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Ten tips to help students become more employable

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One of the [main reasons](#) given by students for going to university is to get a good job afterwards, but with around 500,000 people graduating each year the job market is extremely competitive. A university course will help you develop some of the skills that employers are looking for, but you need more than a degree certificate to get a graduate-level job.

Companies want to see other achievements as well as qualifications, and they also want to make sure you have the [right employability skills](#) to be able to do the job – such as being a good communicator, an ability to work in a team and being able to solve problems. A positive attitude, enthusiasm and adaptability are also seen as important as you will have a lot to learn when you start your first graduate job.

Here are ten tips to help make yourself more employable and stand out from the crowd.

1. Get involved in university life

Whether you enjoy sport, culture, dance or just going out and having fun, your university will have a club or society just for you. Besides meeting new people you can learn new skills, particularly if you are involved in organising events or take on a leadership role in the society.

2. Ask careers for professional advice

Many people leave visiting the careers service until they have nearly finished their course but it is better if you can work with it from your first year. It can help you choose a suitable career and advise what employers are looking for in a new recruit. Also make sure you get advice on your CV and attend a session to practice your interview or assessment techniques. First impressions are important and a simple spelling mistake or poor presentation [can mean](#) your CV ends up in the reject pile.

3. Keep a record

It is easy to forget all that you have learnt while you are at university. You will have a record of your grades but you also need to be able to tell employers the skills you have developed and how you use them. Employers like practical examples so it is useful to keep a record of your personal development highlighting activities you have been involved in and what you have gained from them.



Get involved. Soundsnaps/www.shutterstock.com

4. Work hard and get good grades

While high grades aren't everything many organisations, [such as Unilever](#), still ask for a 2.1 degree as a minimum. Also check out if the company asks for specific UCAS points as it will immediately reject you if you fall below its minimum entry criteria.

5. Volunteering

Companies like employing people who have given their time for free as it shows you are prepared to help others to try to make a difference. You can volunteer through the university or [contact local organisations](#). If you don't have time to volunteer every week you may be able to help out on a special project such as renovating a community centre or running a fundraising event.

6. Work experience

Many students work part-time but gaining work experience as part of your degree really improves your employment opportunities. Whether it is a short internship or a 12-month sandwich placement you will be gaining hands-on, practical experience. It can lead to jobs too: [a third of students](#) employed by the top 100 graduate recruiters have already worked for the organisation.

7. Networking

It's not what you know it's who you know. Attend careers fairs and company presentations to speak to the people involved in recruiting graduates. Also create a professional social media profile. [LinkedIn](#) is the largest network though there may be others specific to the industry you want to enter, for example the [Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development](#) if you want to work in HR.

8. Understand the graduate job market

Each organisation has its own approach to recruitment so research the company and tailor your application to it. Top graduate recruiters such as PwC, Unilever and DHL have early closing dates before Christmas while smaller companies looking for individual graduates will want you to start work almost immediately after you finish your degree in the summer. Timing your applications and fitting them around your exams/ coursework is therefore important.

9. Be flexible and mobile

If you are prepared to move you will increase the number of jobs that you can apply for. Many of the large graduate schemes will move you around the organisation during training so being mobile is essential for them.

10. Be confident

If you get through to the later stages of interviews and assessment centres remember you have earned the right to be there. The company has seen potential in you and wants to find out more. If you don't get offered the job, ask for feedback on your performance, learn from it and move on. There is a job out there for everyone you just need to be persistent to find the right one for you.