

A photograph of a woman and a young woman looking at a document together. The woman on the left is smiling and looking down at the document. The young woman on the right is holding a pen and looking at the document. The background is a bright, indoor setting.

# Parent Motivators

**A parent's guide to helping  
graduates find work**

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# Foreword

As a parent, you're always looking out for your children. Although they have grown up, you still want to help them, especially at important stages in their life such as the transition from university to the world of work.

Traditionally, graduating has been a landmark moment in a young person's life. This year, due to the current economic climate, it's likely that your graduate son or daughter will need your support and advice more than ever.

However, you may be feeling that you're unable to help your son or daughter as much as you want to. Things have moved on since you were looking for your first job and you may not know what you can do to help them. It's important to realise that finding their ideal job will take time but while they search, there are often other opportunities and options available, which will help them increase their employability. This guide aims to explore all those options and give you the confidence to advise and help your son or daughter take this next big step in life.

As a Chartered Psychologist and Registered Guidance Practitioner, I've helped many graduates get clear on making a career choice and be successful in their job search. My background, alongside my experience as a graduate assessor for blue chip companies and the Civil Service Fast Stream, plus the practical advice I share in my book 'How to get a Job in a Recession', enables me to offer practical suggestions and action points.

Best wishes

*Denise Taylor*

**Denise Taylor**

**Chartered Psychologist, Registered Guidance Practitioner and Author**



This guide is written for parents of young people who have recently graduated (either this year or last year) or who are planning to get work after graduation in 2010. It's a time of uncertainty: graduates want to get a job and parents want to do their best to help.

I'll move on to how you can help motivate your graduate son/daughter on the next page, but first consider how they are feeling right now.

Young people may have been excited at the thought of getting a great graduate job, but after graduation, the reality hits. Being jobless can affect their self esteem. Their plans have been put on hold and they are likely to be earning a lower wage than they imagined. It's also likely they have had to move back home to live after spending three years being independent. Frustration is a typical response, but do remind them that even an entry level job provides some responsibility, you do get paid and it's great experience.

You or your son/daughter may even be feeling that perhaps university wasn't the right move for them, but remember that employers will always value graduate talent and a degree is a good, long-term investment for their future. It leads to an increase of independent thought, ability to problem solve and many transferable skills, plus long term friendships and contacts. In the short term these may not be used in a 'graduate job' but the knowledge and skills gained can be helpful in many different situations.

Following the last recession, most graduates did find a suitable career and went on to progress, it just didn't happen immediately. Also, over a working lifetime, graduates earn £100,000 more, net of tax, than someone who left school with two A-levels. Furthermore, graduates are less likely to be made redundant during a recession.

# How you & your graduate son/daughter are feeling

# How to Motivate, Not Alienate

## Yes to...

- ✓ Allow them **some** time to relax once they graduate but don't let a few weeks turn into months. Encourage them to set goals and monitor progress.
- ✓ Provide emotional support – it's quite a jolt from university life, particularly if they haven't had a part time job to bridge the gap to becoming a full time worker.
- ✓ Remind them that the recession will end and that graduates will be needed when companies re-energise for new business. In a few years the majority of graduates will be doing as well as they always have.
- ✓ Identify who you know that might be able to help. If they want to work in architecture, travel, etc. is there a friend of a friend who may be able to help set up some work experience or job shadowing?
- ✓ Make sure they are aware of all of the resources available to them. For example, internships are a great way to get that first step on the career ladder and the Government's new Graduate Talent Pool website is designed to match graduates to employers.  
[www.direct.gov.uk/graduatetalentpool](http://www.direct.gov.uk/graduatetalentpool)
- ✓ Alternatively if they are a self-starter and full of ideas, then they should look into Flying Start, a business mentoring initiative from the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship. With the right support, they could turn their idea into a successful business.
- ✓ Look out for their mental health, and if there are changes to eating and sleeping patterns or a loss of energy, encourage them to see a doctor.
- ✓ Arrange a regular update of progress to avoid nagging. This could be weekly or daily and if agreed in advance can help your son/daughter monitor progress and keep you informed, without adding any more pressure on them.
- ✓ Remind them of the University Careers Service which can help with careers advice, other opportunities and practical help with job search.



# How to Motivate, Not Alienate

## No to...



- ✘ Nagging – it might work in some circumstances, but most young people want to get a job and know there is a lot of competition. The nagging can make young people feel more stressed and makes the failure to get a job worse.
- ✘ Taking over - it's all very well to be encouraging but don't phone up companies on their behalf; your son/daughter has got to want to apply for a job. You can't do it for them.
- ✘ Being too supportive - sometimes, it really is necessary to show tough love. If you are making life too comfortable at home, why would they get a job? If you are providing free board and lodgings, a well stocked fridge, washing and ironing done, plus an allowance, there's not much drive there. So cut back to help increase their motivation.
- ✘ Agreeing to fund or support them in taking out a loan for expensive training without making sure that both you and your son/daughter have done your research. What other options are available?
- ✘ Ruling out unpaid internships, work experience and voluntary work. All of these options can provide valuable experience, contacts and in many cases can even lead to paid employment so encourage your son/daughter to widen the net in their search. However, make sure they have clear aims in terms of what they want to achieve. Be watchful for employers that might take advantage of free labour.
- ✘ Don't dismiss their ideas but also encourage them to be realistic. Yes, some people will make it as actors and film script writers but many just waste away the years. People often pursue careers such as this alongside a job, so encourage them to get a job to increase their independence and so they can support themselves on their dream path.

# Understanding the different options

This section explains the different types of experiences and opportunities open to your son or daughter. The media talks up the difficulty of getting a job, but look through most newspapers and on job sites and you'll see that there are plenty of jobs and other opportunities out there. Graduates should still look for their ideal job, but must also be willing to cast their net more widely.

Getting their ideal job after graduation may take some time, so they need to use their

time wisely. Alongside applying for jobs there are other options, some which can be done on a temporary basis. Below is a useful cut out and keep section for your son/daughter so they can circle the options that might be of interest to them.

Links are included on page 16 for further help and support from a range of sources including their University Careers Service. As a graduate, they should contact the university in the first instance.

## Paid options

### Interested/Not interested

Their ideal job	✓	✗
Paid internships	✓	✗
Entry level job	✓	✗
Self employment	✓	✗

## Unpaid Options – to increase employability

### Interested/Not interested

Unpaid internships	✓	✗
Work experience	✓	✗
Voluntary work	✓	✗
Travel, including TEFL	✓	✗
Post graduate study	✓	✗
Short courses and self directed Learning	✓	✗



## **Their ideal job**

There are still good jobs out there, but your son/daughter needs to be clear on what they want and why they have got what it takes. In particular, jobs are still available in retail, engineering and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG). Companies know that employing graduates is a great investment.

Graduates should look online but also use other methods such as contacting companies directly, networking by letting other people know what they are looking for and using fact finding interviews, internships and work experience to build contacts within a company, and enhance their applications.

They must also make sure that they research both the job and the company and ensure they have created the most effective application they can. That's when some of the other options below can help.

When they apply for jobs they will find that many companies require extensive detail which they will need to input again and again.

# **Paid Options**

### **Top Tip!**

Advise them to create a document with all their information in so they can begin to cut and paste from one main document to save time and mistakes.

### **Top Tip!**

All applications should be followed up with a phone call. Your son/daughter needs to make sure that they sound and look enthusiastic on every occasion they talk/ meet with a potential employer.



## Paid internships

An internship is a way of gaining relevant experience, often through undertaking a specific project or broader experience. It can be either paid or unpaid and can often lead to a job offer. Companies such as Microsoft, Google and John Lewis provide opportunities for graduates. The Government is highlighting the internships available on the new Graduate Talent Pool website which offers a mix of paid and unpaid internships. Graduates can find out more about how to apply at [www.direct.gov.uk/graduatetalentpool](http://www.direct.gov.uk/graduatetalentpool).

## Entry level job

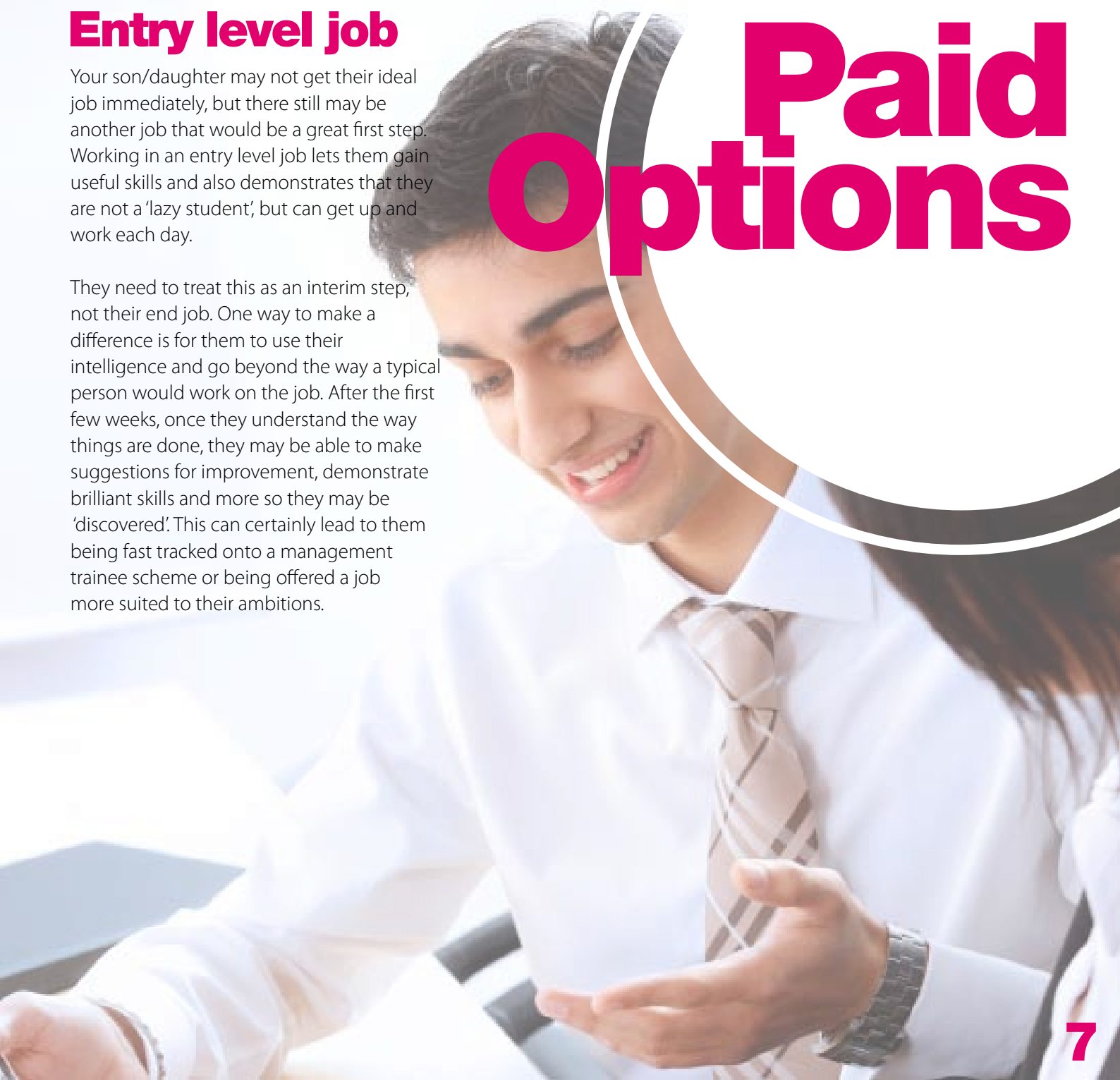
Your son/daughter may not get their ideal job immediately, but there still may be another job that would be a great first step. Working in an entry level job lets them gain useful skills and also demonstrates that they are not a 'lazy student', but can get up and work each day.

They need to treat this as an interim step, not their end job. One way to make a difference is for them to use their intelligence and go beyond the way a typical person would work on the job. After the first few weeks, once they understand the way things are done, they may be able to make suggestions for improvement, demonstrate brilliant skills and more so they may be 'discovered'. This can certainly lead to them being fast tracked onto a management trainee scheme or being offered a job more suited to their ambitions.

## Self employment

If your son/daughter has a great idea, they could consider creating their own job. Lots of companies were created in a recession including MTV and Wikipedia. Working for yourself is not an easy option but for some people it's worth exploring. Could they use some of the skills they have? They can find out more about turning their business idea into a reality and the support available at [www.flyingstartonline.com/makeithappen](http://www.flyingstartonline.com/makeithappen).

# Paid Options



There are lots of ways of learning new skills, developing existing skills and enhancing their CV through unpaid options.

## Unpaid internships

Even unpaid internships can be extremely valuable. As with paid internships, they can lead to great experience to enhance your son/daughter's CV and they give graduates the chance to showcase their skills. They can also help them decide if they really do want to work in their chosen field. Deciding it is the wrong career path is equally valuable.

## Work experience

Similar to internships, this is a less formal approach and usually lasts for just a week or two. Think about the work experience week they did when they were at school. This is similar but this time they set it up themselves. Graduates need to be wise and treat it like an internship, being clear on what they want to find out, and also what they can offer.



# Unpaid Options – to increase employability





# Unpaid Options – to increase employability

## Voluntary work

Your son/daughter can develop transferable skills through voluntary work. There are hundreds of opportunities so they can choose something that really interests them and it might help them to get a job. For example, volunteering in a youth club is useful if they want to go into social work, and producing an organisation's newsletter helps if they want to get into communications. It is good for their CV and good for the people they help too! See page 12 for more information about volunteering.

## Travel, including TEFL

Travel abroad can be expensive, but investing in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) qualifications means graduates can do paid work while overseas. So the investment of up to £1,000 will be worthwhile. Skills they can learn include communication, working with a range of people, and improving their own knowledge of the English language.

## Post graduate study

If your son/daughter can't get work, they may think that a post graduate qualification will boost their chances of getting into their ideal career, but it all depends on which career. It may be that work experience (paid or unpaid) is a better option. You also have to weigh up the costs involved (time and money) against the possible benefits. However, if your graduate has a plan in which post graduate study is a vital element, then it can be extremely worthwhile.


## Short courses and self directed learning

Whilst your graduate is seeking work, they can undertake other activities to improve their employability and learn new skills, such as improving their IT skills and learning more about their subject of interest.

# Case study

Charlotte Andrews, 22, from Surrey, graduated last summer from Chichester University with a degree in Media Studies. After graduating, Charlotte tried to land her dream job working for a PR agency, but found it harder than she thought and wasn't having much luck getting requests for interviews.

Charlotte's father happened to mention Charlotte's situation to a fellow colleague who noted that his wife was currently working in PR and suggested Charlotte should send her CV to her. As a result, Charlotte had a successful interview and managed to get a two week work experience placement which led onto a three month graduate placement, and subsequently a full time career in PR. One year on and she hasn't looked back.



Denise says: 'It's great that Charlotte's parents were able to find a contact through their extended network that could help Charlotte in her search for her dream job. Of course actually getting the placement came down to Charlotte's interview skills and personality, but she needed the contact to find a way in so she could be 'discovered'. Networking is all about making connections with people, and making sure they know what you're looking for.'

*Action point:* You can help your son/daughter in this by talking to your friends and colleagues and keeping them up to date about your child's search for work.



## **Q. How is networking a valuable tool throughout your career?**

**A.** Did you know that 70-80% of job vacancies are filled by recommendation or referral? So the more people you know, the more likely it is you will meet someone with the right connections to the job you want.

It is important to build your network, with a wide range of people with diverse backgrounds who can spread the net. Get in touch with your family and friends via social networking sites such as Facebook or the more business focused LinkedIn, as a way to build up your personal networks and make sure everyone knows what it is that you're looking for.

Networking is all about relationship building. For example, if you go to a networking event and meet someone there who is your dream employer – get chatting to them and make a positive impression. There is no harm in saying to them at the time, 'I would really be interested in working for your company, would it be possible to come and see you to get some advice?'

Once someone's helped you with a connection, whether it be initial contact on your behalf or the person they've connected you to, always keep those people fully abreast of how you're doing and of what your progress has been. This job may be your first, but it almost certainly won't be your last. Stay in touch with the people you meet there, and stay in touch with the people who help you along the way. Some of them will be incredibly valuable to you as mentors.



**Andy Lopata, author  
and business  
networking strategist**

# **Ask the experts**

# Ask the experts



**Fiona Jamieson,  
YouthNet.org &  
trustee of  
Volunteering England**

**Q. How can volunteering give valuable skills and impress potential employers?**

**A.** Volunteering is valuable as a way to enrich both your personal and professional lives. It gives you the opportunity to get experience on your CV, meet new people and learn new skills. It also gives you the chance to have experiences you wouldn't normally be exposed to in working life. This can all really change the way you view the world, your ambitions and your view about where you want to be in ten or twenty years.

Types of volunteering opportunities vary widely from working in prisons with young offenders to supporting disabled children and just about anything else you can think of. You can spend as much or as little time volunteering, from a few hours at the weekend to a whole gap year. There is something available for everyone.

Aside from experience, one of the great things about volunteering is giving your CV that extra edge to stand out against the rest. Another massive benefit of volunteering is the amazing people you get to meet.

When I graduated I got a job as a Project Manager for a charity through someone I met during my volunteering. If she hadn't known about me and the fact that I was graduating, I certainly wouldn't have got that job when I finished university, so volunteering can open huge numbers of doors for you.



A hand holding a pair of scissors cutting a red ribbon. The hand is on the left side of the page, and the scissors are positioned vertically, with the blades pointing upwards. The red ribbon is being cut, and a vertical dashed line is visible on the left side of the page, indicating a pull-out section.

# Next Steps

## The action steps to getting a job!

This is a pull-out section with action points for your son or daughter to use as a guide.

### **Be organised**

Have a means of keeping track of your applications and personal details. Put your certificates in a folder, set up online systems to keep track of what you say in applications so you can use the information again, thus saving you time.

### **Be clear what you want**

Yes you want a job, but it's good to have a maximum of three choices, which means you can focus research into specific areas. You can't explore and research every possible option.

One of the most important things you can do is to be clear about what it is that you want to do – if not, then you are spreading your energy too far and wide.

### **Know what you can offer**

You need to be clear about your strengths. What are your skills, how can any work experience or activity at university aid particular jobs? What can you do which will help set you apart. Why not do a career SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis?

### **Put in the hours**

Finding a job can be a full time job, you need to spend at least four hours a day on effective job searching, not aimless searching on the net.

### **Create and review your CV**

Is it as good as possible? Get advice on how to improve. You may want to adapt it slightly for different potential jobs. Ask other people to proof read it for you to make sure there are no mistakes or missing information.

### **Create a personal commercial**

So that when asked 'what are you looking for?' you aren't vague but can clearly state it. You should be able to respond as quickly and clearly as you would if asked for your address.



## Network

Often we find out about a job through people we know or through a friend of a friend. It's not just meeting people face to face but also using Facebook, Twitter, online forums and more.

## Undertake fact finding interviews

Find out more about the job you want, it will enhance your application – you need to stand out from others and this will help.

## Use more than one way to get a job

Not just by applying for jobs online (such as [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)) and jobs in newspapers, but also by visiting Jobcentre Plus and recruitment agencies. Also look on company websites, apply to companies directly and use the other methods discussed in this booklet – networking, voluntary work, internships, job shadowing and advertising your services on [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com) and [www.gumtree.com](http://www.gumtree.com), etc.

## Produce a great covering letter

This must be targeted at the job. Make it clear how you match up to the key requirements of the job and why you want the job.

## Check your online profile

You may be 'Googled', so what will be found? Get rid of compromising photos and start commenting on forums related to areas of interest. Get an online CV and a profile on LinkedIn.

## Use the hidden job market

Which means being proactive and applying to companies directly. This is not an easy option: you may need to send out 100 highly targeted letters to get a couple of positive responses - and you need to follow up on every letter - but this approach can lead to a job offer.

## Prepare for interviews

Both phone interviews and in person. You may get a screening phone interview or an in-depth interview, make sure you are effective – read books and think about getting an interview coaching session – see resources under career guidance for suggestions. This must include preparing questions to ask.





## Psychometric testing

Many companies use these as part of selection, often as the initial sift, so read books and practice to increase familiarity and confidence.

## Assessment centre preparation

You could be asked to undertake a group discussion, presentation, case study analysis, role play or more, so find out more and seek advice so you can do your best.

## Follow up

Don't just wait to hear whether you have the job or not. Follow up with a letter to demonstrate enthusiasm and clarify any answers to questions which you feel could have gone better.

## Staying motivated

It can take time to get a job, so use your time wisely by doing some of the other activity in this book such as voluntary work and part time study.

## Plan for success

You will get a job offer. What sort of person do you want to be at work? It's a new start so think about what you need to do to make sure you are seen as a brilliant employee and to reinforce their positive decision in giving you the job. Think about being proactive, arriving on time and focusing on work whilst at work.

## Celebrate success

Visualise yourself succeeding, what will you do to celebrate success?

### **Career Guidance**

Your university careers service  
[www.direct.gov.uk/graduates](http://www.direct.gov.uk/graduates)  
[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)  
[www.amazingpeople.co.uk](http://www.amazingpeople.co.uk)

### **Their ideal job**

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)  
[www.graduate-jobs.com](http://www.graduate-jobs.com)  
[www.wikijob.co.uk](http://www.wikijob.co.uk)  
[www.milkround.com](http://www.milkround.com)

### **Internships and work experience**

[www.direct.gov.uk/graduates](http://www.direct.gov.uk/graduates)  
[www.direct.gov.uk/graduatetalentpool](http://www.direct.gov.uk/graduatetalentpool)

### **Entry level job**

[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)  
[www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk)  
[www.jobsite.co.uk](http://www.jobsite.co.uk)  
[www.fish4.co.uk/jobs](http://www.fish4.co.uk/jobs)  
[www.hcareers.co.uk](http://www.hcareers.co.uk) for hospitality jobs  
[www.inretail.co.uk](http://www.inretail.co.uk) for retail work  
Plus local recruitment agencies

### **Self employment**

[www.flyingstartonline.com/makeithappen](http://www.flyingstartonline.com/makeithappen)  
National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship  
[www.ncge.com](http://www.ncge.com)  
[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)  
[www.shell-livewire.org](http://www.shell-livewire.org)  
Students in free enterprise [www.sife.org](http://www.sife.org)  
[www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com) –for freelance work  
[www.gumtree.com](http://www.gumtree.com)

### **Voluntary work**

YouthNet - [www.youthnet.org](http://www.youthnet.org)  
VSO - [www.vso.org.uk](http://www.vso.org.uk)  
Do-it - [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)  
Year Out Group - [www.yearoutgroup.org](http://www.yearoutgroup.org)  
British Council – Connect Youth  
[www.britishcouncil.org/connectyouth](http://www.britishcouncil.org/connectyouth)

### **Travel, including TEFL**

CELTA qualification  
Trinity CertESOL  
[www.tefl.com](http://www.tefl.com)

### **Post graduate study**

[www.prospects.ac.uk/pgdbase](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/pgdbase)  
National Post Graduate Database [www.ukpass.ac.uk](http://www.ukpass.ac.uk)

### **Short courses and self directed learning**

Open University – Open Learn - [www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php](http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php)

# Further reading and useful links for your graduate