

10 Job-Search Skills Today's College Students Need To Master.

The old adage “practice makes perfect” is absolutely true when it comes to finding a job. Practice these critical job search skills so you can present your best self in the hiring process.

1. Shaking hands. Nothing says, “I’m not interested” like a limp handshake. Practice shaking hands so you get comfortable delivering a firm, yet not bone-breaking, handshake.

2. Delivering your elevator pitch. [Your elevator pitch is your 30-second response to “So, tell me about yourself.”](#) It’s the description of your personal brand. You need to be clear and compelling, inspiring your audience to want to know more about you after that elevator ride, networking encounter, or other “planned serendipity” is over.

3. Answering this question: “What’s your biggest weakness?” This question will come up in virtually every interview. Try to avoid saying, “I’m a perfectionist,” as the interviewer has heard this response a thousand times before. Be ready to explain how you overcome or compensate for your weakness.

4. Responding to behavioral interview scenarios. In addition to “Tell me about yourself, what’s your greatest weakness and what did you learn during your past jobs or internships?” you will likely encounter questions like “Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a colleague or friend and how you handled it.” These behavioral interview questions are designed to determine how you would fit in with the culture.

5. Networking. Most jobs are found through a networking contact. When I look back at my corporate career before I started [my own company](#), I realize that every one of my corporate jobs came from a networking contact. [Effective networking requires authentic generosity](#) – a genuine desire to get to know and help others. And it’s not just about the size of the network. The depth of your connections is even more important. Build and nurture your network in the real world and via social media.

6. Remembering names. During an interview, you will likely meet a lot of people. You want to avoid saying, “The lady I just met with said....” So develop a system for remembering names. You will need them for when you send thank-you notes after the interview. *Forbes* contributor [Helen Coster](#) shares [10 great tips for remembering names](#).

7. Sleuthing. After you finish dancing for joy when you get an invitation to interview, the real work begins. Learn as much as you can about the company and the people who will be interviewing you. Perform as much research as possible. Know what’s happening at the company, look at their LinkedIn and Facebook pages, check out their latest ad campaigns, etc. Set up [Google alerts](#) as soon as you learn of an interview so you can start to get updates. Learn what you have in common with your interviewers. Did you go to the same school, join the same LinkedIn groups, grow up in the same state?

8. Asking questions. When the interview is over and the hiring manager says, “So, do you have any questions for me?” you need to be ready with a series of questions that demonstrate your high level of interest in the company. Hopefully, your interview will spark some. If not, come prepared with three questions. Here are a few options:

- What paths for growth does this position offer?
- Based on what we discussed, where do you see me fitting in?
- What do you think differentiates your culture from your competitors'?
- What's your favorite part of your job?
- I really admire X about your company. What's the history behind that?

Choose the ones that feel most authentic to you.

9. Presenting. More and more, hiring managers are asking candidates to prepare a brief presentation on a topic to share with a group of interviewers. Set aside the necessary time to produce a truly powerful presentation, including not just slides or a video but also handouts. Practice your presentation several times so you are completely comfortable delivering it. Bring the presentation on a thumb drive or your tablet. Don't rely on the company's connectivity to access your files from a cloud.

10. Appearing on video. Initial interviews are frequently being done via Skype or other video technology. Rehearse so that you can be comfortable on video. Practice looking directly into the camera, not at the image of the interviewer. Looking at the camera is the equivalent of looking the interviewer in the eye and will ensure that you have a natural facial expression. Make sure your makeshift studio has good lighting, no noise, and a professional background so that what shows up behind you (say, your roommate sleeping until noon) does not distract the interviewer.

If you practice these 10 activities, you will be fully prepared to open doors, ace the interview and get the offer.