior year

Searching, interviewing, accepting, success!

- Update your resume and visit the career services office to have it critiqued.
- Get your copy of the career center's calendar and register for on-campus interviews. Also schedule off-campus interviews.
- Develop an employer prospect list with contact names and addresses from organizations you are

interested in pursuing.

- Gather information on realistic salary expectations. Your career services office will be able to help.
- Attend local association meetings to meet potential employers.
- Draft a cover letter that can be adapted for a variety of employers and have it critiqued.
- Participate in interviewing workshops and practice interviews.
- Read two or more professional or trade publications from your major and career field on a regular basis.
- If you are planning to go to graduate school, take graduate school entrance exams and complete applications.
- Follow up on all applications and keep a record of the status of each.
- Go on second interviews. Evaluate job offers and accept one.
- Report all job offers and your acceptance to the career services office.

Good luck in your career!

Courtesy of the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#).