

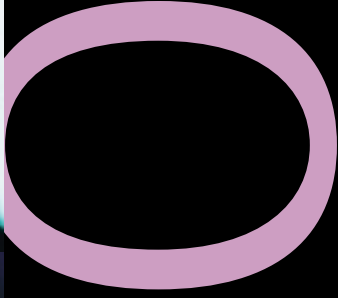
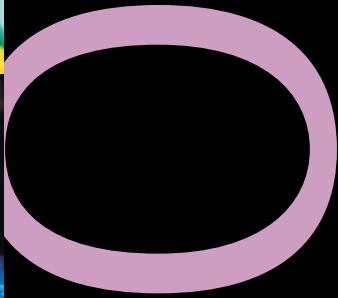
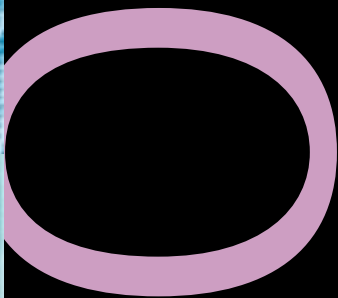
If only I'd known

FE

making the most of higher education
a guide for students and parents



1000 days to shape your life



Where am I now?



HIGHER EDUCATION IS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE. Whether going to university or college it's a time to start looking to the future. You'll want to have a good time – but you'll also want to make the most of the time, effort – and money – you're investing in yourself. You need to begin to understand what employers are going to expect from you when you start looking for a job – and you need to begin thinking about how you are going to provide it.

1

HAVE A GREAT TIME AT UNIVERSITY! IN YOUR 1,000 DAYS YOUR WORLD MAY OPEN UP IN WAYS YOU NEVER IMAGINED. YOU'LL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE NEW ACTIVITIES, MEET COUNTLESS NEW PEOPLE AND SATISFY YOUR CURIOSITY ABOUT EVERY KIND OF EXPERIENCE.

It's probably the only time in your life that you'll have the freedom to dream and experiment.

You can be who you like and, within reason, do what you like.

There are lots of reasons for living university life to the full and making the most of the experiences it offers. *But one of the most important is to build your self-confidence.* This is vital for success on your course – and in life. As you grow in confidence, you may even start thinking about plans and opportunities you never dreamed possible.

It's a whole new world

But make no mistake, your life is about to change in a big way. Yes, you can do what you want to do. But you also have to run your own life and pay your way. If you're away from home, the change will feel even more dramatic. There's no one to cook your meals, wash your clothes or pay bills you never knew existed before.

You'll have to learn to manage your loan, share your life with strangers and plan your own studying. And even if you're based at home, don't expect your parents to drag you out of bed for that 9am lecture.

If you have special needs of any kind, your college will always be able to help – but remember to fill in the relevant section of your UCAS application form correctly.

[Top Tips 1 on page 58.](#)

In fact the best way to deal with the whole process of starting university is to get yourself organised at school or sixth form college. This will not just make you feel better – it will also leave you more time for fun!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Every [Top Tips](#) hotlink refers to more detailed help and ideas at the back of the book.

It's also worth checking out the web addresses on the inside back cover.



SPECIAL NEEDS CAN LEAD TO SPECIAL GIFTS

" I only have 40% sight and 20% hearing so I thought I would struggle at uni. But I soon realised that with the right attitude all the support was out there. Over the past three years I've developed an amazing skill of asking the right questions of the right people – this special ability to network, build relationships and creatively solve problems will be crucial to my future employability. Remember, your problem is as big as you make it. All the resources and possibilities are on your doorstep so go for it!"

"Enjoy yourself – it might be the last time you're completely carefree"

Alison Smith, Inland Revenue



“ **MINE’S A PINT OF BLOOD...**

At school I was a bit shy. I also felt guilty about having fun and was always studying. But at uni I’m doing things I couldn’t imagine before. And it’s made me much more confident about myself. I suppose it was my elder brother who put me straight. He’d always been more of an extrovert. He dabbled in all kinds of activities there, including working on the student mag. This made him really confident and helped him land a marketing job straight after graduating. He’s been promoted since and lots of his old college mates have become useful business contacts. I’ll never be as outgoing as him but I feel more sure of myself now. I mean, just look at me! Would you believe I was once too shy to be in the school play?

1

YOU'RE NOT ALONE. DON'T WORRY IF YOU DON'T FEEL TOO CONFIDENT AT THE MOMENT – YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE. EVERY YEAR OVER 200,000 OTHER STUDENTS ARE STARTING ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND HAVING THE SAME THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS AS YOU. WHAT COUNTS IS HOW YOU COPE WITH THE EXPERIENCE.

This book will show you how to use your time at university to start shaping your whole life. But to get out there and make the most of all the opportunities, you first need to take control of your day-to-day living.

Getting life sorted...

Organising your time is the first priority. Then there's all the admin, like opening a bank account, planning your finances, arranging insurance and other details. You may also need to learn how to choose housemates, plan your domestic routine and share the chores. [Top Tips 15](#)

The more skilled you become at dealing with these day-to-day issues, the more your confidence will grow.

Money... the big problem

So how can you make that student loan go further and avoid piling up too much debt? You can start by learning to budget properly for bills, books, food and other essentials. Think of yourself as a one-person business and plan how to balance your books. To supplement your student loan, you will probably be looking for part-time work of some kind. [Top Tips 9](#)

You could begin by making sure you have a job lined up for the summer. If your subject is suitable, you might aim for sponsorship from a company for your university course.

If you're seriously worried about money, make sure you seek advice. You might even consider taking a year out and finding a job to help fund your course.

And remember, many students pay only part of their fees or nothing at all.

It should all pay off!

Try to remember that it should all be worth it. Apart from the satisfaction of developing your knowledge and gaining a degree, there's a real financial incentive. As a graduate you should start on a higher salary and earn far more over your lifetime.



PLENTY OF PEOPLE TO HELP YOU

If you need help at university, you'll find lots of people who can provide it – from your personal tutor to specialist support services who know all about the problems you're facing. In the meantime, if you're wondering about careers and where university will take you, why not drop into your nearest Connexions office or ask your university careers advisers for help? [Top Tips 3](#)

“The quality of work experience gained at university has a major effect on future earnings”

ESRC Future of Work Programme



“

DAISY'S INTEREST BECAME HER CAREER...

Fashion designer Daisy Shields had always loved customising clothes and her interest deepened while doing history of art at Sussex University. Her degree project explored the links between art, fashion and history. But it was only when she designed a T-shirt for herself and wore it to work that she realised she could make a living out of her interest. “It made such an impact that I started selling them in the office. To fund her own fashion label, she started freelancing as an arts and media consultant. Now her label – Baci – is catching the eye of the fashion world and Daisy is well on her way to building the kind of lifestyle she's been aiming for. Her interest in art also helped her to take on an exciting role putting together private views, a summer party and events for London's Serpentine Gallery.

”

1

I JUST NEED A DEGREE, DON'T I? THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRUE ONCE. BUT THESE DAYS YOU NEED TO STOP AND THINK A BIT HARDER ABOUT WHERE YOUR UNIVERSITY COURSE COULD TAKE YOU. YOU MAY BE WONDERING WHAT KIND OF WORK YOUR SUBJECT COULD LEAD TO – AND WHETHER YOU'VE CHOSEN THE RIGHT ONE.

As long as your course interests or inspires you in some way, don't worry too much. Many students have only a hazy idea of where they're going. And many with a clear career plan still end up changing direction. [Top Tips 2](#)

Remember also that employers regularly recruit graduates with degrees that seem to have little relevance to their business.

What matters is that after acquiring those letters after your name (and duly celebrating the fact), you've proved that a certain intelligence is lurking somewhere behind those bloodshot eyes.

You'll also have quality skills employers can use – such as the ability to analyse facts, develop ideas and sift evidence. (This helps explain why not every graduate in Spanish becomes a translator and law students don't always end up in court – well, not professionally!).

A degree is just the start...

OK, so one day your degree might demonstrate that you managed a respectable knowledge of English, Engineering, Economics or whatever. But it's not a prescription you simply hand to an employer like a blueprint for your life. In today's competitive world you need much more than just qualifications.

As a new graduate you won't necessarily walk straight into a well-paid job with a high-flying future. Today you need to stand out in some way. And if you have real skills and experience an employer can use, that's even better.

In your final year you'll get down to jobhunting for real. But it's never too soon to start thinking about what employers will be looking for and in the next few pages we'll take a sneak preview of the jobs market you'll soon be facing.



THINK AHEAD

Picking the right course at the right university takes planning. [Top Tips 2](#) But even if you've thought carefully about it all, things don't always work out. You may have to consider a change of direction after taking advice from tutors or careers advisers. Just see it as an opportunity to move on to something that really inspires you.

“A degree is no longer a meal ticket to your future but merely a licence to hunt”

Linsey Perry, Railtrack



“ UNIVERSITY GAVE ME RED-HOT SKILLS...

If you enjoy a curry, you probably know the beer Karan Bilimoria developed to go with it. And it all came about because he discovered his talent for selling at university. "I went to Cambridge to do a law degree and had the time of my life. As well as playing lots of sport, I was an active member of the debating team. I also became vice president of the Cambridge Union – and that's when I learnt I could sell because I had to go canvassing. Selling is so important because in life you are always going to have to convince people to believe in you". With the confidence he had developed, Karan went on to found Cobra Beer and exploited everybody's love of Indian food.

”

1

WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT. BUSINESSES ARE LOOKING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD. THEY WANT YOU TO DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF WHERE YOU'RE GOING IN LIFE AND SHOW SIGNS OF HAVING THE PERSONAL QUALITIES AND CONFIDENCE TO GET THERE.

Employers are more likely to be impressed if you can show that you're the kind of person who's taken on projects or challenges successfully and proved that you know how to make things happen.

You'll also be expected to be in touch with the wider world and demonstrate that you are open to opportunities that come along. You may already be able to demonstrate some of these through previous employment or voluntary work. Another quality they rate highly is the ability to learn from your mistakes.

The skills that really count..

Employers are keen on real skills you can apply in their business. These may be people skills such as leadership or the ability to negotiate, general skills such as problem-solving or self-reliance skills such as networking with people. And if you have gained quality work experience relevant to their organisation, you have a head start. [Top Tips 11](#) Specialist skills can give you a further edge – especially outstanding IT skills or knowledge of how a business operates.

The page opposite lists these various kinds of skills – and typical buzzwords employers often use to describe them.

Check it out now

Don't leave it until your final year to get a feel of the jobs market. University guidance advisers, Connexions and adult guidance services are always ready to help (but remember that Connexions is for 16 to 19 year olds in most cases). Try also to find friends or relatives (or people they know) who already work in job areas that interest you and talk to them.



TOP TIPS!

Top tips from Carl Gilleard, Chief Executive of the Association of Graduate Recruiters – which represents hundreds of the UK's major employers – include:

- Take control of your career as soon as possible
- Take every opportunity to get new skills and boost your self-confidence
- Don't be afraid to stretch yourself and take a few risks

“Start thinking about careers in your first year. Seek opportunities to develop the skills which employers look for. Check out the summer work/internships that some employers offer”

Morven Barrie, Graduate Recruitment Consultant – Standard Life

THE SKILLS EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR...

PEOPLE SKILLS



LEADERSHIP – taking responsibility and getting things done

TEAMWORKING – working well with colleagues and being able to listen

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS – being good with people from a wide range of backgrounds and able to put your ideas over easily

BUZZWORDS TO WATCH OUT FOR

DYNAMIC
MOTIVATED

SUPPORTIVE
FACILITATOR

PROFESSIONAL
SOCIALLY AWARE

SELF-RELIANCE SKILLS



SELF-AWARENESS – feeling confident about yourself and what you can do

RESOURCEFULNESS – having drive, using your initiative and planning ahead

NETWORKING SKILLS – being good at linking up with other people so you can help each other

BUZZWORDS TO WATCH OUT FOR

FOCUSED
PURPOSEFUL

PROACTIVE
SELF-STARTER

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDER
INITIATOR

GENERAL SKILLS



PROBLEM-SOLVING – being practical and quick-witted so you get results

COMMITMENT – being dependable, trustworthy and putting everything into your work

FLEXIBILITY – being adaptable and willing to do lots of different kinds of work

BUZZWORDS TO WATCH OUT FOR

RESULTS-ORIENTATED
CREATIVE

DEDICATED
LOYAL

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY
MULTI-SKILLED

SPECIALIST SKILLS



IT SKILLS – having expert computer knowledge (you need basic IT skills for almost every job)

TECHNICAL SKILLS – having knowledge of real work areas eg journalism, accountancy

BUSINESS UNDERSTANDING – knowing what makes companies tick

BUZZWORDS TO WATCH OUT FOR

TASK-ORIENTATED

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

ENTREPRENEURIAL
COMPETITIVE

1

WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT? YOU DON'T JUST NEED TO KNOW WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT – YOU ALSO NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE THEY SPEAK. THERE'S NO NEED TO LET BUSINESS JARGON AND BUZZWORDS PUT YOU OFF. SOME SERVE A REAL PURPOSE WHILE OTHERS ARE JUST IMPORTANT-SOUNDING.

A recent survey showed that two out of three people use business buzzwords. But 20% of them admitted they didn't know what the words really meant – they just felt they had to use them to keep up with colleagues.

But it is important for you to know what they mean because you'll then be able to talk to employers in their own language when the time comes to start jobhunting. Of course that doesn't mean you always have to approve of this kind of jargon – let alone start spouting it to your friends!



GET BEHIND THOSE BUZZWORDS!

- Core competencies** – basic skills
- Empower** – give staff responsibility
- Generate a concept** – have an idea
- Holistic approach** – an all-round view
- Human resources** – staff!
- Innovative** – new
- Interact with** – talk to, phone or email
- Interpersonal skills** – good with people
- Issues** – questions or problems
- Marketing** – making sure a product is what people want to buy
- Motivate** – inspire people to work
- Multi-disciplinary** – covering many areas
- Networking** – finding and keeping up with people who can help with your career
- Proactive** – taking action before something happens
- Products** – anything you buy or sell (items or services)
- Promotion** – advertising or incentives to make customers buy
- Resources** – things needed to provide goods or services (staff or raw materials).
- Service** – a product provided by people, eg by solicitors, surveyors or nurses
- Synergy** – ensuring the whole is greater than the sum of the parts
- Team player** – someone who gets on with others and goes along with policies
- Think outside the box** – have original and creative ideas





“

YOU CAN'T BEAT HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Elliot Hemes always wanted a career that was 'hands-on'. And it was the experience of work he gained during a gap year that led him to the right one – as a design engineer for Land Rover working on new technology and traction systems for the next-generation Discovery and Freelander. "I was always interested in constructing things – I helped build a go kart at school and a hovercraft at sixth-form college. Before taking a Masters degree in mechanical engineering, I did a gap year with IBM. I'd thought the IT industry would be interesting to work in but the work wasn't as fast-moving or as practical as I'd imagined. But experience like that helps you to grow up quickly – you get a sense of reality and know people are depending on you. It also helped to steer me towards this job because I could find out what other people's jobs were about and identify roles I could see myself in. This job really is a dream come true. As part of the engineering design work I do quite a lot of hands-on testing and recently spent two weeks ice-driving prototype vehicles in Sweden."

”

1

TODAY IT'S UP TO YOU! THE MODERN JOBS MARKET IS A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE FROM THE ONE YOUR PARENTS ENTERED. AND YOUR GRANDPARENTS WOULD HARDLY RECOGNISE IT. IN TODAY'S WORLD IT'S ONE THING TO GET A JOB AND SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT TO STAY EMPLOYED RIGHT THROUGH YOUR LIFE.

New technology and changing work patterns mean the old idea of a job for life is dead. Organisations are more flexible and people have to adapt.

In the modern enterprise culture you need a range of skills to stay employed.

This often means piecing together your own career. You may find yourself switching jobs regularly, starting a new career or even launching your own company.

Time to start planning

You certainly need to see yourself as a one-person business, always ready and equipped with the skills to provide the services the market demands.

All this is a further reason for getting yourself sorted once you start uni.



THINK AHEAD

It's a good idea to start thinking now about what kind of jobs you're going to be looking for and planning how you're going to make an impression on employers. Once you get a few ideas you'll start to realise that shaping your own future can be fun – and you'll feel a lot more confident too.

“There's no such thing as a career path. It's crazy paving and you have to lay it yourself”

Skills for Graduates in the 21st Century

“To be employed is to be at risk... to be employable is to be secure”

www.windmillsprogramme.com



“

NEVER BE AFRAID TO CHANGE DIRECTION

“If you’re going the wrong way, never be afraid to change direction”, says Tunmbi Onibokun, a performance manager with the Home Office. ‘Tunmbi started out studying chemistry when living in Nigeria because family and society pressures pushed her towards being a doctor. “I was so unhappy – and did so badly – that I switched to economics, and this opened my eyes to the social sciences. In the UK I started working for the Benefits Agency then went back to study to take a degree in Accountancy and Marketing. It was hectic because I kept on working so there was no time to socialise. On the other hand I was getting incredible work experience – and skills I’d gained such as prioritising really helped me to organise my studying.

”

1

WHAT GIVES YOU A BUZZ? THAT'S THE BIG QUESTION IF YOU WANT TO END UP IN A JOB YOU LOVE. YOU'LL BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN LIFE – AND USUALLY HAPPIER – IF YOU CAN MAKE YOUR LIVING THROUGH SKILLS AND TALENTS YOU REALLY ENJOY USING. BUT WHAT SKILLS? AND HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHERE YOU WANT TO GO IN LIFE?

For a start you can try finding out more about the kind of person you are and the type of work that brings you alive. You can then discover how university life can help you get there.

Uni provides endless opportunities to do this if you know how to spot them.

And you don't have to miss out on the fun of student life or follow any special plan.

Just decide that you are going to do more than just studying. Ideally things that give you a lot of pleasure and experience.

With the right approach, you'll be able to justify spending time hanging around the bar, dressing up in a gorilla suit, getting rid of your inhibitions on the sports field, joining a choir – or simply daydreaming.

All these experiences are a vital part of university. Once you understand how to use them, you can work towards the career that's right for you.

And you should start right away.

learn



“Learn to make the most of uni...
and you can make the most of your life!”

Sonia Reeves, B&Q

2

Where am I going?



YOU'RE ALWAYS BETTER AT WHAT YOU LIKE DOING. If you find something you enjoy, you're always more likely to be good at it, says Rich, who at 32 is a squadron leader responsible for half a dozen flying crew. "I'd always been interested in flying and I managed to be sponsored by the RAF at university". Rich was well aware however that he needed much more than just flying ability to build a higher-level career. "Doing history at university helped to give me many skills I've found vital. I learned to absorb a lot of information in a short time, sort the wheat from the chaff, deal with critical items and put things into practice. All that is just as essential when writing an essay as doing something hands-on.

TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT YOURSELF. SO WHERE ARE YOU GOING IN LIFE? AND WHAT WILL YOU BE LOOKING TO DO IN 1,000 DAYS' TIME? YOU MAY HAVE AN IDEA BUT PROBABLY DON'T, AND THERE'S LITTLE POINT IN GETTING THAT IDEAL JOB AND THEN FINDING THE REST OF YOUR LIFE IS A MESS.

Your life and your work are tied up together. And to be happy you need to take control of both. But first you need to know the kind of person you are – and what makes you tick.

Then you can think about the activities and situations that give you a buzz and the kind of people you want around you. Try asking yourself a few simple questions.

Will you work to live or live to work? This is the big question. What really motivates you?

What skills bring you alive? What things have you done that gave you a real satisfaction? Was it getting something published in the school magazine? Organising an event? Taking a solo in the choir? Launching your own website?

What situations suit you best? Are you better working with people, ideas or practical things? Do you thrive on pressure or prefer a relaxed pace? Are you a team player or an individualist? Do you see yourself in charge (perhaps of your own business) or in a supporting role?

What turns you on? OK, so what are your interests? What do you talk about most with your friends?

Who are your kind of people? What sort of people do you like around you? New faces or familiar ones? What kind of personalities are you comfortable working with? Be careful not to pre-judge this – at university you'll meet lots of people from many diverse backgrounds.

What kind of organisation? There are many kinds of organisation, small and large. Jobs can involve settling in one place or being on the move, whether at home or abroad. University can help you decide what might suit you best.



DON'T GET TRAPPED BY BUZZWORDS

As we've seen, buzzwords are common in business. But don't get hooked on the idea of being 'in marketing' or 'in human resources' without understanding what it involves. Job roles can be so varied today that you need to get behind the jargon by talking to people in jobs or reading career books or checking the web for information.

"Most people spend more time planning their holidays than planning their career"

www.windmillsprogramme.com



THINK AHEAD

Try writing down all your career ideas and options – it fixes them in your mind and helps you think more clearly. Keep your list handy so you can think about it from time to time. Remember to add new ideas as they occur to you. [Top Tips 4](#)



WHAT ARE YOU LIKE?

You need to start thinking about where you're going in life. And you'll have a lot more idea once you understand the kind of person you are – and what really matters to you.



YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWERS AT UNI! OF COURSE YOU WON'T FIND IMMEDIATE ANSWERS TO ALL THOSE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT GIVES YOU A BUZZ AND WHAT WORK MIGHT SUIT YOU. JUST KEEP THEM IN MIND OVER THE 1,000 DAYS OR SO YOU SPEND AT COLLEGE AND YOU'LL END UP WITH A CLEARER IDEA OF WHAT YOU REALLY WANT.

This is why university life is so brilliant. It's a great adventure – one you can use to give you vital clues to yourself and your career. And those clues are often very obvious.

For instance, that enterprising character who started selling posters in the union could quite likely end up running his own business. People who go for positions in the student guild may later move into politics or law. And people keen to contribute to society may get involved with Millennium Volunteers or student community action. [Top Tips 12](#)

Your chance to experiment

For most of us though it's more complex. And we all have different needs. Some people are more driven by play than work or learning. Others put security and stability first. There are also people who need to run their own show completely.

Try to use the university experience to understand what drives you personally and how that can move you on. And you don't have to wait for things to happen. You can start to take control by exploring and experimenting with new situations and skills.

Once you're focusing on things that bring you alive, you're on track for the career you want.

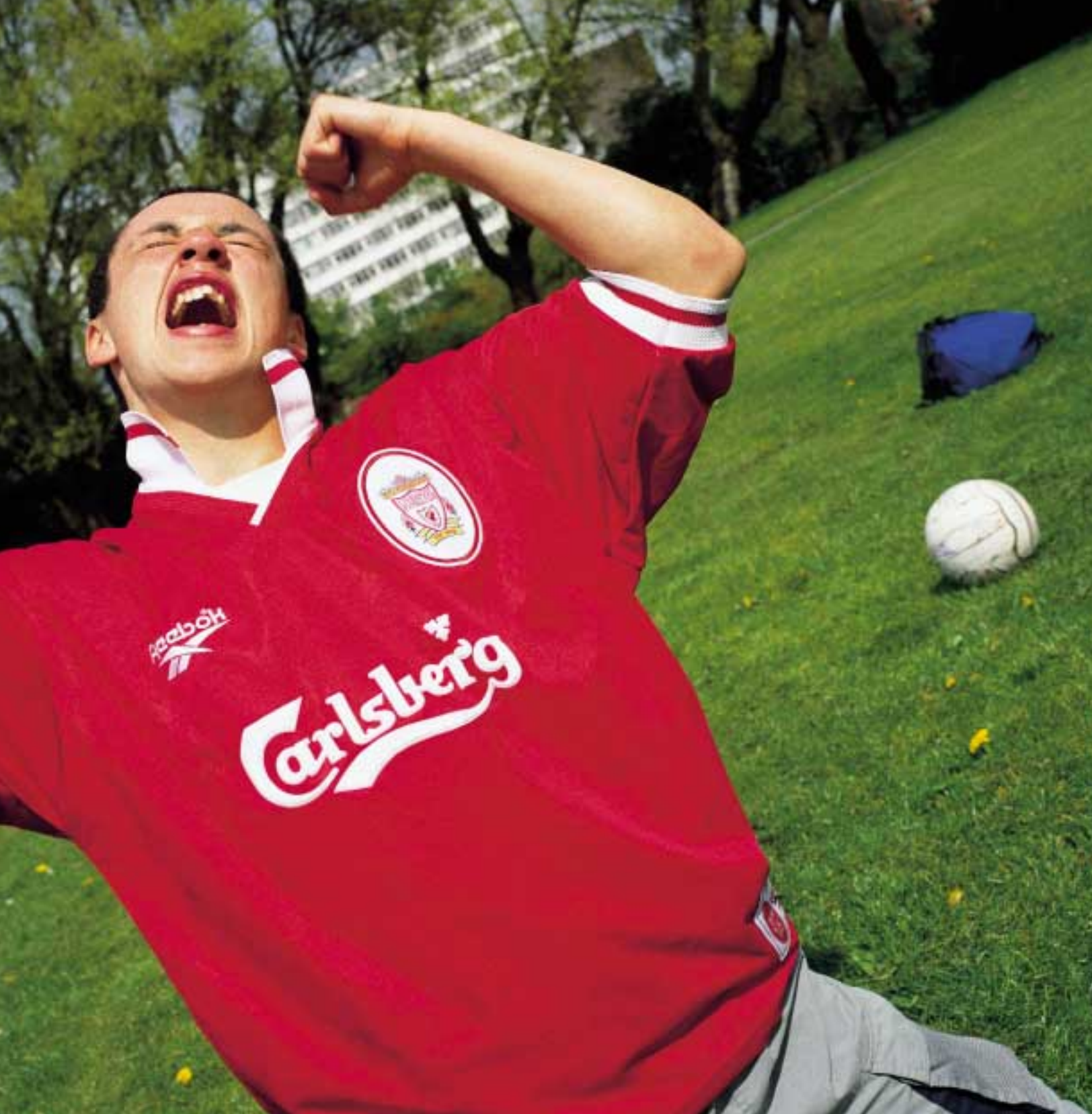
And that makes everything a lot more fun – not just at university but right through life.

"It's far more important to understand yourself than your subject while at college"

Alison Hodgson, WorldCom

"See university as a preparation for the rest of your life – an investment, if you like"

Carl Gilleard, Chief Executive of the Association of Graduate Recruiters



“

GOOOOAAAAAAAAL!

I've always known what I'm passionate about – but we all have to be realistic. Great if you're Michael Owen, but who's going to pay me for kicking a ball? Luckily I really enjoy Business Studies. And when I started running our college team I found I got a kick out of managing people. So if I can find a firm to pay me for doing that, I'll be over the moon. And it will be a lot safer than managing a football team!

”



IMAGINE THAT IDEAL JOB. AS YOU GET MORE CLUES ABOUT WHAT INSPIRES YOU, YOU CAN START PICTURING YOUR CAREER DIRECTION. THE CLEARER YOU MAKE THIS PICTURE, THE EASIER IT WILL BE TO ACHIEVE IN THE LONG RUN. IT'S NEVER TOO SOON TO START THINKING ABOUT THIS AND TALKING TO YOUR FRIENDS CAN OFTEN HELP.

You should also find it worthwhile talking to an adviser who knows about employment. Depending on your age, this could be a Connexions personal adviser (for those aged 19 and under), a university or college careers guidance adviser (for those already in HE/FE) or an adult guidance adviser (for those 20 or over who are considering HE/FE). [Top Tips 3](#) Try also to get experience of areas of work that already interest you when you look for a part-time job or voluntary work. [Tops Tips 9 & 10](#)

Your first year is the latest time to start doing all this. You should then have a clearer idea of the kind of jobs to aim for when you start applying for interviews in your final year. You'll certainly be far too busy working for finals to think seriously about it then.

Perhaps you already have an idea of that ideal job for you? That's fine as long as it's based on reality.

Being a cocktail tester at a tropical beach bar might sound like a dream life. But unless you're the kind of person it really suits, it could turn into a nightmare.

More realistically, there's probably little point in aiming to be a journalist if you're chronically shy or a manager if you always look to others to give you a lead.



“If you have a clear and realistic idea of the type of person you are and what you want from your career, you're far more likely to get it”

Richard Bolles: What Colour is Your Parachute?

2

GET PRACTICAL! YOU MAY NOT WALK INTO THE JOB YOU REALLY WANT STRAIGHT FROM COLLEGE. IT MAY TAKE A WHILE AND YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO SIT AROUND WAITING. IN THE MEANTIME YOU NEED TO EAT. SO YOU'LL HAVE TO EARN A LIVING OF SOME KIND WHILE YOU TRY TO MOVE TOWARDS THE KIND OF WORK YOU REALLY WANT.

You'll find this easier if – alongside your degree – you have lots of practical workplace skills that make you employable.

IT literacy is essential for a start. It also pays to have word processing and other office skills along with basic financial awareness and the ability to organise or research information.

These may not be skills that particularly inspire you – but they can keep you afloat financially and help you work towards a job that will give you that buzz.

University offers endless opportunities to pick up such skills – often just by taking the right approach to your day-to-day living, studying and socialising. Other skills can be gained through part-time work during term, a holiday job or voluntary activities.

These skills can also lead you into higher-level work doing things that really inspire you and provide vital career clues.

If you can get this right, you should have no problem staying employed while you work towards the kind of life you want.



THINK AHEAD

Before you go to college, talk to anyone you know who's been to university about the most useful work experience they've done. And once you're there, get to know people in the year above and try to pick up some tips from them. [Top Tips 9 & 10](#)

listen



“Find out what jobs are really about – talk to people in the jobs and ask those ‘warts and all’ questions”

Ailsa Falconer, Unilever UK

2

YOU COULD HAVE OVER 500 SKILLS. YOU CERTAINLY HAVE MORE THAN YOU THINK. APART FROM THOSE YOU USE AT HOME AND SCHOOL, YOU COULD ALREADY HAVE PICKED UP ALL KINDS OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES FROM A PART-TIME JOB, YOUR OUTSIDE INTERESTS OR VOLUNTARY OR COMMUNITY WORK.

For instance, working as a waiter a couple of nights a week gives you a range of useful skills.

Organising tables and taking orders involves communicating clearly and dealing with information efficiently. Delivering bills, taking money and giving change all help develop your financial awareness and ability to cope under pressure.

And keeping customers happy can involve skills in negotiating, customer care and even selling. [Top Tips 11](#)



Once you start thinking about what you can do (not what you can't!) you'll feel a lot more confident about your job prospects.

Why not try making a progress file – a list of the achievements you're really proud of in your life – and then think about the skills you used in the process?

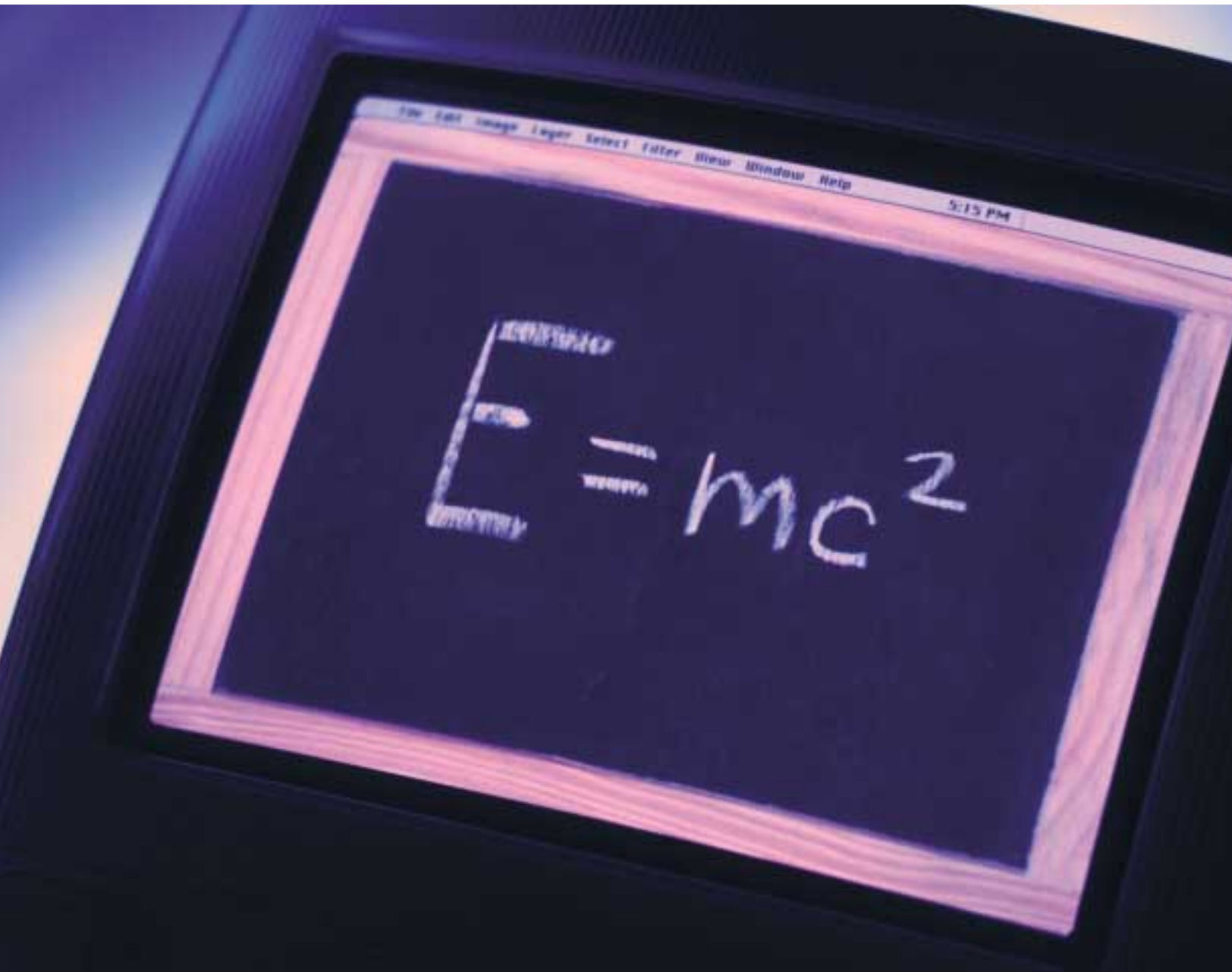
Another good idea is to ask someone you really respect to tell you what they like about you.

“Get feedback from other people to find out what your own skills are”

Nick McMenemy, Standard Life

3

How can uni help me get there?



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EINSTEIN TO MAKE HIGHER EDUCATION WORK FOR YOU.

You don't even have to slog away at an action plan. You simply need to make the most of the opportunities coming your way over the next 1,000 days. You can use them to find out where you want to go in life – and to pick up the skills to help you get there. It's simply a question of taking the right approach to studying, socialising, working, giving and even just going about your daily life. You can then have a hell of a time at uni – and know you're in full control of your future when you leave.

3

YOU'VE NOTHING TO LOSE. AS WE'VE SEEN, YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO SUCCEED IF YOU'RE DOING THE THINGS YOU LOVE. FROM YOUR FIRST DAY AT COLLEGE YOU'LL BE SWAMPED BY NEW EXPERIENCES AND SURROUNDED BY NEW FACES. BETWEEN GETTING YOUR STUDIES SORTED, CHOOSING BETWEEN THAT PILE OF INVITATIONS, DEALING WITH SQUABBLING HOUSEMATES AND LOOKING FOR A PART-TIME JOB, YOU'LL HARDLY HAVE A SECOND TO YOURSELF.

But somewhere in there will be the clues you need to know just what you want to do in life. And with a bit of thought you should be able to spot them.

Every experience can be used to discover more about yourself, what you're good at and what really gives you a buzz. You can also start picking up the practical skills you'll need to pay your way while working towards that job you really want.

Once you start thinking this way, you'll see you have nothing to lose.

Get it right and you can:

- *Cope with **living** in a way that makes more time for fun*
- *Organise your **studies** to succeed at uni – and have vital skills for life [Tops Tips 5 & 7](#)*
- *Use your hectic **social life** to gain confidence and get skills and contacts [Tops Tips 8](#)*
- *Ensure part-time jobs or voluntary work give you real **work experience** [Tops Tips 9 & 10](#)*

The more you open your mind to every experience and the more possibilities you explore, the sooner you'll develop confidence and self-reliance. These qualities will not simply impress employers – they'll smooth your way right through life.

“There is no rush. Take your time to decide what you enjoy and what motivates you. It's a big decision. And you could have to live with it for a long time”

Richard Illingworth – Audit Commission



CREATE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

If you lack a particular skill, why not find a way of getting it? For instance, if you feel you don't assert yourself enough, try to 'create your own experience' by looking for a part-time job which involves you telling other people what to do. The more you try setting up situations that can help you, the better you get at it and the more fun you can have!



“

I THOUGHT I WOULD GIVE IT A GO...

At 16 I decided to be a good Indian boy and go into merchant banking. By the time I finished my economics degree at Bristol University, I was only sure of one thing... merchant banking and me weren't meant to be. As I didn't know what to do with my life, I thought I might as well have a go at a thing called An Introduction to Media which the careers service were running in the summer holidays. It was great – we learned to write newspaper articles, put together radio packages and make short television programmes. I really enjoyed it. I then applied to my local radio station, GWR, for a week's work experience. I got some stuff on air, did a bit of reporting and just got hooked. After that I did a Postgraduate Journalism Diploma at Cardiff University followed by a placement at Red Dragon FM. I was eventually offered a job there and my broadcasting career was launched.

Rajesh Mirchandani – Radio 1 presenter

Photography courtesy of Radio One.

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3

GET YOUR LIFE ORGANISED. YOU MAY WELL BE AT UNIVERSITY TO EXERCISE YOUR INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY – NOT TO MENTION LESS EXALTED PLEASURES – BUT YOU STILL NEED TO DEAL WITH DAY-TO-DAY LIVING. SUDDENLY YOU’LL HAVE TO SORT A PILE OF PRACTICAL PROBLEMS THAT MAY HAVE BARELY TOUCHED YOUR LIFE BEFORE – ESPECIALLY IF YOU’RE GOING AWAY TO COLLEGE RATHER THAN BEING HOME-BASED.

Bank accounts, landlords, gas bills, and bus timetables all need facing. That’s on top of shopping, cooking and the culture shock of sharing your life with a gang of housemates whose domestic habits are probably just as erratic as your own. Luckily there’s a plus side to having to get your life organised. And with a bit of planning from the start you can enjoy university a lot more.

[Top Tips 15](#)

Make yourself more time

One of the most useful techniques you’ll need is effective time management. [Top Tips 5](#) When you start in a job, you’ll realise why they coined that old cliché ‘time is money’. You don’t have to think quite like that as a student but the better you organise your time, the more you’ll have left over for the things you enjoy doing – as opposed to those you have to do. You’ll also have more time left to try new things and discover what you’re really passionate about in life.

Yes, university is a place to have fun and dream your dreams. But meanwhile you have a few realities to face – like the washing up, those essay notes to write up and your Tuesday night job at the supermarket. And the sooner you get them sorted the better.

Beat that budget

Perhaps for the first time you may be facing the reality of living on a tight budget. You’ll have to learn to ration out your student loan for bills, books, food and other essentials – and think how to boost it by means of part-time jobs. All this will give you useful practice in basic financial planning. Choosing your housemates, sharing the costs and organising the chores calls for a range of talents including leadership, delegation and downright commonsense.

[Top Tips 6](#)

Just your everyday living provides endless opportunities to master other skills such as communication or assertiveness. And the more you take control, the more your confidence will grow. After a year of two of managing your own life, you should become more capable and confident than you – or your parents – ever imagined.



“Be assertive – practise in shops for instance by taking things back etc”

Claire Maguire, NHS Graduate Training Scheme



HOW MANY BEANS FEED FIVE?

Your fridge may not get this bad – but if you don't budget, you'll starve.

That means allocating the money, doing the shopping and organising the cleaning – not to mention keeping everyone happy. Get all that sorted and you'll be surprised at the useful skills you'll have at your fingertips already.

3

GET THE STUDYING SORTED. NOW YOU SET THE AGENDA. AT COLLEGE THERE'S NO TEACHER TO STAND OVER YOU. IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET ORGANISED AND DO THE WORK – JUST AS IT WILL BE WHEN YOU FIND A JOB AFTERWARDS. YES, IT'S THE FREEDOM YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED, BUT IT ALSO BRINGS RESPONSIBILITIES.

You're at university to study and expand your mind. And that means taking charge of your own learning. So avoid the temptation to merely show your face at tutorials or try and get away with the bare minimum. It's vital to organise your work and meet deadlines.

You'll find this easier if you learn to use time efficiently. Set time aside for study and stick to it. Build your social life round this – and use simple psychology on yourself – eg by going to the cinema after you've done the work – not before (or instead of). That way it becomes a reward and you'll enjoy the film a lot more too.

Work smarter

Time spent at a lecture is wasted if you fail to do the preparation work. And don't just read a textbook without keeping clear, concise notes. Background reading does not mean reading with TV in the background (or, worse still, watching TV with a few books in the background).

No point reading up your history notes with one eye on Eastenders – you'll end up remembering more about the Queen Vic than Queen Victoria.

Make sure that what you learn in lectures sinks in by re-reading your notes within a day or two. Yes, it's a drag – but you'll be amazed how it imprints them on your brain. Background reading, note-taking and sharing ideas with others are all worth building into your routine.

Master this in your first year and you'll have a huge advantage right through your working life. In future you'll find it easy to research, prepare and analyse information when your course – and eventually your job – calls for project work or reports.

These are just a few of the simple study tips that can make a big difference. [Top Tips 7](#)

Get with IT

There are also lots of practical skills that can make life easier both now and when you start job-hunting. IT skills are essential and highly rated by all employers. Even if you're not a computer nerd, mastering basics such as word processing, spreadsheets and databases will help you at college and pay off at work.

Word processing helps you give essays and project work a professional look, while touch typing can save you hours. Such skills can also help you get part-time jobs to boost your grant. Mastering efficient web research techniques is another of those skills that will make life in general so much easier.

Email is brilliant for building up your contacts. [Top Tips 8](#) It's considered OK to email even casual acquaintances (ones you'd never dream of writing to or phoning). And such contacts can end up as key members of your network – that group of friends, colleagues and acquaintances who can help you shape your life in the coming years.

Building this 'life support system' is one of the most worthwhile things you can do at college.

“Develop your IT skills beyond just Word and Excel.
Make sure you're familiar with new communications technology”

Nick Keeley, University of Newcastle



“ **ITS A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF PEOPLE**

Phillip Bowen reckons one of the biggest things about going to university is learning to live and work with a whole new range of people. "It's a huge step change – like going to school for the first time or starting work," says Phillip who left St Andrews last year and is now a policy officer with the Civil Service. "Suddenly you're meeting people from all over the country and all over the world." Phillip made the most of his opportunities, getting involved with a drama group and running a student helpline. Both experiences gave him confidence and communication skills he finds invaluable in his work. "Typical helpline issues I had to deal with ranged from personal relationships to special needs – we found that students who do need particular help are really well provided for.

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3

GO ON, STRETCH YOURSELF! SEMINARS ARE A GOOD PLACE TO STRETCH YOURSELF – AND THAT DOESN'T MEAN SNOOZING IN THE CORNER. THEY'RE THE PERFECT PLACE TO BUILD YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE BY DISCOVERING WHAT YOU CAN DO. IN THIS RELAXED ATMOSPHERE NOBODY MINDS IF YOU END UP STUCK FOR WORDS OR SAY SOMETHING STUPID. AT THE WORST THEY'LL LAUGH. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE AND YOU MIGHT JUST AMAZE YOURSELF.

That big client meeting in your first job is not the place to begin. Get it wrong then and you certainly won't impress your boss. Group situations give you a chance to develop any leadership skills you may have. But don't worry if you haven't got these skills. Leaders need followers and you may find you're better working quietly within the group and can make a useful individual contribution.

Don't underestimate this – future employers recognise those skills and effective teamworking is highly-rated.

“Debate, get involved, exchange information and socialise – find out what you like and don't like”

Ruth Patterson, Atkins



An American survey revealed that while two in ten people feared money problems, four out of ten were terrified of speaking in public. The ability to speak clearly and communicate well with an audience takes practice – and tutorials and seminars are an ideal place to get that practice.



“Focus on the development of your communication skills”

Sarah Gilpin, John Lewis Partnership

3

THE TRUTH ABOUT EXAMS. "EXAMS PROVE NOTHING ABOUT YOUR ABILITY IN THE REAL WORLD – THEY JUST SHOW YOU'RE GOOD AT PASSING EXAMS." THAT'S A CLAIM YOU HEAR FROM SOME PEOPLE (USUALLY IF THEY HAVE A POOR DEGREE) – BUT DON'T BE FOOLED BY THEM.

The truth is that exams teach you to sort out the facts, explain them fast and deliver your best work under intense pressure. And those are just the kind of skills employers are looking for – as any job ad shows.

Firms expect and employ people who can come up with the goods. Exams ask you to repackage your knowledge to meet the needs of the examiners – in business terms they are your customers.

As you already know, exams are easier if you're good at revising. And at university you'll need to polish up your revision skills.

It will also pay off when you start work. If you're good at it, you've mastered a skill employers rate highly.

Analysing what needs doing, deciding the priorities and drawing up an action plan are all important processes in the business world.



PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Playing to your strengths is a trick that works in the exam room as well as on the games field. It's your best marks which usually decide your degree, not your worst. So make the most of your own natural advantages and don't worry too much about trying to remedy your weaknesses. You'll get better marks and you'll have learned a lesson for life.

play



3

JOIN A CLUB... OR START YOUR OWN! JOINING CLUBS AND SOCIETIES IS ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS TO BREAK THE ICE WITH PEOPLE DURING THAT FIRST FRANTIC FRESHERS WEEK. THERE'S ANOTHER GOOD REASON ALSO. IT'S WHAT YOU DO AWAY FROM YOUR STUDIES THAT HELPS YOU STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD.

But prospective employers won't be terribly impressed that you're just a member of the university drama group. They're more likely to take notice if you've played an active role. Tell them you were the artistic director/designer etc and it's a different story.

If your talents (or confidence) are not up to that, there's always something you can do. Volunteer to be publicity manager or treasurer for a start. And if the drama society is a bit ambitious, there are plenty of others.

If you're really stuck you can always start your own – even a trainspotters' society, if you must!.

If you're a bit shy or feel you're not up to it, remind yourself that getting involved will boost your confidence. You'll also meet more people (easy because if you're the secretary or treasurer, they'll tend to approach you) and bring lots of party invites rolling in! Try to join a variety of organisations. Then you'll be able to demonstrate a range of interests and pick up an assortment of skills once you get involved.

“Join three societies and become actively involved in at least one”

Alan Richardson, Royal Bank of Scotland Group

NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!

You'll find every kind of interest catered for by clubs and societies. If you've always fancied making films or learning to scuba dive this is your chance. It's also ideal for developing your existing interests. If you're into acting or journalism, the opportunities to spread your wings are tremendous. And would-be lawyers and politicians can brush up their debating skills by spouting rubbish all night. Make a fool of yourself and nobody will mind. You're free to experiment and that's all that matters.



HOW AN EMPLOYER SEES IT

If you take an active role in a university club or society, employers see you as someone who'll really put something into working for them. Being on a committee, organising publicity, taking part in drama or music – and playing any team sport – all help prove you're a team player and a person who gets things done.

THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS TO BE A WINNER. AT COLLEGE YOU'LL FIND THE BIGGEST CHOICE OF THINGS TO DO AT THE CHEAPEST RATES YOU'LL EVER KNOW – AND THE BEST SPORTING FACILITIES YOU'RE LIKELY TO FIND (OR AFFORD) FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

This is the place to build on any sporting ability you may have. It's also your chance to have a go at something you've always been dying to try – whether it's kickboxing, salsa dancing, snooker or skydiving. Even if your usual habitat suggests less athletic activities, you'll find kindred spirits in every student union.

Whatever your game, go about it with the right attitude and you'll develop a lot more than muscles.

Team games in particular can give you the skills that help make you a winner out there in the world of work.

Even without thinking, you'll be learning lessons about teamwork, communications and leadership that employers will reward with hard cash in a few years time.

It's not so surprising. Why else would far-seeing firms lash out thousands of pounds taking staff to four-star hotels for all-action team-building and bonding weekends?



“ **AND I CAME HERE TO GROW UP!**

Sitting in a pram wearing a nappy and with a dummy in your mouth can help you get rid of a lot of inhibitions. If you are a bit quiet or shy, getting involved with rag week is a great way to let your hair down. And you will give your self-confidence a boost in the process. Helping stage a successful event will develop your organising skills and trying to come up with good ideas will stimulate your imagination.

”

I'm a teamworker





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I suppose you could call this my idea of having fun. As a kid I wanted to play rugby but was always awkward about joining in with a gang. My dad's really proud I'm in the uni rugby squad – I haven't told him it's the third fifteen! Our lot don't have that much skill but we're great at post-match celebrations. My new housemate Mark got me into it. He seemed quiet at first but rugby's given him confidence and you can see he's a natural leader. It's helped me too – I get along with people better these days. They've even put me in charge of 'social' events which means organising the beer mostly. It's a good way to meet new people. Even if they try to dismember you on the pitch, you can end up great mates afterwards.

”

3

GET A JOB – AND GET SOME EXPERIENCE. A PART-TIME JOB IS ONE WAY OF KEEPING A CHECK ON THE SIZE OF THE LOAN YOU COULD BE FACING WHEN YOU LEAVE UNI. IT'S GOT A LOT MORE GOING FOR IT AS WELL. WORKING IN THE UNION BAR OR A LOCAL SUPERMARKET MAY NOT FIRE YOUR OWN CAREER AMBITIONS BUT IT CAN GIVE YOU MORE REAL-LIFE SKILLS THAN YOU REALISE.

Checking out the multi-buys at your checkout may seem mechanical but it will sharpen your wits and give you what employers call 'customer-awareness' skills.

You'll also be picking up some handy insights into how the British public thinks and acts.

You may even be grateful for your experience of 'interfacing with the public' in a few years time when you're holding forth about consumer psychology at that high-level marketing meeting.

When looking for likely work check first if your university has its own on-site centre for temporary jobs. [Top tips 9](#)

If you can, get experience of as many different kinds of jobs as possible. Try working in a different area each year (or even each term) if possible.

And look for every opportunity to deepen your experience – if working as a waiter for instance, ask if you can 'shadow' the manager for a day. [Top tips 11](#)

You could be the boss...

If you have any special talents, this could be a chance to put them to good use – whether on your own or with friends. Coaching struggling schoolchildren or budding sportsmen, providing a simple catering service – even offering or organising a house/baby-sitting service – there are lots of ways of bringing in some much-needed cash.

Make a go of working for yourself and you may find you really enjoy it. You'll be able to show potential employers you can kick-start yourself – and if those big job offers fade, you'll never be stuck for a living.

“Get work experience of different kinds – and it doesn't have to be with a big organisation”

Sophie Burden, Linklaters



IF ONLY I'D KNOWN

“The more you enjoy university life, the more you'll get out of it. Employers like you to have what they call 'customer-facing experience'. You'll get loads of that if you take a part-time job or work as a student volunteer with a local organisation. It's a terrific help if you get to understand how small firms work, show you can get things done and apply simple common sense. It was my work experience that gave me all those things – not my academic course.”

Kate, marketing officer with a PR agency

Make the most of the summer

Summer jobs offer similar useful experience. But you're also available longer. You can look for better quality jobs – even a chance to work in areas you might aim for after uni. If you change jobs or work the next summer too, try to develop any skill you've gained a bit further. And collect evidence of anything you've achieved – it's just what you'll need later when you put together your CV. Some businesses take on students for several months in summer – it's a great chance to pick up real business skills and find out if your career ideas could work out.

[Tops Tips 10](#)

Opening up your mind

Working abroad opens up all kinds of opportunities. You'll find plenty of advice at college and lots of organisations that can help. Voluntary Service Overseas provides opportunities through its World Youth Millennium awards and Youth for Development programme. Mixing with new people and enjoying your independence can really help to expand your mind.

It also brings you the confidence, practical experience, planning skills and contacts that help you stand out when you start looking for a serious job at the end of your course.

[Top Tips 12](#)

>THINK AHEAD< For summer jobs, send off for an application form at least three months ahead – they attract a lot of competition.



THINK SMART

A temporary job is fine during term for putting some money in your pocket. But always keep one eye open for the long-term opportunities – especially for the summer holidays or a gap year.



DON'T OVERLOOK THE UNION

Yes, your student union is a great place for social contacts, cheap entertainment and hearing about part-time jobs that are going. But it's also a place to broaden your outlook on life.

As well as debates there are union meetings and probably a student council. You don't have to be a budding politician either. It's just a good way of keeping up with what's going on in the world and another opportunity to practise putting yourself over in public.

“Make the most of long holidays – do something worthwhile, not just work. Expand your outlook on life”

Melanie Peeke, McKinsey & Co

GET A SPONSOR!

ONE GREAT WAY OF TAKING THE FINANCIAL PRESSURE OFF YOURSELF – IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH – IS TO GET SPONSORED BY A COMPANY. AS WELL AS GETTING YOUR TUITION FEES (AND POSSIBLY LIVING COSTS) PAID, YOU WON'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR FOR A JOB ONCE YOU GET YOUR DEGREE.

3

HELP OTHERS – AND HELP YOURSELF! VOLUNTEERING IS A HIGHLY ENJOYABLE WAY TO HELP YOURSELF AS WELL AS OTHER PEOPLE AND YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY. THERE'S AN AMAZING VARIETY OF VOLUNTARY WORK YOU CAN DO, SUCH AS STAFFING A PHONE LINE, HELPING CHILDREN OR DISABLED PEOPLE, ORGANISING A FRINGE THEATRE GROUP OR LENDING A HAND ON A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER.

Whatever you do, you'll have the chance to explore all kinds of real-world activities and see how you get on. Try to keep experimenting and discover what inspires you and what doesn't. Even without realising it, you'll be picking up tips and techniques you'll be glad of when those 1,000 days at uni are over.

You may well gain actual skills such as basic business procedures, learn about running a small organisation or pick up PR or accountancy techniques.

You'll certainly find yourself learning to communicate with people, work in a team, make useful contacts and put your own ideas across... all things an employer will rate highly.

On top of all that you can have a lot of fun. That's the view of most student volunteers who find it a refreshing experience that can keep them in touch with real life when the academic world starts to feel slightly claustrophobic.

[Top Tips 11](#)



THINK SMART

Try to use your part-time jobs to get different kinds of work experience – this gives you more chances to find out what you're passionate about. You should also try to think of ways of taking it a bit further. For instance, if you help a local group with its computer problems, see if you can become the manager of its whole IT facility.

“Want to change someone's life? Then why not start with your own?”

The Art of Crazy Paving
www.studentvol.org.uk

“Get the best work experience you can and do voluntary work”

Liz Rhodes MBE, National Council for Work Experience

“People with quality work experience usually end up in the best-paid jobs”

Carl Gilleard, Chief Executive of the Association of Graduate Recruiters

“Volunteering can be a great way to develop the skills we look for when recruiting graduates”

Helen Feltham, Marks and Spencer's Director UK Retail Human Resources



“

I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING NOW

It's pretty run-down around here. I should know – our student house is just round the corner. I'd always noticed the number of deprived kids and how different it was from the nice area where my friends live in hall. One night at the union I got talking to a guy who'd been a student volunteer and he told me about this community project which helps local mums and kids. I went along and just found myself caught up with it. I was just waiting here for the Tube one afternoon when it suddenly clicked in my brain – this is the career area I want to spend my life in. Luckily I was allowed to switch to a sociology course and it was my volunteering experience that swung it for me – the tutor could see that it had got me fired up. I got so wrapped up in the project last year I fell behind with my work. I've cut back now because of finals – but I now know where I'm heading, once I get that degree.

”

3

LEARN TO SELL YOUR SKILLS. WHEN YOU START JOBHUNTING, YOU'LL NEED TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE SKILLS AND ABILITIES YOU'VE HOPEFULLY GAINED AT COLLEGE. FOR A START MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A CONCISE, RELEVANT AND UP-TO-DATE CV THAT SELLS YOUR SKILLS AND ACHIEVEMENTS CLEARLY.

Remember your CV is the first thing a prospective employer sees. Then you should work on your self-presentation skills and plan how to put yourself across in interviews.

Employers will expect you to show exactly how these meet their job requirements. That involves backing up your claims with hard evidence such as certificates, progress files, letters and examples. You should be collecting such evidence right through university – and the sooner you start the better.

Put the facts at your fingertips

Try keeping a notebook for jotting down worthwhile things you've done.

Every little achievement is worth including. If you and your friends organised a party for charity, put down how much you raised, how many people came and what role you played. Did you organise it – or come up with a bright idea that made it a success? Make this a regular habit and you'll benefit by having the facts at your fingertips when your jobhunting starts.

Learn the language

As we've seen, the business world has a language of its own and there are times when you need to use it to sell yourself to employers effectively. No need to go over the top using buzzwords. But you will need to describe your skills and achievements in the way they recognise.

“Practise using your skills vocabulary to describe yourself and your experiences in as many situations as possible – at uni, at work and in your personal life.”

Valerie Metcalfe, University of Westminster Careers Service

present



4

New faces



PEOPLE YOU MEET AT UNI CAN SHAPE YOUR FUTURE. Some will become best friends or lifelong contacts, others may provide inspiration, support or vital feedback about yourself and your career. And the more you get out and socialise, the greater your chances of finding people who can help you get what you want in life.

4

1,000 NEW FACES. FROM FRESHERS WEEK ONWARDS – THAT FIRST CRAZY TASTE OF UNIVERSITY LIFE – YOU'LL BE MEETING NEW PEOPLE EVERY MOMENT AS YOU RUSH AROUND GETTING ENROLLED, BEING INVITED TO PARTIES, JOINING CLUBS AND GETTING YOUR BEARINGS. AND IT DOESN'T STOP FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

You could meet 1,000 new people and many of them can provide vital clues about what you want to do in life. Some may also help you start getting there too.

A few may become close friends who support and influence you right through life. Others might say or do things that inspire you – or provide an idea or contact that proves the key to your future. Others will join the network of contacts you build up over your working life.

Networking is a skill employers rate highly. But remember that it's a two-way process. Your friends and contacts will be looking for you to help them with support, feedback and referrals to other contacts.

Don't miss out

The more people you can get to know at college, the more likely you are to find the right ones to help you move forward. [Top Tips 8](#). To ensure you don't miss out, get out there and meet people. Fortunately, the more you do this, the easier it becomes and the more your confidence will grow.

You can always stick to "What's your name? Where do you come from? What are you studying?" Or ask about the films or music they like. Always give them somewhere to go in the conversation – so keep off your gap year memories or your mind-blowing video gaming skills!

Never stay in your own room worrying that you know nobody. Lots of others will be feeling the same. And those cool-looking types may not be so laid back – more likely paralysed with shyness!



THINK AHEAD

College can provide you with endless contacts for the future. And when the Marketing Manager your company needs to impress turns out to be the guy with whom you once did a three-legged pub crawl for charity, you'll have a head start on the opposition.

"Don't be embarrassed about networking! Talk to your friends' parents or attend meetings and introduce yourself"

William Archer, Barkers



“

SO GLAD I MADE THE EFFORT

One night I was feeling really homesick when I heard some guys talking in the kitchen. I forced myself to go in and introduce myself. I'd noticed one of them at lectures and that helped break the ice. Nick already knew lots of people and introduced me to his crowd. I didn't even go home once that term. Nick's become a great mate and we swap lecture notes a lot and sound each other out about our career plans. I often wonder what would have happened if I'd just stayed in my room that night.

”

“

I like this job – I've found I'm good with money and actually enjoy it. I've picked up a few other skills too – like coping with pressure and negotiating with people. One night I had to calm down a couple of lads who got over-excited in an argument – they belonged to this dangerous sports club and decided to make me their President! It began as a laugh but now I've even started a simple savings scheme for their club. My housemates are so impressed they reckon I should put up for Treasurer at the Film Society. By working here I've also met a lot of people who will be useful contacts if I decide to go for a job in the financial world.

”

I'm in financial



services



4

WHO'S YOUR HERO? AT COLLEGE YOU'LL HAVE THE CHANCE TO SEE HOW DIFFERENT PEOPLE OPERATE AND WHAT THEY'VE ACHIEVED IN THEIR LIVES. PEOPLE YOU REALLY ADMIRE CAN BE A GREAT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION. OFTEN SOMEONE OLDER WHO'S BUILT THE KIND OF CAREER YOU'D LIKE FOR YOURSELF CAN PROVIDE YOU WITH A ROLE MODEL.

A person who has succeeded in doing what you would like to do is also living proof that your ideas can become reality. And if they can do it, why can't you?

It's not only fellow students or tutors who can spur you on.

It's worth thinking about everyone you know – including members of your own or your friends' families or even people you've seen on TV or read about. [Top Tips 14](#)

See how you can 'sell' yourself

Once you start work, you'll discover that however efficient or smart you might be, you still need to convince other people.

Like it or not, success in life often comes down to how well you sell yourself.

Meeting and talking to so many people gives you endless opportunities to work at how you present yourself and communicate. [Top Tips 13](#)

Watch how others do it

Studying other people can also provide tips you can adapt for your own use – especially when it comes to communicating better. Instead of daydreaming through a boring lecture, ask yourself why your attention is wandering. What is this lecturer doing wrong?

But if you find another lecturer's approach exciting, note any techniques you could use yourself. The more you do this, the better you'll become at putting yourself across.

“Think of uni as a practice ground for work tasks such as making presentations, influencing, negotiating etc”

Leona Deakin, Barnes Kavelle Ltd



“ **BACK TO SCHOOL...**

Teachers told Garth Crooks it was a shame he didn't apply himself in the classroom the way he did on the soccer field. Garth's enthusiasm for football led him to become a star striker for Spurs. But his passion for conveying his enthusiasm for the game to others helped to send him 'back to school' later in his playing career. "I'd thought of getting into broadcasting and decided it would be helpful to do a social science foundation course. The course gave me a real passion for learning and I ended up doing a BSc in politics. I'd always been interested in both politics and sport, and returning to study helped me to formulate my thinking and develop my arguments better." As well as equipping Garth to become a successful BBC broadcaster, it has also enabled him to put the professional footballers' point of view more effectively in roles such as membership of Sport England and the Football Foundation, where he chairs an important advisory panel.

”

4

FRIENDS CAN GIVE YOU FEEDBACK. ONCE THINGS SETTLE DOWN AFTER THOSE HECTIC FIRST WEEKS YOU WILL START ASSESSING ALL THE NEW FACES WHO HAVE COME INTO YOUR LIFE. STARTING WITH YOUR HOUSEMATES, YOU'LL BE DECIDING WHO IS YOUR KIND OF PERSON AND WHO ISN'T.

Try to find friends who listen to you and make you feel comfortable rather than useless. And be careful to keep well clear of the cynical types who knock everything in sight – they'll drag you down too if you let them.

Good friends can provide more than just emotional support. Someone who backs you up and has your interests at heart is also the best person to give you an objective view of yourself – and what you're good at.

They'll also tell you where you're going wrong – but in a helpful way. Such positive feedback is priceless. If you're going to take control of your own career successfully, you'll need this right through life. [Top Tips 14](#)

You're not on your own...

You'll find lots of other support out there, including specialist groups and many people who are there to provide you with back-up – for instance on personal and financial matters. For a start you have university careers guidance advisers, Connexions (if you're under 20) [Top Tips 3](#) and your own personal tutor. There are also counsellors and postgraduates who'll be happy to help, not to mention doctors, bank managers and other professionals who are at your service.

The big thing is to make sure you know what's available and how to use it.

“Ask yourself what you value and enjoy. Start formulating your future vision”

Adrian Thomas, Royal Bank of Scotland Group

interact



“Talk with your friends and peer group and learn from their experiences”

Alex Snelling, L'Oreal

Get set for life



MY YEAR OUT GAVE ME REAL CONFIDENCE. Melissa Berry always dreamed of working in motor racing but never imagined she would end up rubbing shoulders with drivers such as Ralf Schumacher and Juan Pablo Montoya. As a sponsorship executive for Reuters, Melissa project-manages client hospitality and travels the world when she's not working in her firm's Fleet Street HQ. "I started by working in sales and really appreciated the confidence I'd built up during a year out in France while doing my degree at Leeds Metropolitan University – especially my unpaid placement in the summer researching how a French war museum marketed itself to tour operators. It was pure luck for me when Reuters started sponsoring Formula One and I could move into the marketing department. But in a good firm, however low down you start, you will be given opportunities and you can build a career if you're prepared to put in a real effort."

5

THINK ABOUT IT! EVERY TIME YOU EXPLORE A NEW OPPORTUNITY OR TAKE A RISK, YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IT'S TAUGHT YOU. EVERY EXPERIENCE CAN BE USED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE DIRECTION YOU WANT YOUR CAREER – AND LIFE – TO TAKE. YOU SHOULD ALSO SPEND TIME REVIEWING HOW YOUR IDEAS ARE WORKING OUT.

If you volunteered as film society treasurer and ended up dipping into your own pocket to make up the subscription money, you may have concluded you're not cut out to be a financial wizard (or you need more assertiveness skills!).

But let's say on the other hand that you did get a buzz out of organising some publicity in the local paper for a college fundraising event. Don't simply accept this – ask yourself what it was you enjoyed and what other situations might inspire you too.

One of the best ways of learning is to use all the feedback you can get. As we've seen, friends are the best source of this – along with tutors, parents, relatives and other people you've known for years.

Planning your future

Learn to think like this and it becomes a habit for life – and a big help once you get into a career. As you collect various skills, you'll be thinking how to use them to get what you want. You'll identify other skills you need and spot opportunities to get them. You'll also quickly realise the value of contacts and start reviewing your network of friends and acquaintances to see how they can help.

If you're thinking like this, you'll feel in control of your own life. And if you want to take it further once you're in a job there are action thinking and target-setting techniques you will find helpful. [Top Tips 4](#)

think



“Spend 5-10 minutes a day reflecting on what you do and if you should do it differently”

Thomas Ruedl, GKN plc



“ IT ALL CAME IN USEFUL LATER...

Ben Finn and his twin brother Jonathan built an international music software company out of their hobbies. “At university Jonathan studied music and I did philosophy,” says Ben. “We’d always been into computers and music and just assumed we’d make a living from programming. You’re exposed to all kinds of opportunities at university and we had the time to try our hand at lots of things. They all came in useful. Some showed me what I didn’t want to do and others gave me skills I still use... like writing and editing our student newspaper and taking photographs I could turn into postcards to sell. We spent years working on a better way to write music than pen and paper. Yet we only realised it could make us money after leaving university.” The best-selling program the Finn brothers developed allows users to publish their scores online. Today their Sibelius Group is a world leader in state-of-the-art Internet technology and music software, with over 100,000 customers in 100 countries.

5

KEEP IT GOING. EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO YOU – SETBACKS AS WELL AS SUCCESSES – IS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE. IF YOU USE COLLEGE TO EXPLORE EVERY OPPORTUNITY, YOU’LL SOON REALISE THIS. YOU’LL ALSO SEE WHY YOU NEED TO KEEP THINKING LIKE THIS ONCE YOU START WORK.

By the time you leave university, you’ll know much more about the kind of person you are and the life you want. With any luck you’ll have started to collect the skills you’ll need to achieve it.

Every time you try something new, you’re taking a risk. And that, naturally, increases your chances of a setback.

But once you can handle rejection, your confidence will grow and you’ll be readier to take risks. You can then go on learning and improving. [Top Tips 14](#)

You may know a bit about setbacks after your A level results – or even rejections from university. You’ll be lucky not to face some more once you start jobhunting.

But it’s always worth overcoming fear and taking a risk. And you could be amazed at where you end up.

Manage those risks

When trying something new, you’ll have more chance of success if you learn to manage the risk.

For instance don’t leave it until your first job to learn how to make a presentation to an audience. Practise while at college and find a ‘safe’ environment (eg a community group you work with in the vacation) to experiment with your technique.

If you do get knocked back, ask yourself what’s the worst that could happen? Not a lot!



THINK AHEAD

If you take a risk that comes off, make sure you celebrate your success. Remember to collect some evidence for future use – perhaps a reference from someone you worked for or a certificate for completing that course.

“Take big risks early on. Don’t regret anything and learn something from it. Bite off more than you can chew – and then chew like mad!”

Suzie Howard, WHSmith



“

SHINY SHOES DON'T ALWAYS HELP

When Duncan Inglis was at university, he spent his summer holidays as a labourer on building sites.

“Working on the sites was a great experience and it gave me a chance first hand to see how the buildings were constructed,” recalls Duncan, who is now a director of Inner City Solutions, a Liverpool-based regeneration consultancy. “This proved really useful when I was training to become a chartered surveyor.”

Any work experience – however menial the job – gives a chance to get an insight into what goes on in that particular career area.” Duncan also recommends jobs that are a bit offbeat – he’s also worked as a commercial diver in the Middle East and with a travelling fair in the US. “I think potential employers are more impressed if you can obtain some work whilst abroad, rather than just travel. And a colourful job always gives you something interesting to liven up your CV and provide a talking point at career interviews.”

”

5

WHAT KIND OF A JOB THEN? IF YOU'VE SPENT TIME AT COLLEGE FINDING OUT WHAT GIVES YOU A BUZZ, YOU SHOULD HAVE A GOOD IDEA OF WHAT YOU'RE AIMING FOR WHEN YOU LEAVE. SIMPLY KNOWING ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHAT MOTIVATES YOU WILL MAKE YOU FEEL MORE IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE.

Even if the picture of your ideal job is still hazy, you'll know enough to avoid drifting into one you'll hate. This is the time when the opportunities you've taken start to pay off.

Your part-time jobs, volunteering and vacation work will stand you in good stead when the time comes to start applying for jobs. And along with your involvement in college clubs and societies, they ensure you'll have lots to put in your CV to help you stand out from the crowd. As well as helping you discover what inspires you, your experience of work will have shown you what many jobs involve.

Making the right choice

You've got where you are now by making choices. Deciding on a career is another big choice. But you'll face many more during your life.

Any decision is a gamble to some degree. But the more you know about the various options, the more likely you are to make the right decisions.

“Operate outside your comfort zone and get into real jobs with skills training. Get temping. Get techy. Get travelling. Get interviewing. And get going.”

Paul Farrer, The Graduate Recruitment Company



YEAR OUT?

If you're not taking a gap year before starting at uni, you may wish to take some time out before you start your working life. If so, most people agree that one of the best things you can do with your time is to travel and gain a wider perspective on life.

“70% of the working population are unfulfilled in their work and 60% would like to leave their current job but don't know how”

National Gallup Survey



“

GIVE YOURSELF SPACE

A friend who came back from Goa with some fantastic stories gave me the drive to do something for myself. I decided to work hard at university then get away to discover the beauty of Africa. This changed my perspective on the world – but mostly on myself. Being alone in a wide open wild space really clears your mind and focuses your goals. It made me realise I could take responsibility for my own future, gain skills and have fun. There is more to life than study and ways of learning that are equally important as university. I had such an amazing and valuable time that it is now my job to encourage more people to do the same

Katie Stevens, Teaching and Projects Abroad

”

5

PAYING YOUR WAY. REMEMBER IT CAN TAKE TIME TO WORK TOWARDS YOUR IDEAL JOB. MEANWHILE YOU HAVE TO PAY YOUR WAY IN THE WORLD. IF POSSIBLE, IT'S BEST TO TRY AND FIND A SUCCESSION OF GOOD JOBS WHEN YOU LEAVE UNIVERSITY RATHER THAN RELYING ON SIX-WEEK SPELLS OF WORK INTERSPERSED WITH TIME ON SOCIAL BENEFITS.

In employment, you'll have the chance to go on gaining the skills you need for the kind of work that inspires you. You'll also be better placed to spot opportunities to move forward.

But don't think that leaving university is the end of your career decisions. You always have the possibility of changing direction and as long as you keep an open mind, anything is possible.

Many people go on to postgraduate studies and take up lifelong learning opportunities that will help them develop or even change direction. [Top Tips 4](#)

A sound investment

By the time you leave college, you could have spent several thousands of pounds on your education.

If you've used some of the ideas in this book and made the most of your time there, you'll be able to look back on this as a really sound investment in your future.

By then you should also have much more than just letters after your name.

You'll have a clear insight into what makes you tick and the kind of work you really love. You'll know what employers are looking for and how you're going to provide it.

In short you'll have a much clearer idea of what you want from life – and how you're going to get it.

enjoy



“Have fun at uni and live your life – all aspects of it”

Sara Wright, Uniq plc

IF ONLY I'D KNOWN

BY THE TIME I GRADUATED, I'D DECIDED I WAS GOING TO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND FELT I WOULD MAKE A GOOD SOCIAL WORKER. WHEN I FOUND THE SOCIAL WORK STAND AT A RECRUITMENT FAIR AND INTRODUCED MYSELF, THEY STARTED ASKING ME ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE. THEY SAID I NEEDED EVIDENCE OF SUCH WORK TO BE ACCEPTED FOR A SOCIAL WORK TRAINING COURSE. WHEN I POINTED OUT THAT I'D BEEN STUDYING FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS, THEY ASKED IF I'D CONSIDERED STUDENT VOLUNTEERING I COULD HAVE KICKED MYSELF! OH YES, I'D THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALL RIGHT AT UNI, BUT YOU KNOW HOW IT IS - IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY THEN TO DEMONSTRATE RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE AND WOULD HAVE GIVEN ME THE CHANCE TO CHECK IF I WAS AS COMMITTED AS I IMAGINED.

IF ONLY I'D KNOWN!

toptips

1) Special Needs

If you have special needs or a disability

- Check your institution is equipped to meet your needs before making a final decision
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Be assertive – remember you are the paying customer
- Look at how others have managed the process
- Seek external advice
- Stay positive – think of all the skills you'll gain in managing the process

2) Choosing the right place to study

If you're struggling with choice of course or university, ask yourself:

- Do the subjects really motivate and interest me?
- Does the course build on my real strengths?
- What quality of jobs do graduates get when they leave?
- Are they the sort I'd like?
- What reputation does this course/university have – particularly with employers?
- What learning approaches are used – what is the balance between lectures, seminars, theoretical, practical work, group, independent study etc – does this meet my preferred way of learning?
- How flexible is the course? Is it easy to change if I'm unhappy?
- What level of personal one-to-one support am I given?
- Is there a strong focus on developing employability skills as well as academic excellence?
- How can the institution help me find quality work experience?
- Does it meet my other preferences – geographically, socially, people and entertainment wise?
- What's my gut feeling?

Many people find it easier to answer these questions after a year out so don't be pushed into following the crowd.

3) Focusing your career/Making the most of the guidance services

Connexions or your college guidance service are among your most valuable resources so visit it early and as often as possible

Connexions is an advice and guidance service for all 13 to 19 year olds in England. It provides all teenagers with the help, support (including careers guidance) and access to development opportunities they need to prepare for the transition to work and adult life. Adult guidance may be provided in some of their centres.

Connexions is currently being phased in and will be fully operational by April 2003. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own arrangements. Where Connexions is fully operational, young people will be able to approach the service for help and guidance on all the things that may affect them. Further information is available from the website at: www.connexions.gov.uk

- Use all the resources available (guidance expertise, Information technology, training, contacts)
- Explore and increase your self-awareness
- Sign yourself onto as many skills development courses as possible
- Make the most of work experience opportunities of all kinds
- Find out what employers are really looking for

SET YOURSELF REGULAR CAREERS-RELATED OBJECTIVES, EG:

By the end of year 1, I will have:

- Explored potential career opportunities
- Found some relevant work experience in this field

By the end of year 2, I will have:

- Developed a draft CV and practical interview skills
- Undertaken more intensive work experience (building on Year 1)
- Participated in presentations and several key skills courses

By the end of year 3, I will have:

- Gained at least one job offer in my chosen field
- Gained a clearer idea of future opportunities
- Looked for feedback on my progress

Another source of help for those under 20 is 'Connexions Direct' which provides instant access to information and advice on a wide range of issues through its website at www.connexions-direct.com

If you are living in the North East or the Cheshire/Warrington areas you can also contact a Connexions Direct adviser for further confidential advice and help. This service may be available nationally at a later date.

4) Keep going! Career Management is a lifelong process.

There are many ways you can benefit from regularly talking to Connexions or your college careers service:

- Stay flexible. Be realistic in your career goals and keep as many options open as possible
- Explore career options. Set up your own mini research project, making full use of the library facilities and learning technologies. Try to uncover alternative career paths
- Gain experience. Continually look for opportunities to gain relevant work experience
- Increase self-awareness. Make use of the wealth of exercises, books, workshops and tests available to help identify your skills, values and interests
- Make contacts. Get yourself out and about. Make contact with past graduates in interesting jobs. Ask your university careers adviser for advice on who to contact
- Improve self-promotion. Find out what employers want. Get feedback on your CV and practise interview techniques
- Develop skills. Sign yourself up for as many skills workshops as possible. Look out for any careers-related modules or options. Practice makes perfect
- Learn how to make career decisions. Look at how you make decisions, and with the help of a careers adviser identify your values and motivations

5) Managing your time better

STEP 1 – BE CLEAR ABOUT THE BALANCE OF THINGS YOU WANT TO GAIN AT UNI.

STEP 2 – MANAGE YOUR MAJOR TIME-STEALERS:

- Inability to say 'No'
- Too many leisure activities
- Unclear personal objectives
- Lack of planning/organisation/priorities
- Poor working and/or studying environment
- Lack of self-discipline
- Interruption by drop-in visitors
- Involvement in too many things
- Laziness/lack of urgency

STEP 3 – REVIEW YOUR PROGRESS REGULARLY. AIM TO:

- React less and initiate more
- Avoid finishing assignments at the last minute
- Use study time more and organise time effectively
- Get the right balance between work, play and personal development

ALSO ASK YOURSELF:

- On whom or what am I spending too much of my time?
- On whom or what am I spending too little of my time?
- Where do I fail when I try to improve my use of time?
- What ideas have others given me for improving my use of time?
- Who or what else can help me?

6) Living on a tight budget

Think like a business – you need to make money and save money. Making money:

- Taking a year out will help, both for the experience and the cash

- Find part-time work that doesn't conflict with your studies
- Make the most of quality work experience opportunities during the summer vacation
- Look at other ways of making money, eg self-employment
- Find sponsorship
- Put your loan money into a saving account
- Sell your old books to the following year students

Saving money:

- Get as much advice from your bank/student loans office as possible
- Set yourself a weekly or monthly budget and try to stick to it
- Try keeping a written record of your expenditure
- Watch spending, eg junk food is convenient but cooking is cheaper
- Share the cost, eg books (second-hand where appropriate), taxis and food
- Seek out cheap student nights and make the most of NUS discounts
- Look for clubs and societies that don't break the bank balance

7) Improving your study skills

Effective studying requires a whole mix of skills including researching, problem-solving, learning and self-managing:

- Assess the standard – ask students the year above what is really expected and ask lecturers for old exam papers – look at the assignments that received high marks
- Build on your strengths and interests – choose courses/modules that give you a real buzz
- Find out how and where you learn best
- Look at how your performance is assessed – do you work better through continual assessment or exams?
- Learn to learn both individually and in teams – look creatively at ways of sharing books, notes, ideas and concerns
- Prioritise your 'prime' time for learning – stick to the time and place where you learn best, eg First thing in the morning in the library
- Use all the support available, eg study-skills books, courses, tutors, careers and library staff
- Explore the possibility of studying abroad – you'll gain invaluable language, cultural and self-reliance skills
- Learn to manage stress – put your study into perspective, build in time for relaxation, keep healthy and don't be afraid to ask for help

Always remember that every experience is a learning experience.

8) Building up your contacts

Use this 10-stage plan to build your network

- List the people you know – friends, family, older people. What do they do for a living? Does it interest you? Who helped them get there? Could they help you get a voluntary or paid job, too?
- Think creatively about past and present contacts, eg people you've met in your part-time jobs or volunteering, neighbours, professionals within the community. Are you still in touch with them?
- Ask them to help – or to suggest somebody who can
- Look in your diary or address book for three new contacts to make
- Add to the list people you've heard or read about, or who've been recommended to you
- Find a mentor – someone you admire – to monitor your progress
- Keep your list detailed and up to date. Keep in touch with people who've helped you – send thank you and Christmas cards and let them know how you are getting on
- Find new contacts. Cold-call organisations and volunteer. Talk to people at parties, on the bus, everywhere!
- Set down key questions to ask new contacts (see the list below). Remember to be friendly and research the language and culture of organisations that interest you
- Do a web search and contact the professional organisations in the sector that attracts you most. Do they hold specialist networking events you can attend?

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN NETWORKING INCLUDE:

- How have you reached your current position?
- What skills and experience are vital in your profession?
- Could you have done anything differently?
- What are the main lessons you have learned?
- Could you put me in touch with someone who could help?

9) Finding a part-time job

- Visit Connexions or your college careers service and spend time looking at the opportunities
- Find out whether your University has a Job Shop or schemes for work experience
- List your existing network of contacts – does anyone need your talents or know somebody else who may need an extra pair of hands?
- Be proactive and simply knock on employers' doors (having done a bit of research beforehand)
- Target sectors you are interested in working in – Yellow Pages will provide an ideal start
- Remember there are literally thousands of quality opportunities hidden in small businesses
- Volunteer yourself, just to get in the door, then make yourself indispensable
- Catch opportunities before they go public – use all the contacts available, past graduates, lecturers, your local pub or supermarket
- Walk round your local community – see what businesses are on your doorstep
- Create your own job – start your own small business

10) Finding summer work

Plan ahead and make the most of the time (you may never have such a flexible chunk of time again until you retire!)

- Visit Connexions for opportunities and schemes, eg Shell STEP
- Look to combine work with international travel
- Explore every type of work opportunity – work shadowing, casual work, sponsorship, volunteering, self-employment etc
- Try a few different types of work in different sectors
- Use every experience (good and bad) to reflect on where you would ideally like to work in the future

THE FOLLOWING FRAMEWORK MAY HELP:

SURROUNDINGS – Where will I work – lab, office, factory, outdoors? Is it dynamic, noisy, hi-tech?

PROSPECTS – Where might the job lead? Information about job security – whether the sector is expanding or contracting, effects of technology change, promotion prospects and future income. Will it be necessary to move for promotion? Will training and experience allow career development into other areas?

ENTRY AND TRAINING – What qualifications and personal qualities will I need to get in? What's the competition like? What training is available? How much help is there with training, time off, etc? Will I take a professional qualification?

EFFECTS – What effects will the job or placement have on my life? Information about how lifestyle is affected, eg standard of living, limits on free time, need to commute, relocate, effect on family life, respect from others, self-esteem.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK – What tasks will I perform? Varieties of work, opportunities to specialise, take responsibility, use equipment, develop procedures.

CONDITIONS – What are my conditions of work? Pay, holidays, regulations, maternity/paternity leave, mobility, sickness, insurance.

ORGANISATION – What type of organisation will I be working for – multinational, institutional, self-employment, entrepreneurial? What is the reputation of the employer?

PEOPLE – Who will I work with – colleagues, customers, clients, managers, will I be responsible for other people and their work?

11) Deepening your work experience

Make sure you get enough relevant work experience. Ensure the quality and depth of your work experience makes you stand out from the crowd. Try lots of different experiences to see what you're good at and enjoy.

- Make the most of the range of opportunities available (Voluntary, project work, self-employed)
- Be open-minded and try working in different sizes and sectors of company, particularly small businesses as they provide excellent opportunities for variety and early responsibility
- Set clear objectives of what you want from your work experience and regularly review them

- Collect evidence of your main achievements and continually log your learning. Keep any letters of commendation or positive feedback in a diary or file
- Use your work experience to build networks with people who can help you in the future. Make as many contacts as possible and keep your options open
- Think of work experience as a stepping-stone to a future job. Try looking beyond your degree at the jobs you're interested in and look at what experience they need – then go and find it
- Use the resources available at your university (college careers service, Job Shop, department contacts, placement schemes, etc) to find the right experience for you. If they can't help – create your own

EMPLOYERS ARE REALLY INTERESTED IN HOW YOU APPLY YOUR SKILLS TO 'ADD VALUE' TO THEIR ORGANISATION. YOU MAY BE ABLE TO:

- Identify new markets – 'Julie's research and language skills helped us expand our exporting into Spain'
- Fundraise – 'Peter raised £10,000 for our charity'
- Improve quality systems – 'We now have ISO9000'
- Increase productivity – 'We have reduced waste by 15%'
- Increase products or processes – 'Kalim has helped us re-engineer our organisation'
- Financial savings – 'Bringing in a full-time accountant and administrator has saved us thousands'
- Increase sales/custom base – 'Sara's warm friendly approach has increased repeat business from our existing client'
- Free up manager's time – 'I can now focus on my core business'
- Improve administration – 'We now have computerised systems which improve efficiency'
- Develop new products – 'Anne's technical skills have helped us develop a new product range'
- Improve IT systems – 'Mark computerised our accounts systems'

12) Getting into volunteering

Join your local student community action or Millennium Volunteers scheme – log on to info@studentvol.org.uk or info@student.org.uk Remember any job you are looking for can be found in voluntary work – marketing, fundraising, media, IT etc.

- Volunteer somewhere that makes you feel passionate, encouraged and rewarded. Then try to keep this momentum going in your career
- Go for it – it's an ideal way of boosting your confidence and taking risks in a safe environment
- Make sure the volunteering projects you choose will help you build on your strengths and tackle your weaknesses
- Create a portfolio of all your achievements
- Look for role models – people you admire, and learn from them
- Polish your networking skills, make the first move in building relationships
- Look for opportunities to meet people from cultures and backgrounds you would normally spend little time with
- Think seriously about the community/social enterprise sector as a future workplace – it's expanding fast and requires high-level skills

13) Learning to sell yourself

MARKETING OR SELLING OURSELVES RARELY COMES NATURALLY. SELF-PROMOTION IS ALSO A CRITICAL SKILL THAT NEEDS DEVELOPING OVER TIME, SO USE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD THESE SKILLS. IDEAS FOR ACTION INCLUDE:

- Get yourself onto a presentation skills course – if your department doesn't offer one, go to Connexions or your college careers service
- Set yourself a target – volunteer for two major presentations a year
- Join a debating society
- Get involved in the community and communicate with other cultural and educational groups
- Join a club or society where you present your ideas or lead a group
- Choose projects that involve elements of oral presentation
- Learn from your lecturers, assess good and bad presentations

- Tackle various audiences, eg organise a student quiz, present to academics as a course representative, promote your project to employers
- Start early, and build on your experiences
- Understand the importance of planning, eg anticipate the audience's needs, set objectives, have a clear structure, rehearse tough questions
- Seek a mock interview
- Keep a log of your progress and get feedback
- Don't forget that practice makes perfect

If you're shy, it's hard to speak to lots of people, but you could well need these skills in the future. If you start now, even in a small way, you'll be a lot more confident for later work situations.

14) Finding support/Boosting your self confidence

Most people at university are not as confident and self-assured as they may seem at first. This is the key to personal development and may need a fair bit of working on. Try these simple suggestions:

- List the achievements you're proud of and collect evidence of your success, eg any awards, certificates or letters you have
- Seek feedback – ask people you know to name five positive things about you. It sounds embarrassing, but you'll be pleasantly surprised at the valuable qualities you probably never knew you had. Once you know what they are, you can start to use them to help you
- Ask for constructive comments on areas you need to develop
- Update your list regularly and refer to it frequently so that you can reinforce positive feelings about yourself
- Create positive pictures about your world and the part you play in it. Avoid being negative or cynical!
- Keep a diary of positive events in your life – and add it to your list of achievements
- Step beyond your 'comfort zone' (the area of behaviour where you feel safest). Try things you wouldn't normally do – from a new activity to talking to new people. No need to take huge risks – lots of smaller ones will do and can do wonders for your self-confidence!
- Hang out with positive people – it's hard to stay positive all the time on your own

15) Getting your life organised

- Find the right balance between working, learning, playing and giving
- Carefully choose your clubs and societies – think about the skills and confidence you can gain from each
- Get the practicalities sorted – register with the local doctor, select the most appropriate bank, and choose your housemates carefully
- Make good use of the web contacts opposite

16) Boosting your career prospects

TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE YOU NEED TO ANSWER 'YES' TRUTHFULLY TO ALL THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Am I aware of the changing world of work/prepared for it?
- Do I have the skills to manage my learning and work effectively (ie am I self-reliant)?
- Am I aware of my strengths, weaknesses, values, experience and career aims?
- Have I enough work experience in the right areas?
- Am I making the most of activities such as clubs and societies?
- Am I aware of the benefits of project work?
- Am I making the most of Connexions or college careers service?
- Do I make full use of the contacts, opportunities and resources going?
- Am I learning from my own successes and failures?
- Do I have clear objectives for making the most of my university experience? Are these broken down into small, manageable steps?

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www.push.co.uk
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Special needs:

SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities):
www.skill.org.uk (0800 3285 050)
www.fast-trackpartnership.co.uk

Money:

www.dfes.gov.uk/student/support
www.studentsurvivalguide.com
www.bbc.co.uk/essentials/student
www.times-money.co.uk/student
www.studentmoneynet.co.uk
www.uniserveuk.com
www.youngpersons-railcard.co.uk
www.studentsgetoff.com
www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk (Tax)
www.slc.co.uk (Student Loans)
www.scholarship-search.org.uk
www.rbs.co.uk
www.natwest.com/students

General Student Advice:

www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigher
www.foundationdegree.org.uk
www.studentsurvivalguide.com
www.college-student-guide.com
www.juiced.co.uk
www.prospects.ac.uk
www.studentsgetoff.com
www.studentmagazine.com
www.student123.com
www.studentuk.com
www.university.net
www.uniserveuk.com
www.virginstudent.com
www.windmillsprogramme.com

On-line book search:

www.careers-portal.co.uk
www.push.co.uk
www.business-minds.com
www.blackwell.co.uk
www.books4beer.com
www.swotbooks.com
www.howtobooks.co.uk

Volunteering:

www.studentvol.org.uk
www.mv-online.gov.uk
www.vso.org.uk
www.worldwidevolunteering.org.uk

Jobs – gap year and part-time:

www.yearoutgroup.org
www.gap-year.com
www.vso.org.uk
www.summerjobs.com
www.hotrecruit.co.uk
www.prospects.ac.uk
www.yini.org.uk (Year in Industry)
www.statravel.co.uk
www.thegapyear.co.uk
www.gap.org.uk
www.gapwork.com (Australia)
www.councilsexchanges.org
www.bunac.org
www.teachingabroad.co.uk
www.changingworlds.co.uk
www.aventure.co.uk
www.world-challenge.co.uk
www.youngpersons-railcard.co.uk

Postgraduate information:

www.mba.org.uk
www.studylink.com
www.prospects.ac.uk
www.dfee.gov.uk/studentsupport

Health:

www.netdoctor.co.uk
www.studenthealth.co.uk
www.drugscope.org.uk
www.sexualhealth.org.uk
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
www.brook.org.uk

Other useful contacts:

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
www.ucas.com
National Union of Students
www.nusonline.org.uk
Commission for Racial Equality
www.cre.gov.uk
On-line community for ethnic minority students
www.kaleidoscopic.co.uk
SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities): 0800 3285 050
www.skill.org.uk

General help:

National nightline
www.nightline.niss.ac.uk
Depression Alliance 020 7633 9929
www.depressionalliance.co.uk
Alcoholics Anonymous 0845 769 7555
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
Drinkline 0800 917 8282 www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
National drugs helpline 0800 776 600
www.ndh.org.uk
Quitline: 0800 002 200
Samaritans 0845 790 9090
www.samaritans.org.uk

Contraception/sexual health:

Family Planning Association 0845 310 1334
www.fpa.org.uk
British Pregnancy Advisory Service
0845 730 4030 www.bpas.org.uk
Brook Advisory Centres 0800 018 5023
www.brook.org.uk
National Aids Helpline 0800 567 123
www.aidsmap.com

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AGR is the Association of Graduate Recruiters, an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting employers in all aspects of graduate recruitment and retention. AGR represents over 600 organisations that between them offer a high proportion of graduate opportunities in the UK.

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