

A Guide to Getting the Job You Want



**FREELANCE
STUDENTS**



“It’s a tough job market. Be more considered in your approach, show flexibility and use every avenue”

*Timothy Mukasa,
FreelanceStudents.co.uk founder*

There are jobs out there. However, the marketplace is crowded. This guide provides simple, but effective, strategies that you can apply to remarkably improve your chances at each stage of the recruitment cycle. We wish you the best of luck!



How Not To Get a Job!

A recent drive to recruit writers for our blog prompted us to provide some much needed advice to the many students out there who are simply not doing their job applications justice.



From the applications we received we found a number of common mistakes, which we've listed below. We imagine that many will probably think this all common sense, but for those of you that have not seen much success in getting work experience we suggest you give this article a good read and hopefully we can get you producing applications that will get you that job.

1. Not Reading the Job Description

We had many responses that could have been applications for any job on the planet! It seemed as though some students were just not reading the details of the job description. Employers take time and care in writing job descriptions to find the right candidate and any application that appears to disregard the details will be quickly binned.

2. No Covering Letter

The covering letter is vital and as a general rule you should always include one with your CV. The covering letter sets the scene – who you are and why you're applying. It points out key information to the employer, outlines your qualities, and makes a statement about your suitability for the job. It should give the personal touch that your CV will intrinsically lack.

3. CVs not Tailored

In some instances we received excellent covering letters, but on reviewing the accompanying CV we found no link between the two documents; the applicant had clearly not bothered to take the time to tailor the CV to fit the covering letter or the role. This sets alarm bells ringing and implies that an applicant is firing off the same CV to every employer!

4. Information Overload

Employers do not need to know your age, height, religious leanings, or your first summer job as a cup cake seller with the scouts. Jokes aside, you don't need to include unnecessary information or your life history, as only a strong shot of espresso will keep an employer from falling asleep. Keep it relevant and keep it professional.

5. Pasting a CV into the Email Body

This is probably a point of contention, but we believe that pasting the contents of your CV into an email body looks, well, ugly. The lack of formatting within email applications often means that the structure is fairly messy. Our advice would be to attach a CV.

6. Poor Spelling

Remember that your application is a reflection of your professionalism, attention to detail, and writing skills. Believe it or not many of the applications we

had for our writing roles were littered with spelling errors. We all make spelling mistakes (there's probably a few in this article), but when it comes to jobs, employers need only find the slightest indiscretion in order to quickly reduce their overcrowded inbox of applications.

Final thoughts: Employers will only afford you a short amount of time to make an impression and if you fail to follow the advice above then we can almost guarantee that your application will quickly be thrown on the scrapheap. Good luck!

Author: Tim Mukasa

5 University Activities that Can Boost Your CV

Throughout your time at university, you will be given the opportunity to get involved in a variety of tasks and extracurricular activities, such as, participating in your halls eating contest and the annual sleepathon. However, of the million and one things to do, a select few look really awesome on your CV and add immeasurably to your employability. But with so much to choose from, where does one start? Never fear, we'll be separating the wheat from the chaff by cherry picking 5 university activities that will not only look great on your CV, but that you will enjoy too.



Let's Play

Regardless of your ability, getting involved in a drama production says all the right things to potential employers i.e. that you're confident, cultured and able to work both as part of a team and as an individual. Plays aren't exclusive to the drama society, they'll be put on all year round by several different societies, but if your chosen society isn't putting one on, then take matters into your own hands and put a suggestion forward.

Make Mine a Sandwich

A placement is the perfect opportunity to gain some valuable [work experience](#), network and decide whether or not the field of work you're considering is still as glamorous as it first appeared. Many degrees offer an opportunity for undergraduates to spend 6-12 months away from study either in the industry or abroad. Taking a sandwich year shows your employer that you are familiar with the work place and not just another graduate.

I Think Therefore I Blog

The great thing about starting a blog is you can write about anything you please. Regular

blogging demonstrates good literary skills and shows that you are not a square. Blogging is another great opportunity to network and make a name for yourself. But be extremely cautious when posting, especially negative comments. The last thing you want to do is get blacklisted before you've even started working.

Get Down with the Kids

Most universities have partnerships and programmes running with local schools, affording you with the opportunity to go into schools and manage kids. The options available vary from university to university and school to school, but more likely than not if your degree is one that's taught at school level then there's probably a programme for you. Enrolling on such a programme demonstrates great leadership skills, patience and involvement beyond the classroom. What are you waiting for? Enrol! Besides, these kids are probably among the only people who still think you're cool.

Get Active!

Get involved, especially as a fresher. It's common knowledge

that many university students spend most of their time in bed; break the trend. Joining a sports team shows dedication & commitment, ability to work as a team and to take orders.

Would you employ a candidate that has shown no initiative outside of the classroom over a self-starter with a more interesting and varied CV? Neither would I. There are more and more students graduating from universities, and it's harder than ever to secure employment. Do something that will set you apart from the others and have fun whilst doing it.

Author: Tobiaking

4 Good Reasons to Volunteer

Have you considered boosting your CV, job prospects and self-worth through undertaking [voluntary work](#)? 'Volunteer work' can conjure images of soup kitchens run out of disused bus shelters by eccentric evangelists – which there's nothing wrong with, we might add – but there are a plethora of different enterprises that require keen volunteers.



Specialist charities such as [CSV](#) have been running inclusive community schemes which require volunteers for decades, including an excellent [gap year volunteering initiative](#). Meanwhile, many universities now encourage student participation in the community, such as the University of Manchester's [Community Sports Volunteer Scheme](#) which trains volunteers to do sports coaching and mentoring.

Opportunities also exist outside of formal schemes, however. When I was still in the sixth-form at school (a painfully long time ago), I returned to my old primary school to take games lessons one afternoon a week. Furthermore, I also took on occasional childcare volunteering work for a friend's mother's charity for several years whilst finishing school and studying at University. Essentially, people always need help; particularly if it is offered for free, so don't hesitate to approach old schools, your university halls committee or the local hospital radio station.

Now you know what's out there, let us convince you why it's a good idea. And remember kids, volunteer work is for life – or however long you can manage – not just for Christmas!

It's another line on the CV...

Cynical as it may sound, one very good reason for undertaking volunteer work is that it will fill out your CV. Didn't make the 2XI football team? Then volunteer to help run sessions for and coach local kids instead. The 21st century job market is a scary, fearsomely competitive place, so any activity that might set you apart from the next Accounting and Finance grad with a 2:1 from Nottingham is going to be useful interview fodder.

...and employers will like it

As a corollary to the previous point, prospective employers will be impressed with your drive and initiative. Final year careers seminars up and down the country will be plugging the importance of a 'USP' – Unique Selling Point – when applying for jobs after uni, and volunteer work could be your golden ticket. Everyone has to work for money at some stage, but volunteering not only shows employers a good team-playing community spirit, but also a conscientious, hard-working streak, and the ability to manage your time effectively whilst juggling a work and study schedule.

Builds skills

Throw yourself into voluntary work and you are likely to reap the rewards of your endeavours. My

enthusiasm for helping out with football practise at my primary school meant that after the first few weeks I was essentially left to take the sessions myself. This may not sound that tricky, but managing two dozen 10 year olds is probably a tougher task than heading up a board of directors; employers will note the management, teamwork and communication skills you invariably gain from voluntary work. In certain vocations, such as being the Treasurer for a local club or your halls, you may also gain formal training required for the post. Another big tick on the CV.

You will enjoy it!

I had so much fun looking after kids with disabilities for my friend's mother's charity that I continued to offer my help for as long as time and scheduling allowed – it became a hobby rather than a chore. It's no coincidence that many volunteers find themselves pledging more time than they originally intended. On a purely selfish basis, helping others in whatever capacity will make you feel good about yourself, building self-esteem and confidence. Finally, you will meet like-minded people and may make long-lasting friends, contributing as much to your personal as your professional development.

Author: James Lachno

How to Find a Job on Twitter Part 1

Finding a job on Twitter may sound like the 21st century equivalent of looking for labouring contracts in the local bookies – or, better still, the Nag’s Head – but thinking outside the usual job sites and vacancies columns can pay serious dividends. Nope, Twitter isn’t just a place for slightly unhinged celebrity stalkers to sate their appetite for Lily Allen’s meandering nonsense. Twitter can be a powerful tool for finding [student jobs and internships](#) and full-blown, real-life, money-for-milk-actually-going-into-my-bank-account [graduate jobs](#).



Essentially, the means can be split into indirect and direct. The former involves building the right ‘profile’ for prospective employers, cultivating relationships and generally being a genial tweeting presence – indeed, a bit like looking for labour in the Nag’s Head. The latter is much more like your traditional job-scouring, just given a 21st Century injection of techno-wizardry. This article looks at indirect ways you can enhance your job prospects through Twitter.

Presentation, presentation, presentation

First things first – know your enemy. Or prospective line of employment, rather. Despite having limited capacity to play around with Twitter profiles (unlike Facebook, or, worse, Myspace), there are still several personalized aspects to a Twitter account which can filter the professional and appropriate jobseeker from a student drinking monologue. Choose a picture wisely – show your face, as users like to engage with what they imagine is a human being, but avoid those Faliraki holiday photos and pouting poses. If you have a blog, link it, particularly if it is relevant (journalism, graphic design). Enter your location

properly – i.e. don’t write ‘in the sky with diamonds’. If you don’t want to commit too specifically, enter a region i.e. South-East, North-West et cetera. Under bio, you should be concise and relevant if you are on the job hunt. Indeed, writing “solicitor” or “web designer” is fine, even if you’re yet to gain employment in your chosen field. Finally, follow the same rules for your background wallpaper, which can be changed. Again, use your common sense. Plain colour, appropriate tiled landscape picture? Good. ‘Meat Is Murder’ banner? Bad. Employers will look, trust us.

Follow relevant people, and get chatty

This might sound like a no brainer, but an invaluable way of networking is adding people relevant to your chosen field. You may search for a certain company name, like Clifford Chance, FreelanceStudents or RBS, or individual people (Charlie Brooker) via the ‘Find People’ link. Another useful way of finding people or organisations is through lists, which may include scores of relevant Tweeters to follow. For example: enter ‘Guardian’ in the ‘Find People’ search box, click guardiannews, then go to ‘listed’ on the far right. Select a list that

makes reference to news or politics (e.g. @Benshere/news) and hey presto, you’ll be presented with more useful media contacts to add to your collection. Play around and see who you can find, and never be afraid to add people: it’s part of the game. Some might even follow you back – another useful way to start cultivating relationships. Then: engage. Start ‘tweeting’ to people using the @ function (@[user-name] will publically ‘mention’ that user, making them aware of your presence). Ask for advice, guidance and information. Mention that you have useful skills. Barack Obama might not write you back, but that PR or recruitment consultant probably will. Better still, even if these actions are unlikely to result in you being recruited out of the blue, when a relevant job does come up at a certain company, your professional networking through Twitter will make you stand out from the crowd. As always, be appropriate when tweeting to potential work contacts – avoid text speak, don’t swear et cetera. Simples!

Author: James Lachno

Read [How to Find a Job on Twitter Part 2!](#)

9 Tips for Job Interview Success

Interviews – loved by some and hated by many – are a necessary part of securing a job. The problem however, is that most cower at the thought of sitting down to talk about themselves with a stranger/could be boss. “What if they don’t like me? What if I make a fool of myself?” Stop it. Rather than panic and think up hypothetical, negative and awkward situations, take a step back.



Be cool

I’m not going to say imagine them naked because quite frankly that’s off putting and requires too much attention, rather stay relaxed, regulate your breathing and pay close attention to the words coming out of their mouths.

Flattery

The person/people conducting the interview are just that, people, and there’s nothing people love more than compliments. The trick is to make them genuine and thoughtful. For example compliment the passion portrayed in their voice or their choice of words. Avoid making comments referring to physical appearance!

Confidence

Confidence is key; you need to believe in yourself. Remember “If you weren’t cut out for the job, your CV or application would have been slung”. You got the interview because they think you’re capable of doing the job; they have faith in you; have some in yourself.

Punctuality

If you’re late to an interview you don’t want the job, simples. However this point is about more than just being on time. It’s

important that one is punctual with responses, when asked a question try and respond with good timing to show that you’re a quick thinker.

Appearance

First impressions count, as outlined in Office Etiquette: Do’s & Don’ts Part I, certain hairstyles and items of clothing are not appropriate for the office. For interviews it’s definitely best to play it safe, if you think it’s a step too far, then it probably is.

Honesty

Honesty by far is the best policy, besides if you lie it’s extremely likely to come back to haunt you, what’s more, lies create anxiety and discomfort which will make it harder for you to remain cool.

Take a drink

If you’re offered a tea or coffee, take one. It’s polite to do so. In addition when you’re asked a taxing question taking a sip of your beverage will buy you thinking time.

Questions

At the end of the interview, you’ll be asked if you have any questions. Make sure you have a relevant

one ready, asking questions shows that you’ve been listening and are truly interested.

Vocabulary & diction

The words that leave your mouth need to be real, avoid gobbledygook. A couple days before the interview make an effort to drop all colloquialisms from your vocab. everything you say, needs to be done so clearly. Fully pronounce your words; stay away from “yups”, “uh-huhs”, “nahs”, and “nopes”.

Author: Tobiaking

How to Pass Assessment Centre Group Exercises: 5 Golden Tips

That time of year arrives when many students and graduates are interviewing and a lucky few get invited back for an assessment centre in which they'll have to partake in the dreaded... group exercise. A personality-clashing mine field. But group exercises need not be scary and can, in fact, be enjoyable if approached correctly. As you know, we like to tell you how it is. So, below we've provided 5 golden tips for cruising through any group exercise.



We've assumed that you already understand the basics i.e. do your homework, be presentable, be on time, be confident and don't be as loud as a motorbike.

Golden Tip #1: Introduce yourself to everybody

At university I sailed through first round interviews, but found assessment centres tricky and in particular standing out in group exercises. Then, I was given some priceless advice by a university friend. He advised that as soon as you arrive and students are sitting nervously in deafening silence, to go round and introduce yourself and be careful to remember every name, maybe throw in a bit of conversation, and most importantly, ensuring that they remember your name. What this action very cleverly (and subtly) does is to start rounding the troops onto your side. The other students will start looking to you for help, agreement and guidance. So without much effort you've immediately made yourself stand out and it won't go unnoticed!

Golden Tip #2: Use the names of your peers

So, you've got everybody's name, great. But go a step further and actually call your peers by their names during an exercise. "Dan,

what do you think of this idea?" or "Helen that's a very good point!" Not only does this show that you're well mannered and courteous, but also that you have strong attention to detail. It will also continue the impact of the effect you've created in tip #1.

Golden Tip #3: Volunteer to take a role

You've watched the Apprentice right? Then you would have noticed how Lord Alan Sugar targets candidates that play no role in an exercise. "You did naff all!" is a usual retort from the mini-entrepreneur. When an exercise kicks in, quickly take a key role, for example write the notes on the whiteboard, which means you lead the discussion, or be the person doing the timing. WARNING: if you are going to do a role, then do it! Don't half lead the discussion or be too scared to shout, "We've got 2 minutes left guys!!" as this will work against you if the team fails due to the area you've taken responsibility for. But it's better to do something then naff all.

Golden Tip #4: Come up with ideas

Hopefully you've read our piece on [how to be an awesome intern!](#)? In that article we

discussed the importance of coming up with ideas. At one of my earliest experiences of assessment centres, in which I did not progress, I was given feedback that I didn't contribute ideas. I always considered myself to be a man of ideas, but I was frozen by the occasion. Don't let his happen to you. Companies look for students with fresh ideas to inject much needed fresh thinking and creativity.

Golden Tip #5: Never give negative feedback about your peers

"Honestly, I thought Gary (not actual name) was quite loud and talked over people!" This was my response at an assessment centre when I was asked about the other members of my team. I was young and naïve and it was one of my earliest experiences (pre-university). Yes, he was extremely annoying but slating others sends big time warning signals that you're likely to do the same if hired. Companies want team players; people who can work with difficult characters without showing frustration. So, if asked the same question, talk about the positive aspects of the team's performance and areas where as a team you could have done better.

Author: Tim Mukasa

How to be an Awesome Intern: 5 Tips

Many of you will be embarking upon your first steps in the professional world as a fresh faced intern. You've got a new shiny suit from Next, an unnecessary amount of pens in your bag, and you've been practicing office-speak. But, have you considered what it will take to ensure that the company come grovelling back to hire you after graduating? No, being nice, arriving on time and being organised are not good enough. These are the basics!



1. Focus on Delivery

This is the single most important word...Delivery. It's so important it's blessed with a capital D. What does it mean? Delivery means YOU were responsible for a result. YOU wrote those articles. YOU created that new logo for a small client. YOU organised the office Christmas party. Ultimately we're all judged on results. Some temporarily get away with diverting their inability to get results by blowing hot air and ass-kissing, but the question of Delivery will always remain lurking. It's a powerful word and takes you from being a simple observer to a real contributor. So tell me, what have you delivered?

2. Try it and see

Many people fear failure, so they don't think independently and seek constant guidance with every task. Failure is how we learn, no? You don't just get on a bike and ride straight away; you fall off and look goofy for a while. It's the same process at work. Don't pester your manager, instead, use common sense (don't just attack the task), google the info you need or email a friend... just try something. If it fails, you've learnt something in the process and next time, you'll know what it takes to peddle down the road unassisted. It's annoying giving somebody a task and they return 3 hours later

panic-stricken and having not produced anything. It's wasted time. This leads me onto my next point...

3. Ask a bucket load of questions

Newbies often get clogged up with worry. This worry tends to overpower their ability to take in information. We all recognise when this happens because you think "Sh*t, I totally missed that but I can't ask again". The possible consequences are you sit at your computer like a lemon, you produce total rubbish, or you return to your boss disgraced, hands out asking "please sir, more". Drill your boss/mentor with questions, because your ability to Deliver a satisfactory result is dependent upon you understanding the task.

4. Respect the master!

Some interns fly in with a chip on their shoulder and promptly declare their status: "I studied at so and so university", "I got a First", or "My dad is head of blah blah at Evil Corp". Seriously, this kind of attitude will win you no friends and will overshadow your talents. You're young and ignorant, and that's ok! These guys know what they're talking about. Be a sponge. Soak in information and

enjoy learning new things. Don't attempt to teach the teacher.

5. Come up with ideas

Don't you hate it when you meet people who can only identify problems? Real energy drainers. I offer examples: "Man, we missed the train, what are we going to do?", or "We're out of beer". "Yeah ok thanks, so what do you suggest?" WARNING: When approaching your boss/mentor with a problem ALWAYS offer some kind of a solution. I offer amended examples: "Man, we missed the train, but I called the local taxi firm and they offer a reasonable rate", and "We're out of beer. I suggest we contribute £10 each and do a trip to the supermarket". Now who's ya daddy?! Your boss will love you because you're relieving them of the burden of tackling another issue. Make this a habit.

If you're going to do any one of the above points, make it number one. However, to be truly awesome, and remember this article is about being awesome, you need to actively embody all five points and if you do, we guarantee that the job will be yours. Good luck!

Author: Tim Mukasa

The Importance of Being Yourself at Work

In my 10 years of working, something has perplexed me; on entering through the doors of the office, many of us lose a sense of who we are; we lose a sense of self. We take on a persona of how we think somebody should behave in a particular context and we start exhibiting behaviours that our friends and family would find strange e.g. we become cold, aggressive, subservient or fearful. This office persona is often a burden and can be detrimental to success in the workplace.



For those of you with [work experience](#) under your belt already, consider the awkwardness of bumping into your colleagues outside of work or the stale atmosphere of office get-togethers, as nobody dare show their true self. So, why do we do it? The answer is that we hide our true self in order to fit in and be accepted. Examples:

- The new highly educated mild-mannered graduate starting a banking role as a trader becomes aggressive and foul-mouthed
- The caring women who as an executive takes on a cold and steely approach to professional relationships in order to prove herself in a male dominated workplace
- The usually confident friend that finds they are unable to speak up in meetings or challenge management decisions, whereas in a social context they are opinionated and outspoken

The negative outcomes of 'fitting in'

The common thing many people do is copy others in order to be accepted. But in doing this we lose our uniqueness and we begin to suppress our personality. The potential negative results are commonly:

Emotional baggage – We are all acutely aware of when we're not being ourselves and this weighs heavy on our minds and often leading to feelings of distress and anxiety that we carry with us even outside of the office.

Loss of creativity – There are many challenging situations in the workplace that often call for creative thinking in order to be resolved. Creativity calls for originality, but if you're too busy copying others then inevitably you are merely likely to churn out stale uninspiring ideas that you believe others will see as best.

Ineffective decision making – Most of us recognise when something feels wrong e.g. a client might be very assertive and yet you feel that their demands are potentially disastrous and under normal circumstances you would have said something. This decision to suppress your true thoughts results in a poorly delivered project. However, had you been yourself and spoken up, it is likely that the end result would have turned out positively (I've been in such situations!).

Standing out

Considered this – in order to get promoted or progress you need to stand out, but if all you're doing is copying other's actions or suppressing your uniqueness, you simply won't stand out! I'm not advocating that you rock up into the office dressed and squealing like Lady Gaga – you have to apply common sense, as being a professional means that you do have to adhere to more formal standards than you would in your personal life. In order to stand out you simply need to avoid assuming other people's perspectives of you.

To conclude...

It is important that you attempt to learn this lesson as earlier as possible in your career, whether you're doing a menial student job, an internship at a top firm, or you're a new graduate on a training scheme. **The sooner you learn this and act upon it the more effective you'll be at work as your uniqueness, honesty, and creativity will quickly set you apart from the crowd.** Furthermore, it will have an all round positive impact on your life outside of the office. Being different is absolutely beautiful and it attracts people to you.

Author: Tim Mukasa

Contact

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About the Authors

Tim Mukasa is the main editor. He is a former student from UCL and has been through the graduate recruitment merry-go-round... twice. A self-confessed social media geek, a wannabe web designer, a useless cook, and he wants to be Barack Obama.

James Lachno is a recent graduate. He probably has more friends than you on Facebook and he's well-versed in the art of job-hunting. When he's not trawling the blogosphere to track down useful titbits of career advice and web technology epiphanies, he can generally be found extolling the virtues of The Smiths or Blur on some unsuspecting victim.

T Aking is currently a student at the University of Reading and is also a freelance writer. He sees his writing as more than just an occupation, but a way of life, a frame of mind. He's very chilled and almost to the point of going in reverse. His passions include travelling, writing and cooking.

Endnotes

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