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# SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT?

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In particular, Arts and Humanities students often have a difficult time identifying potential career paths. Often their choices are influenced by the idea that a liberal arts background is not particularly transferrable and the most obvious next step is teacher's college, law school or grad school. Although those are three great options, they are, by no means, your only options. If you are not passionate and determined to become a teacher or a lawyer, or are not driven by a burning research question that can only be answered by a higher level degree, then these are likely not the best options for you.

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## IF THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES OUT THERE, HOW DO I FIND THEM?

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The first step in considering what career options are available to you is to identify your skills and how they can transfer to many different careers.

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## WHAT DOES A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION EQUIP ME FOR?

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A liberal arts education nurtures skills and talents increasingly valued by modern corporations. Today's companies function in a state of constant flux. To prosper, they need creative thinkers at all levels of the enterprise that are comfortable dealing with decisions in the bigger context. They must be able to communicate, to reason, create, write and speak for shared purposes; for hiring, training, managing, marketing, and policy-making. In short, they provide leadership. These are exactly the skills and challenges that a liberal arts education prepares you for.

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## IDENTIFYING YOUR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

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Liberal Arts students have many of the skills that employers are desperately seeking, such as: writing, research, critical analysis, and time management.

In addition to the skills that you have developed in the classroom, there are numerous other skills that you develop through extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, volunteer work etc.

**Communications:** speaking effectively, writing concisely, listening attentively, expressing ideas clearly, facilitating discussion, providing appropriate feedback, negotiating, perceiving non-verbal messages, reporting information, editing. . .

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**Research and Planning:** gathering information, forecasting, predicting, identifying and solving problems, developing ideas and alternatives, organizing, setting goals. . .

**Human Relations:** developing rapport, listening, providing support for others, motivating, sharing credit, group work, cooperating. . .

**Organization, Management and Leadership:** initiating new ideas, paying attention to details, managing groups, decision making, managing conflict, coordinating tasks, teaching, coaching . .

**General Work Skills:** being punctual and reliable, managing time, meeting goals, accepting responsibility, setting and meeting deadlines. . .

*All of these skills are in great demand in today's job market.*

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### **WHAT IS THE *RIGHT* CAREER FOR ME?**

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A sometimes even more daunting task than figuring out what your transferable skills are is figuring out what you want to do with those skills. It is common to run into people who do nothing to change their life or career because they have not yet figured out what it is that they want to do. If you can figure out what's important to you, then all you have to do is find where or how that intersects with what's out there.

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### **HOW DO I BEGIN TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE *RIGHT* DIRECTION IS FOR ME?**

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Did you start high school with a different goal in mind than doing a degree in the area that you are currently in?

Did you sit down and figure out what you wanted in a life partner and then go out and find him/her without dating any "wrong" people along the way?

For many the process of figuring out the correct path whether it is for education, career or relationships involves a few wrong turns before you find the right direction. What is most important is that you are constantly turning within and analyzing what makes you happy, satisfied, and is sufficiently challenging to keep you interested.

Deciding on a career is not just about finding the right job; it is also about finding a lifestyle that suits your needs. Start by thinking about your core beliefs, your character, and your philosophy of life. What are your material needs? What are your priorities? Where do you want to live? Are you willing to work 70 hours a week for a lot of money? Or would you rather have more time for family even if it means less pay?

These sorts of questions are important to think about. They will help to guide you towards a career that suits your lifestyle. Number in order of priority to you the following things:

Challenges                       Independence                       Financial security

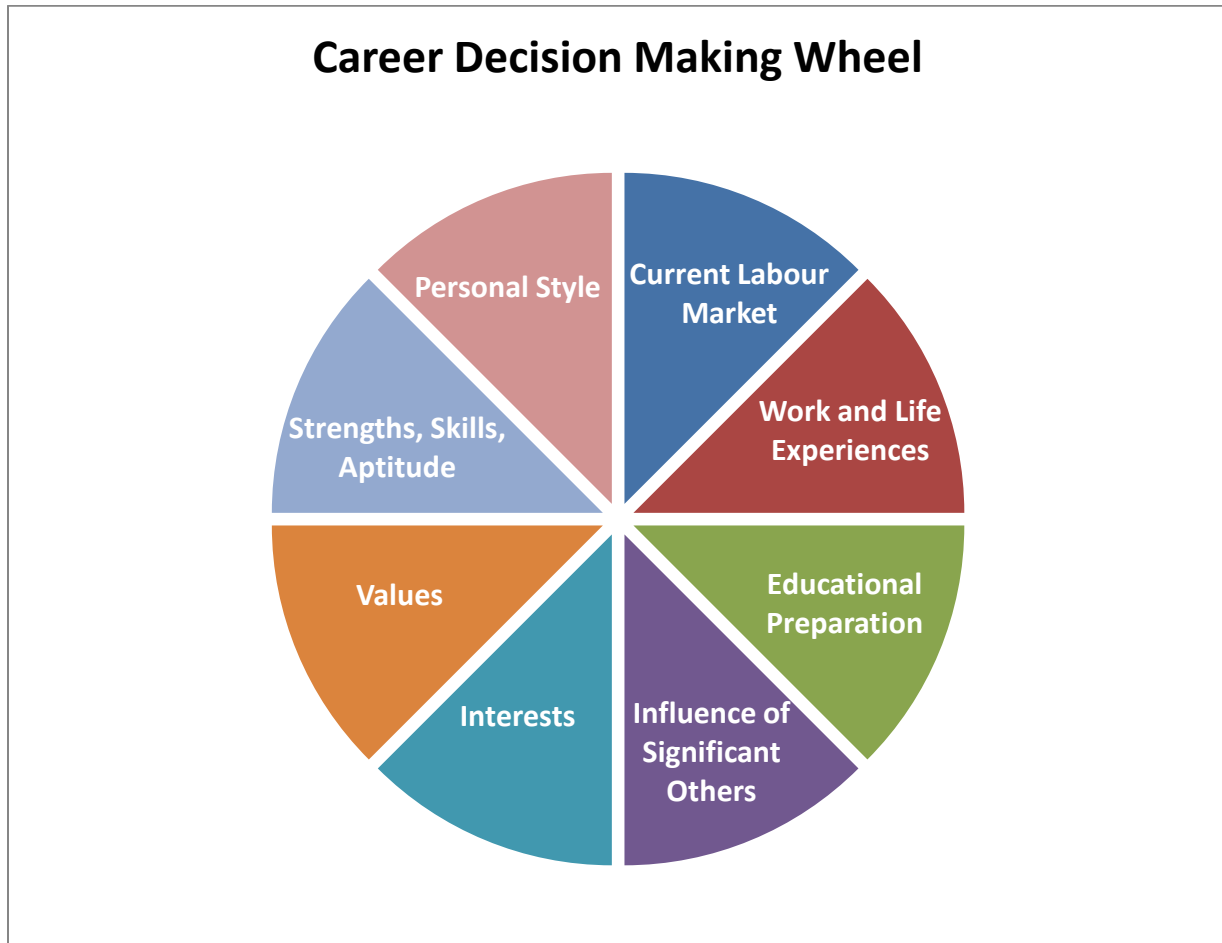
Service to others                       Family                       Power

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Once you have done this, each time you think about a career option ask yourself, “Does this position offer the values that are most important to me?”

It is also important to recognize that there are many other factors that play a part in our career decisions; skills and abilities, education, and values are only one part of the pie. We also need to ensure that we are reflecting on things that may be outside of our control such labour market trends, the needs and expectations of loved-ones . . .

A useful tool in career exploration is **The Wheel**, created by Norman Amundson & Gray Poehnell which illustrates the *8 main factors that influence career decisions*.



The best choices with respect to career are made by taking all 8 factors into consideration.

Another way to get an idea of whether a career is suited to your lifestyle is to look at those who are already in that career. Does their day to day appeal to you? Do they have enough time for their children? Are they too stressed or too bored?

**RESEARCH:** It is not only important to find the right career, it is also important to find the right company. Corporate culture can have a huge effect on your job satisfaction. Every corporation, like people, has a different personality. You need to know or at least have an idea before you start working somewhere, whether your personality is a good fit for the company.

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Obviously if you know someone at the company this is one way of gaining some valuable information about how they treat their employees. However, unless the person you are talking to has a similar personality to your own, their perceptions and interpretations may be quite different. Therefore, it is also important to use other research tools such as the company annual reports, brochures, or other company literature, and their web-site. Do not forget to check social networking sites for company information as well. This could give you some unique insight into what it is like to work there based on posts, blogs, issues etc.

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## HOW DO I MAKE CONNECTIONS AND FIND A JOB?

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IT IS NOT JUST WHAT YOU KNOW, IT IS WHO YOU KNOW.

### WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is the process of *making contact and exchanging information with other people*. It involves *building relationships* and creating a personal set of contacts that may be able to help you in some way and that you may be able to help in some way.

Networking is attentively and consciously meeting people, being interested in them, remembering who they are and what they do, and exchanging information with them over time.

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### WHY NETWORK?

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*According to numerous studies conducted by career counseling professionals,  
almost 80% of job opportunities are not advertised.*

Networking can be used in many ways in your job search and throughout your career to:

- *Conduct field research*
  - Learn about a specific field that you are interested in
- *Explore careers*
  - Learn about what types of work exist in different fields
- *Obtain information about organizations*
  - Learn about an organization for which you might want to work
- *Obtain career advice*
  - Ask people in the world of work about how you might prepare yourself for a certain field or position
- *Seek job-search advice*
  - Ask for suggestions of people you might contact for information about job or internship possibilities
- *Create your own job or internship*
  - Identify an activity or a type of work that you would like to do, and find someone who is willing to let you do it

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## **NETWORKING ETIQUETTE AND GUIDELINES:**

No matter who you contact, etiquette is important in building and maintaining relationships.

- Be well prepared. Be able to articulate as much as you know about what you are looking for in your career, job search, etc
- Always be professional, courteous, and considerate
- Be interested in the people you meet. Most people enjoy the chance to tell you about their own careers and activities
- Be genuine. Possess a sincere desire to learn. Be honest in asking for advice. If you are only interested in asking for a job, it will show, no matter how you disguise it
- Be gracious. Write a thank you letter when people take time to meet with you
- Stay in touch. Update people in your network when you make significant progress in your research or job search
- Give back. Know enough about the people you meet to keep their needs in mind as you continue to network. You may be able to pass on ideas, articles, and contacts that will interest them
- Use good judgment about the amount of time you request when you contact people. Do not overstay your welcome, and do not "return to the well" too many times

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## **NETWORKING TO FIND A JOB**

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Have faith that effective networking will result in helpful information about job possibilities. You also dramatically increase your probability of getting an interview if you have arrived at a job prospect through your own networking efforts than through other means. The personal contact involved in networking enhances your status as a candidate as compared with more anonymous application methods such as job boards, company web sites, and print ads.

Networking will often result in a job prospect that did not exist before you networked. Positions are sometimes created to accommodate a terrific person who contacts an organization proactively.

The reasons for this have to do with the nature of the job market and the way organizations work. The only jobs that are posted on job boards are those that have been identified as a need, approved by the organization's bureaucracy, and posted. This is an arduous process in many organizations. Jobs may be at various stages of the HR process, from being written as a formal listing through approval of the personnel requisition. Often, managers do not bother to seek approval for a personnel requisition ("req") until they have found a qualified candidate; this makes life easier for them. You may never even see those job descriptions.

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## **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING**

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This can be an extremely important part of building your network and finding a job. Often people are interested in a particular career or corporation but do not have any contacts. By setting up an information interview, you can make a contact, find out more about the company and the career, and get a foot in the door for future job openings.

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If you really do not know anyone, then setting up an information interview will start with some research on the company and the employees and will be followed by a cold call to the person that you would like to meet with. As intimidating as this may seem, people are surprisingly willing to talk about themselves.

So you may be pleasantly surprised at the reception you receive provided that you preface the request in the right manner. You need to ensure that you let the person know that you are a recent or soon to be graduate and are interested in a career in his/her field and would be grateful if he/she would have a few moments to talk to you about what he/she does and the pros and cons of his/her career choice. You do not want them to think that you are calling them to try and get a job.

- When you go to meet for the information interview be sure to dress professionally. Although this is not a job interview, the impression that you make on this person could be vital for the future
- Be prepared, have a short list of questions that you would like to ask and try not to take up too much time
- If you are meeting for coffee or lunch you should be prepared to offer to pay for the drinks/meal. Basically, if you invite, you pay
- Have a resume in your bag, but do not give it to him/her unless she/he asks for it
- At the end of the interview you can give him/her one of your contact cards and let him/her know that if they do hear of any opportunities that you would be thankful if he/she would let you know
- Be sure to follow up with a thank you card. This is extremely important and can make or break his/her impression of you

It is important to keep a journal or notebook detailing sources you have consulted and thoughts or ideas you have had. This way you will not have to worry about forgetting to follow up on a lead. You will also be able to pick up where you left off the next time you sit down to work, rather than inadvertently duplicating your research efforts. Perhaps most importantly of all, you will remember to follow up on leads generated by your networking contacts and to keep in regular contact with them as you continue your career exploration and/or development.

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### **NETWORKING IS A TWO-WAY STREET**

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Networking should not be only about what you get out of the relationships. That is no way to build a lasting or fruitful relationship. If you come across an interesting article or a relevant job listing, share it with your network. The point of having a career network is to have resources that can help, but, you should reciprocate whenever you can.

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### **ON-LINE NETWORKING**

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*These days, over 50% of employers Google prospective employees before they hire them.*

This means that you need to be paying attention to your on-line image. So Google yourself! See what comes up. Keep your private life private. You can still have personal information on the web. Just make sure that it's only available to the people you want to see it. Be careful what you write on your blog, or other people's blogs or social networking pages. Don't let the whole world see your personal information.

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## YOU ARE YOUR OWN P.R. AGENCY

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### BUILD A PROFESSIONAL BRAND BOTH ON AND OFF-LINE

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Once you've made sure that your personal information is only viewable by whom you want to see it, start building your professional brand. This will serve a couple of purposes. In addition to being information that showcases your talents for potential employers, it's also information that, if created properly, will bump the not-so-good stuff down the list in Google. That way, any prospective employer who Googles you, should see what you want them to see - your professional branding.

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### PROFESSIONAL BRANDING TOOLS

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- **JibberJobber** - Use JibberJobber to keep track of those networking contacts and keep a log of how they have helped you
- **LinkedIn** - Create a LinkedIn profile and start connecting. Ask and answer LinkedIn questions to increase your visibility
- **VisualCV** - Create a VisualCV to share with contacts and prospective employers
- **Write a Blog** - I know everyone, almost literally, has a blog these days. However, a well-written blog focused on your area of expertise is another good addition to your professional branding package
- **Create a Presence** - Comment on other people's blogs, write some articles, go to industry meetings, conventions, and events, and make contacts in your field. Be sure that all your endeavors are focused and relevant to both your skills and your career goals
- **Build a Web Site** - Consider a website to create and showcase your brand. Many web hosting services have built in web building tools and it's quick and easy to build a site that reflects your professional presence. You can get your own free site and post your resume on it at [about.me](http://about.me)
- **Get Your Name Out There** - Try to meet, either online or in-person, the important people in your field. Send them an email or a message via their web site or networking profile. Over the years, I've met lots of the important people in the world of job searching and careers, many of them because I sent them a quick email introducing myself or vice versa

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### REMEMBER

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Everything that you do, every letter or phone call that you make is a representation of you. Because of this it is important to invest some time in developing a tool kit of job search resources that you can use. Also, it is important to go through a variation of a branding process that will assist you in creating an image that will be appealing to employers.

Branding is a way of distinguishing yourself from competitors. The font, paper, language, colours etc. that you use will assist in creating in the employers mind a picture of who you are. You want to ensure that this picture is true to you and is tailored to the job/industry that you are hoping to enter.

Essentially, your resume, cover letter, and contact cards are your advertising campaign, so you need to take time to think out your strategy, who your target market is, and what your end goal is. Once you have figured this out creating the materials will be easier and there will be consistency in the message/image that you present.

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## RESUME

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I have students coming into my office all the time asking for help with their resumes. *They say, "I have sent this out to hundreds of places and haven't heard anything."* My number one response to this is that *you need to combine sending out your resume with networking*. It will help to draw attention to your document if you have met them, even briefly or even if you have not met the person doing the hiring, but have met with an employee who has at least mentioned your name to the person doing the hiring. Secondly, *you need to tailor your resume*. You are more likely to get a job if you have sent out 6 well targeted and tailored resumes than a hundred generic and identical resumes.

Your resume is a big part of your professional brand so make sure that it represents you accurately. You could go and see 5 different career counselors and each one will have a different opinion and different tips to offer. Take all of the suggestions into consideration, but ultimately do what feels right for you.

There are many different types of resumes and some, depending on the job/industry, will serve your needs better than others. Choose the resume style that best communicates to prospective employers your *relevant* experience, skills, and potential contribution. The choice of font or paper is entirely personal. However, a font size of 10-12 point is recommended. And there should be no typos, no misspelled words, and no grammatical errors.

Learn the language of the industry that you are hoping to enter and use it in your resume and cover letter. If there are key words that are mentioned in the job posting or on the company's web site incorporate them. This will make it easy for the employer to make the connection between your skills and their needs. Further, many employers are now using resume scanning software that scans your document for the key words that they are looking for. So although we have told you all through your degree not to plagiarize, this is the one time that using the exact language is not only appropriate, but necessary.

As a soon to be graduate you will probably not be entering the job market with multiple years of work experience. Because of this, I find the standard chronological resume to not be particularly useful. Instead, I prefer the functional resume that emphasizes the skills that you have and your achievements rather than the length of time that you have been doing them.

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## FUNCTIONAL RESUME

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The functional resume highlights your marketable skills by organizing your accomplishments by skill or career area. This format is very useful if you have limited related work experience or are looking to enter a new line of work. This fits for liberal arts students because you are essentially moving from an academic environment to a corporate environment.

When writing a resume it is important to avoid repetitious language. Therefore, to help, you should have a list of action verbs that will assist you in describing your skills and experience (*see attached list of resume action verbs*).



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## COVER LETTER

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Never send a resume alone when you are applying for a job. Use your cover letter to describe your qualifications, motivation, and interest in the job so that the employer will want to interview you.

Each letter should be printed on plain paper with a matching envelope. If you are enclosing a resume, the letter and resume should be on matching bond paper. Type size should be 10-12 point.

Letters should be short (no more than one page) with generous margins. Paragraphs should be limited to 4-8 lines whenever possible.

Use the standard business format, with your address and the date at the top and the addressee's name and address on the left just above the salutation. Your full name should be typed at the bottom under your signature. Don't forget to sign your letters and keep a copy for your files.

Letters should **ALWAYS** be addressed to an individual by name, with his/her correct title and address. If you don't know this information, call the company and ask for it. Titles should also be used in the salutation as appropriate, "Dear Dr. Carley", or "Dear Ms. Smith". First names should not be used unless you are personally acquainted with the addressee.

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## CONTACT CARDS

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These little cards can be extremely useful for networking. Remember that they are a mini advertisement for you, so be careful and strategic with the information that you put on them. Always be sure to include your degree(s), and some key words to describe some of your most relevant skills. Include all contact information including phone number, email address, and mailing address.

You can buy the paper to print these cards at home from most business supply stores or order cards online to be shipped to your door. Many producers of business cards have numerous free templates and designs that you can choose from. This will make it easy to create a professional card with a minimal budget. Check out [www.moo.com](http://www.moo.com) for some ideas or create an [about.me](http://about.me) page.

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## THE INTERVIEW

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An interview is a conversation about possibilities, a chance to learn and an opportunity to share information. Make the most of your interview: relax, take the time to respond clearly, and be yourself. The more worked up you allow yourself to get about an interview, the worse you will perform.

1. Be prepared! Learn as much as you can about the company and position in which you are interested.
2. Practice potential responses out loud, in front of a mirror or patient friends and family members. Discover various strategies, transitions, and lead-ins for answering certain kinds of questions, talking to one person or a group, and changing topics or focus. Practice asking questions. Employers will expect you to ask about matters that concern you.

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3. Anticipate commonly asked questions by interviewers and develop a set of related responses that you can mold to a variety of individual situations.

Some interviewers may ask, for example:

- How does your previous work experience relate to this job?
- What suggestions have been given to you to improve your performance?
- Have you had experience working as a part of a team?
- What accomplishment has given you the greatest satisfaction?
- How do you organize and plan for major projects?
- How do you handle conflicting priorities?
- What three things are most important to you in your career?
- What contributions can you make to this department?
- How does this job fit into your career path?
- How has your education prepared you for this career?
- Why did you choose your particular area of study?
- Do you feel you will be able to adapt from an academic environment to a corporate one?
- Give me an example of a major problem you have solved?
- Give me an example of how you respond to professional criticism?
- How would you resolve conflict in a group situation?

**When answering questions try to use the STAR method:**

**Situation:** give an example of a situation you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.

**Task:** describe the tasks involved in that situation.

**Action:** talk about the various actions involved in the situation's task.

**Results:** what results directly followed because of your actions.

4. The interview is an opportunity to share information. You will have to talk about yourself, your interests, and your values. Don't be shy about your accomplishments and experiences. Practice ways of phrasing replies about yourself that highlight your talents in a way that feels comfortable to you.
5. Demonstrate to your interviewer your engagement in the conversation. Ask perceptive questions, be alert, make eye contact, provide *relevant* information, and relay your knowledge of and interest in the field and the organization.
6. Observe *all* rules of courtesy and respect. Be punctual. Dress appropriately. Call people by their titles unless specifically directed to do otherwise. Express your thanks for the organization's consideration of your candidacy.

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7. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview to collect yourself and take a few deep breaths. You'd be surprised how much that will help as compared to rushing in at the last minute. If you're at the company location, use that time to observe what's going on. Does this seem like a place where you'd like to work?
  8. Bring an extra resume with you. This process is by no means an exact science and you will learn to expect situations like . . ."We seem to have misplaced your resume."

Rest assured that both interviewers and job seekers enter into the process hoping that it will proceed successfully. It is possible, though, that in spite of this good will the interview might not go as well as planned. To the greatest extent that you can, muster your courage, keep your chin up, and keep your confidence, dignity, and humor intact. Interviews are great ways to learn about career fields, particular positions, and, perhaps most importantly, yourself, whether or not you get a job offer.

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## FOLLOW UP

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**THANK YOU LETTERS:** These are of immense importance at all stages of the job search. They are a great way of making an impression and illustrating that you are a considerate person. Further, ensure that they are well written and do not have any errors. Be careful never to fire off a thank you email to someone without checking it at least twice.

After an interview always send a thank you note. The organization took the time to review your resume and interview you. You need to thank them for their consideration. It also provides you with one last opportunity to express your interest in the position and your pleasure in meeting with them.

If you did not answer a question well, this will also provide an opportunity to briefly clarify your thoughts and illustrate your point.

**FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALLS:** These can be helpful, but, you do not want to be a pest, so use this technique sparingly.

**BE ASSERTIVE AND CONFIDENT:** When in an interview or while on the job it is important to believe in yourself if you want others to do the same. Far too often we discredit our good ideas by prefacing them with diminishing language such as: "I'm not sure if this idea would work, but . . ." This is one of the most common ways that we undermine our talents. You must express your talents and good ideas and take credit for them if you want to get a job or make a significant contribution to the workplace

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## JOB OFFER

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**NEGOTIATING SALARY:** Unfortunately, in today's job market there is still a differential between expected earnings for women and for men. In general, a woman is paid 76¢ for every dollar a man makes, for the same work. This, in part, can be attributed to the fact that many women, in particular, are reluctant to negotiate salary when they are offered a job. More often than not, there is the tendency to just jump at the first job offer that comes along. It is important to not only research what job/career is suited to your skills and interests, but to also research what is average pay for that job/career. Knowing this will better prepare you for what to expect and what is reasonable to ask for.

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## RESOURCES

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### The Student Success Centre at Western:

Visit, [success.uwo.ca/index.cfm/careers](http://success.uwo.ca/index.cfm/careers) for information on workshops and support available on campus, including: career counseling, job search clinics, career management classes, job listings, and career testing.

For further information on these or other programs offered by the SSC go to UCC Suite 210, or call (519) 661-3559.

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## INTERNET

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- [www.workopolis.com](http://www.workopolis.com) - numerous career resources and tools, job and resume posting, salary calculator, news and articles
- [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com) – salary calculator, salary survey, and key words
- [www.monster.ca](http://www.monster.ca) – more job postings and you can post your resume
- [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com) - career planning/decision making support
- [www.bizweb.com](http://www.bizweb.com) – company research site – 30,000 companies listed
- [www.canadavisa.com/canada-salary-wizard.html](http://www.canadavisa.com/canada-salary-wizard.html) - salary information for different careers and regions within Canada
- [www.dynastaff.com](http://www.dynastaff.com) - interview questions and information
- [www.moo.com](http://www.moo.com) – business/contact card
- [about.me](http://about.me) – personal branding
- [www.jibberjobber.com](http://www.jibberjobber.com) – keep track of networking contacts
- [linkedin.com](http://linkedin.com) – connect to other professionals
- [www.visualcv.com](http://www.visualcv.com) – online resume sharing tool
- [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com) – create a blog
- [www.workstory.net](http://www.workstory.net) – view videos of people talking about how they got their jobs

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