

SECTION 2

JOB SEARCHING BASICS IN THE U.S.

Whether you have been in the U.S. for one year or many, life as a student is different from that of a full-time employee (often referred to as “the real world”¹ by Americans). One of the most important skills to use in your first few months at work is observation. The workplace has its own culture, which can vary from company to company even in the same field.

Resume and Interview Tips

Elevator Speech

Networking Tips

Informational Interview

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RESUME AND INTERVIEW GUIDE

Just as there are cultural differences in education systems and social life, there are cultural differences in what an employer expects during the interview process. This guide is designed to help international students in the U.S. understand what these cultural differences may be, help them create a U.S. appropriate resume, and prepare for a successful interview process.

Resume

A resume for a U.S. employer is a concise, attractive marketing tool that summarizes job skills, accomplishments, and academic background relevant to your employment objective. It is NOT a detailed chronological list of academic and formal work experience.

You SHOULD Include

- Full Name (*given name, family name*)
- Contact Information in the U.S.
- Career Objective (*optional*)
- Summary of Qualifications (*optional*)
- Education (*highest degree first*)
- Relevant Experience (*most recent first*)
- Leadership Experience (*optional*)
- Honors & Awards (*optional*)
- Languages (*other than English*)

You SHOULD NOT Include

- TOEFL Score
- Photograph
- Immigration Status
- Age
- Hometown/Home Country
- Marital Status
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Personal Interests or Hobbies

Resume guides and samples: careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/resources

Interviewing

The most difficult thing for many international students during the interview process is selling themselves. The U.S. is a highly individualistic, direct culture where employers expect you to show confidence in yourself and enthusiasm for the job. To do this, you must openly discuss your goals and accomplishments in order to convince them you are the best candidate for the job. Many international students feel boastful and disrespectful when trying to discuss their qualifications in such an individualistic manner, but this is one of those situations where it is important that you practice expressing yourself confidently without sounding arrogant. Learning to find the appropriate language is often difficult, so it is very important that you take advantage of the programs your career center provides, such as practice interviews.

You SHOULD

- Be on time
- Maintain eye contact
- Anticipate questions regarding competency and experience
- Openly discuss your accomplishments
- Be direct and give specific examples that demonstrate your experience
- Be prepared to discuss your strengths and weaknesses
- Research the organization
- Follow-up your interview with a thank you note
- Interview guide and sample questions:

You SHOULD NOT

- Be late
- Disclose age, race, marital status (*it is illegal for them to ask you such personal questions*)
- Answer questions indirectly
- Avoid responding to questions that require you to talk about your accomplishments and personal career goals
- Treat anyone you meet differently based on education, job title, sex, age, etc. (*politeness and respect are shown to all employees a candidate meets, whether a receptionist or CEO*)

THE ELEVATOR SPEECH

An elevator speech is a 30 to 60-second speech (think about it being a personal commercial!) that is a concise, well-practiced marketing message about your professional self. Whether you're on the phone, in person at a networking event, or informally chatting with a friend or relative, you will have a "ready-made" answer to the questions "tell me about yourself?" or "what are you hoping to do when you graduate?"

Clarify Your Job Target

Know what type of experience or position you are looking for and tailor your pitch to be relevant to your goal.

Put it on Paper

Write down everything you'd want a potential employer to know about your skills, accomplishments and experiences.

Format it, Practice it!

While there are a few skills and experiences to highlight in your pitch, work up ways to customize it for particular situations. Be sure to practice and get feedback from others.

Say it With Confidence

Remember to maintain eye contact and be calm. Avoid sounding overly rehearsed.



Common Mistakes

Lack of confidence in what you have to offer.

"I don't have a lot of experience yet." Instead, say: "I'm excited to learn x and y."

Lack of focus or goals.

"I have a lot of interests and don't want to limit myself." Instead focus on transferable skills.

Inability to articulate the skills gained from one's academic major.

"I know my major has nothing to do with my interest in starting my own business, but..."

SOURCE: <http://career.sa.ucsb.edu/students/job-search/creating-elevator-pitch-two-minutes-or-less>

NETWORKING TIPS

Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

Challenge yourself to attend networking and social events to talk with people. If English is not your first language make the effort to interact with English speakers and use your 'Elevator Speech'! Attend OISS Coffee Hours--held each Friday at 4pm in the International Center

Understand Cultural Differences

Take the time to understand and address different business cultures and how to network. When networking at events and social gatherings, be aware of language cues and general etiquette. For example, in U.S business culture, it is appropriate to speak about yourself and your qualifications.

Be Proactive Online

When searching for opportunities, use credible resources for employment information, industry trends, and business culture in the country you are seeking employment. Connect with industry professionals using social media: Use Twitter and LinkedIn to also participate on news articles and posts. Don't forget to be cautious of language choice when posting or writing to professionals.

Be an Active Listener

It's important to be an active listener when networking. When seeking information about a certain job, career, or industry, it is important to show sincerity and interest. Take brief notes on the key points. Remember to ask for business cards or contact information and be sure to follow-up afterwards through a thank you email, or connection on social media. *Tip: Write what you talked about and when/where you met on the back of their business card.*

Don't be Discouraged

Building your network takes a lot of time and energy. Not everyone you reach out to will necessarily respond to you. Don't take it personally, and don't give up! Move on to the next person. More often than not, people are more than willing to speak to students.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

What is Informational Interviewing?

Informational Interviewing entails finding individuals in your field of interest, and asking them questions regarding the field that will eventually help you in determining whether or not that a particular field of work is a good “fit” for you. At the same time, you begin a new relationship with someone who can begin to mentor and advise you along your chosen path.



Objectives of Informational Interviews

To Learn More

If you hope to find what a specific career path has to offer, what the positives and negatives are within an organization’s culture, or which academic major will prepare you best for a selected career path; why not ask the people who already working within that field?

To Build Relationships

USA Today posted the question, “*How did you find your present position (jobs)?*” Almost 70 % of those surveyed claimed that they were able to obtain their position because someone they knew. In other words, most of us attribute our career success to personal relationships. The earlier you start building relationships with people in your field of interest, the stronger they will be. This can significantly improve your professional network you’ll use when you actually begin your job hunt.



Where Do I Start?

Informational Interviewing is a networking process. On the following page is a guideline for making contacts and gathering informations from them. As you go through the process focus on obtaining information relevant to your career objectives while building lasting relationships. The sooner you begin, the more prepared you will be to make career decisions pertaining to internships and full time positions. Turn the page to get started!



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW PROCESS

1 Network Through Existing Connections

You will be amazed at how many contacts you may be able to make through existing relationships. Ask, “Who do you know that...” and be sure to obtain contact information. Also, let your friend or family member know that your intent is to contact this person to learn more about their career field. MSU’s Alumni Association, your professors and advisors, and LinkedIn are also useful in helping you identify people you may wish to meet.

2 Schedule Meeting

Call or e-mail the new contact and let them know that:

- You are a MSU student studying (your academic field)
- Your friend suggested that you contact them for career advise
- You can invite them to coffee
- Ask if they have 30 minutes available to answer questions you have about the field in which they work (face-to-face appointments are best, but a phone/email conversation is fine)

3 Write out Your Schedule

Remember, you are the interviewer so be prepared. Make a list of questions that you have. Be sure to show a substantial interest in the career field and the organization. For example, you may want to ask:

- What has been your career path?
- Can you describe a typical work day?
- What do you like best/least about your job/company?
- Sample questions can be found on the Career Services Network

4 Final Three Questions

Once you are ready to end the discussion (keep an eye on the clock, you only asked for 30 minutes!), ask three final questions:

- Would you please look at my resume and give me feedback?
- Who else do you know that might give me further insight into this field, and can I contact them?
- Would you mind if I kept in touch with you?

5 Follow-Up

Make sure to show your appreciations for their time. Send a thank you note or e-mail and let them know what you learned. As you continue to study the field, approach your new contact with questions that come up, and as you strengthen the relationship ask if they know of any opportunities to gain experience in the field.

1. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/exploring-options/information-interviews-and-job-shadowing/sample-questions.html>
2. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/thank-you-letters/index.html>

MANAGING YOUR DIGITAL IDENTITY

Your online identity or brand is defined by any and all online information that exists about you, whether you created it or not. Social networking sites are part of your public image. The material you post and the things you write will influence an employer or graduate schools' impression of you, for better or for worse. Employers, graduate schools, and other programs use social media sites and information in their recruitment and selection processes. Know what is out there with your name on it. If you can Google it, so can someone else.

Check Your Current Online Identity

Review your public email address(es): Is each address professional?

Google yourself: Are you comfortable with an employer or graduate school seeing what you found?

For each social networking site (Facebook, Twitter, etc): Would you be comfortable if someone else were to see your profile, photos, groups and comments? Are you tagged in any photos online?

If you've posted your resume online: Are you comfortable with the privacy policy where your resume is posted? You may want to omit your street address and phone number for safety and privacy.

If you have your own website or blog: Are you comfortable with an employer or graduate school seeing what you've written, posted and/or compiled?

Clean Up Your Online Identity

The next step is to target potential problems you've identified and clean them up.

Identify the easier areas to address first, like your own Facebook profile and blog, then tackle the tougher ones like contacting friends regarding the embarrassing photos in which you are tagged.

There are some pieces that are a part of the public record and can't be removed, like police logs and newspaper articles.

If there is information on the web that you would rather employers or schools not see, you must be particularly diligent in building your brand on high traffic sites so that less flattering information will appear lower on a Google search.

Build Your Online Identity or Brand

Now that you know what's out there, and have worked to clean up your image, you are ready to begin proactively building your brand with intentionality.

The simplest step you can take to guarantee that the first Google link with your name on it is professional is to create a LinkedIn profile.

[LinkedIn](#) is a great way to professionally display your skills, accomplishments and your goals while building meaningful relationships.

Creating a professional online presence can help you find a job!

1. [www.http://linkedin.com/](http://linkedin.com/)

SOURCE: <https://www.pomona.edu/administration/career-development/how-to/networking/managing-your-online-identity>

US WORK AUTHORIZATION CHART

	Process	Employer Requirements	Timing	Cost
Curriculum Practical Training (CPT) F-1 Visa Holders	<p>CPT can be done prior to completion of study. Student applies for approval from their host institution. Students can request to work:</p> <p>Part time - maximum of 20 hours/ week while school is in session (there may be exceptions)</p> <p>Full time - when school is not in session (21 hours or more/week)</p>	Provide Offer Letter and/or other job specifications	Approval takes 3-10 business days	No cost to employer or student
Optional Practical Training (OPT) F-1 visa holders	<p>Can be authorized for full-time employment after completion of studies (definition of completion varies by degree level)</p> <p>Student files OPT application with their host institution</p> <p>Approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)</p> <p>Student must obtain Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) prior to starting work</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Student must present EAD card to employer on the first day of work as proof of authorization.</p>	Approval takes 2-3 months – students can apply 90 days in advance of their program completion.	<p>No cost to employer</p> <p>\$380 paid by student</p>
H-1B Visas	<p>Work visa available to foreign nationals who:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have at least a U.S Bachelor's degree or foreign equivalent 2. Will be working in a job that requires at least a degree <p>There is no need to advertise the position and no need to determine if U.S workers are available to fill the position</p>	<p>Submit visa petition to USCIS.</p> <p>Employer must post notice for 10 days at the worksite stating they are hiring an H1-B worker, providing information about the position</p>	On average 5-6 months. Employer can request expedited processing for an additional \$1,225 and can take up to 15 days to approve.	<p>Ranges from \$2000-\$3500 and includes: Base Filing: \$325 ACWIA Fee \$750 for employer with 1-25 full time employees, \$1500 for 26 or more full time employees</p> <p>Fraud Prevention and Detection fee: \$500</p> <p>Public Law 111 Fee: \$2000 - if more than 50 employees</p> <p>Attorney Fees if applicable</p>
Academic Training (AT) J-1 Visa Holder	<p>AT can be done Before and After completion of study</p> <p>Student applies for approval from their host institution</p> <p>Students are eligible to work anywhere from 18 to 36 months depending on length of study.</p>	None	Approval takes 3-10 business days	No cost to employer

For more details about U.S. Work Authorization Options for International Students, please refer to the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) website at Michigan State University: www.oiss.msu.edu/students/employ under Related Links