

## Step 5: Get Hired: Be the Grad Every Employer Wants!

The overall job market for new grads and others seeking employment continues to gain momentum after the pandemic, so that's the good news. The bad news is that many job seekers fail to have the skills employers are looking for today, or neglect to implement basic strategies that will make them more competitive. These are oversights could prevent them from getting coveted positions. Using the simple steps covered here throughout your academic career won't take a lot of time, but the results could pay off with an offer for your dream job upon graduation.

### 1. Prepare

Here are some basic tasks that will increase your chances of becoming a top candidate when entering the job market.

- **Start now** — And that means *now*, whether you're in high school, college, or the workforce. Don't wait until graduation to begin taking these simple preparatory steps toward your career.
- **Maximize your credentials** — Prepare for and build the skills in fields companies are looking for. Are you working toward a degree in one of these fields? How much is the [degree or position worth](#)? Would a few more semester hours in a popular area of specialization boost your earnings potential...and the chances of becoming more marketable?
- **Become an intern** — This is a great way to build skills, add real-world experience to a résumé, and begin to establish contacts in your chosen field. Sites like [WayUp](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Internships.com](#), [Glassdoor](#), and the school's job board can help students find the right intern position.
- **Networking** — Ask friends, family, teachers, professors, career counselors, etc., who to talk to about a job in the field of your choice. It's a great way to begin learning more about the field and the true job opportunities in the market.
- **Social media** — Connecting through business sites like LinkedIn help identify new trends, key people in specific industries, potential employers, and connections that could remain throughout your career.



### 2. Research

One of the biggest reasons 41% of recent grads now work in jobs that don't require a college degree is a lack of

research on the latest job market trends, and as noted above, this should begin as soon as possible and continue throughout your academic life, especially as jobs continue to evolve as employers adjust their requirements. It won't take long, but can boost your potential for a great job offer once you graduate.

- **Hot careers** — These lists identify high-demand jobs: [Business Insider](#), [U.S. News 100 Best Jobs](#), and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#). Also, search the [BLS Data Finder](#) to determine the growth of jobs in a chosen field over the past few years. Reviewing these lists can be extremely helpful for those who still have time to supplement their skills and training in key disciplines.
- **Who's hiring?** — Look at sites like [Indeed](#), [Monster](#), or [Flex jobs for those who want to work from home](#). Also look for the best companies to work for at these sites: [Fortune 100](#), and [Best Tech Companies](#).
- **What skills do employers want?** — *Students* often feel prepared for the job market, yet *employers* often look for skills grads haven't developed. As noted in the hot career lists, employers are looking for talent in the *STEM* fields, as well as in business, energy, accounting, financial advisory, analytics, and healthcare support services. Hiring managers also want — but frequently fail to see — abilities in teamwork, critical global thinking, leadership, and other **soft skills**.



 **Caution:** It may be efficient and even cool to use texting shorthand in communications during college, but remember that most employers seek those with excellent written and verbal communication skills, as well as basic punctuation, spelling, and core language abilities. If this is an area that needs improvement, check out these [Free Online Courses to Improve Your Writing Skills](#) to increase your chances of being a standout candidate.

- **Where are the jobs?** — It's also important to begin searching specific geographic areas that are hiring. Many remote areas around the country offer excellent compensation, unique benefits, and even student loan assistance as a way to motivate applicants to relocate to their areas.

[CoolWorks.com](#) promises “jobs in great places” like Alaska, Big Sur, or the Rocky Mountains. There are also sites for those



who seek remote (work from home) jobs, such as [We Work Remotely](#), [SkipTheDrive](#), and [PowerToFly](#), a site specifically for women with skills in technology.

 **Caution:** Beware of common “work-at-home” scams. If the job seems too good to be true, it probably is. For the top scams and tips on spotting them, see [Scambusters](#), [Monster](#), [FTC.gov](#), and the [FBI](#).

- **What’s the environment?** – Sites like [TheMuse/Companies](#) and [Glassdoor/Reviews](#) make it easier than ever to research a company’s internal culture. This can also help determine the best questions to ask and the most appropriate way to interact with staff during the interviewing process. It’s also a good way to identify whether their environment is right for you? If it’s a relaxed, carefree environment, but you prefer a more structured setting, you might be wasting everyone’s time by interviewing there.
- **Test your interests versus aptitudes** – Learning more about your skill set, interests, and aptitudes can ensure you’re headed in the right direction. Those who go into science or math because they may be high-paying fields could be setting themselves up for failure if their skills are best utilized in sales, writing, or business. Taking an aptitude test may help. Talk to a trained College Coach or Career Counselor for the best options. Also see [Your Free Career Test](#).

### 3. Protect Your Credit & Your Health

- **Credit matters** – Due to the high cost of financial stress, many companies now perform credit checks on all new hires. Those who go into a job interview with a poor credit score could fail to receive an offer. To help understand how credit could affect your life, see [6 Credit Myths That Cost Consumers Thousands](#) [PDF].



- **Your fitness** – With healthcare costs rising dramatically, many employers consider obvious health issues when selecting a candidate. Employee fitness not only applies to an individual’s physical health, but also their financial wellness. Employees who are struggling to pay bills, worry about their student loans, or are distracted due to money problems can be a significant drain on productivity, cause accidents, or fail to reach corporate objectives ... all of which ultimately affect bottom-line profitability.

#### 4. Don't Make These Mistakes

- **Falling into social media traps** – Yes, it may be fun to post outlandish activities with friends, use vulgar language, or express personal views on everything from gender issues to politics, college is a good time to clean up your act if you want a job upon graduation. Consider whether the posts or pics reflect the type of candidate employers are looking for today.
- **Failing to learn about the company** – Take a little – or a lot of – time to learn about the company and read available press releases about them. Use words in the cover letter (or résumé) that reflect the company's values, mission, and goals. This will also trigger questions to ask throughout the interviewing process. Employers are not impressed with candidates who don't take the time to complete this simple step, so *never* go into an interview without looking at their website! One Human Engagement Manager recently stated her first question to potential candidates is whether they've reviewed the website. She crosses anyone who hasn't taken this step before sending their résumé off the list of viable recruits.
- **Providing a résumé that lacks customization** – Winning applicants often adjust their résumé – or at least their cover letter – to reflect the advertised job description. This will impress the hiring manager (since so few applicants do it), and can significantly increase an individual's chances of at least getting to the second step of the selection process. Also, keep in mind these [words](#) to delete from your résumé, and common [mistakes](#) that will cost you a job offer.
- **Lying to a potential employer** – This is an amazing but true [story](#) of how one applicant got busted and lost a job opportunity through dishonesty. A "professional" candidate canceled a job interview in Atlanta because he and his wife were in a bad car accident, and their child had to go to the hospital. He even sent a picture of his wrecked car. However, the astute hiring manager Googled the image and discovered the story was all a lie, since the original accident (and related image) happened in India. Needless to say, he lost all chances of being hired by this company.
- **Sabotaging your own success** – Negative mind-speak ("I'll never get this job"), inflexibility, being too fidgety, coming across



with a dour disposition (who wants to work with a grumpy person?), and failing to establish eye contact can all negatively impact an employer's desire to offer a second interview.

- **Projecting the wrong attitude** – While there are definitely applicants today who are in high demand for key positions, most new grads must meet the expectations of employers. Companies want employees who are eager to work for them, so forget the arrogant, entitled, or *take-me-as-I-am* attitudes. This is the real world, and no matter what achievements you had throughout your academic career, show them what *you* can do for the company, not what the *company* needs to do if they want to hire you. See more interviewing ideas at [10 Tips to Crush Your Interview](#) (ignore the 'guy' references; these are great tips for everyone). Mike Rowe (host of Dirty Jobs) also offers some valuable [suggestions](#).

## 5. Wow the Prospective Employer

Too many applicants believe blasting their résumé to every employer with a job opening is going to be the winning strategy for obtaining their next job, regardless of whether their skills and experience match the job qualifications. For example, an employer recently shared with us they had a sales position open, yet received résumés for applicants who were looking for accounting, healthcare, and even construction positions. This is not only a lazy approach, but could blacklist candidates from a future position that might actually be a good fit. Though it may be too much detail for many job openings, [Nina4Airbnb](#) is an example of one woman's personal marketing approach for a job at a specific company. Let it inspire you to go above and beyond the typical applicant when applying for your dream job.

The jobs are there, but employers are looking for the right candidates. Increase your chances of being their next choice by taking these simple steps.

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## Bonus: Scams & Traps to Avoid

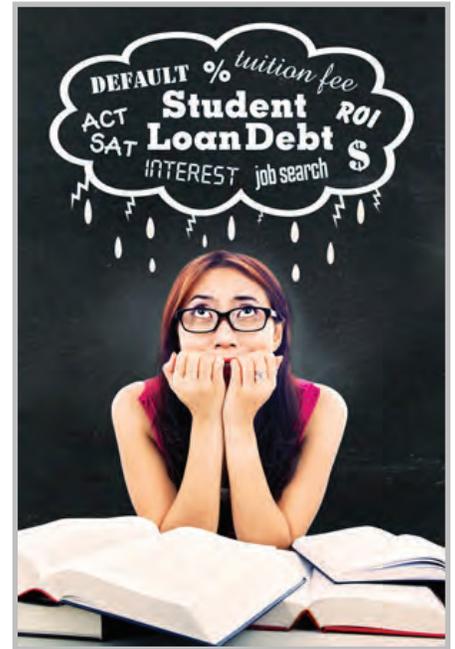
43 Million Americans now owe a collective \$1.6 trillion in student loans. Part of the problem is that predators are targeting parents and students with misleading information, false promises, and hidden scams guaranteed to steal hundreds – or even thousands – from vulnerable, trusting victims. Becoming aware of these ploys will help you identify and avoid them. Here are just a few of the latest traps to avoid:

- **The fee factor** – If there's a large up-front fee to apply for college funding, there's a good chance it's a scam. Go to [StudentAid.gov-Scams](#) for free assistance, advice, and traps to avoid.



 **Caution:** Legitimate sites will typically end in .gov. Question site financial aid site ending in .com if they claim to be “government-approved” or a “special government program.” There are no such government-sanctioned sites. Go to [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov) to apply for free college funding.

- **Student ID debit cards** – Student ID debit/credit cards loaded with college funding make it easy to pay for tuition, room and board, books, school supplies, and other necessary school items. However, too often students use this loan money for clothes, gas, food, media equipment, entertainment, a night out, or even spring break. When the money runs out, students borrow more and end up with debt that may be nearly impossible to repay. Caution: Read the fine print. Many of these cards have high activation and usage fees, overdraft penalties, and interest rates.



- **Social media scams** – With students’ dependence on communication through social media, scam artists are targeting the unsuspecting. They’ll set up fake college Web or Facebook pages to harvest your e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and even bank information. At best, you’ll receive a lot of spam...at worst, you’ll be a victim of identity theft.

For additional ID theft protection, password protect your smartphones, tablets, and computers ... and never give bank, credit card, or Social Security numbers to anyone other than your school, bank, and insurance company!

- **Predatory lending** – Beware of schools that lure students in with promises of high financial aid levels or impressive employment guarantees, while encouraging them to borrow thousands of dollars - often from a company the school owns. It’s still a common trap for unsuspecting students. Go back to the steps covered in Step #2 for the best college selection strategies.
- **Fake job scams** – Watch for fake job postings on Craigslist, CareerBuilder, or LinkedIn where an applicant is required to provide a Social Security number, bank information, etc., for an employment background check. Victims have paid hundreds or even thousands in up-front fees to predators who fail to provide legitimate jobs or income.
- **Lack of accreditation** – If your degree, diploma, or certificate comes from a school without accreditation, it could hurt your chances for government financial aid, as well as future employment.

While there may be legitimate reasons a college or university has decided to forego accreditation, be very skeptical of those who say it isn't important. Check the [Department of Education](#) to verify accreditation.

- **Diploma mills** – They often have names that sound professional, but they leave students with thousands in student loan debt and degrees that have no value. Be skeptical, and look for these warning signs:
  - They offer credit for work experience without asking too many questions about that experience.
  - The cost of the degree is paid up front, not per semester hour.
  - They don't ask for high school or previous college transcripts, which every legitimate college will require.
  - They fail to publish or disclose the names or expertise of their "professors."



Remember, most diploma mills offer degrees that typically take years to complete at a legitimate institution, so if it sounds too easy, it's probably a scam.

- **Scholarships** – The FTC warns students and parents to beware of unscrupulous companies who guarantee scholarships, grants, or fantastic financial aid packages...for a fee. Many use high-pressure sales pitches at seminars and require payment immediately to prevent losing the "opportunity." This industry is plagued with corrupt companies targeting unwary prey, so watch for these deceptive promises:
  - We have access to scholarships no one else knows about.
  - Results are guaranteed...or your money back.
  - Act now; these scholarships won't last long.
- **Housing scams** – Avoid signing a lease or sending a deposit until you or someone you know actually sees the apartment, location, and condition. Phony landlords place ads for housing that doesn't exist or that they don't actually own.

Avoiding these traps and scams will stretch your college dollars further, and keep you from becoming another victim.

## Conclusion

Now it's time to complete Step 5 of your personal *College Action Plan*. You'll find it on your Dashboard. Will it answer all your questions? Probably not. But it's a simple way to learn more about the complex College Planning field. You may even learn strategies that may have you reviewing and revising previous decisions. Better to do it now ... before enrolling in a specific college.

Completing your *College Action Plan* will help save you thousands, and avoid so many of the traps and pitfalls covered throughout the videos and this Resource Guide. It will also give your parents - and perhaps even lenders - the confidence you have a solid plan for your future.

For students, implementing these strategies can literally change your financial life by borrowing less, graduating earlier, and securing the best job once you graduate.

For parents, reviewing these tools and seeing your student's completed College Action Plan are the first steps toward avoiding costly mistakes that can drain savings and threaten your retirement security.

Making smart choices *now* will help both students and parents build a stronger financial future.

