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INTRODUCTION: CHOOSING AN ALTERNATIVE CAREER PATH

So, you are a Ph.D. student (or Master's student) considering an "alternative" or non-academic career path? Despite what you may fear, you are not alone on this path, and many people successfully make the transition beyond the ivory tower every year.

The purpose of this packet is to assist you in considering career alternatives to academic research and faculty positions and to help you prepare to pursue your alternative career goals. The ways to pursue an academic career are fairly clear and often taught, or at least supported by, academic departments and faculty. However, if you want to consider other career fields, the process for doing so is less obvious and often shrouded in silence for Ph.D. students.

This packet is not intended to encourage you to leave academia nor does it provide a sure-fire method for how to do so. What it does offer, however, are several resources to help you decide about and ultimately pursue an alternative career path. These resources include:

- Strategies to help you decide whether an alternative career path is right for you
- Information on possible career fields to explore with an advanced degree
- Tips on how to convert your academic mindset and materials
- Advice for conducting informational and job interviews
- Resume and cover letter examples

Use this guide to help you ponder and prepare. Refer back to it as you undertake the often drawn-out process of choosing and pursuing a post-academic career direction. And supplement it by visiting the UCSD Career Services Center (CSC) and the "Special for Graduate Students" section of our web site, <http://career.ucsd.edu>, which offers even more information that can help you prepare for your professional life – academic and/or non-academic -- during and after graduate school.

STEP 1: DECIDING IF IT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

How do you figure out if an alternative career to academia is the path for you? The first step is self-assessment, which basically means taking stock of your own priorities, personality traits, goals, and experiences.

Several books are extremely helpful for graduate students considering alternative career paths:

So What Are You Going To Do With That?: A Guide to Career-Changing for M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s. Basalla, Susan and Maggie DeBilius. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001.

- Written by two Ph.D.'s who decided not to take the academic path, this book outlines the steps to choosing and preparing for an alternative career. Includes the authors' interviews with 100 Ph.D./A.B.D./Master's degree holders about their transition from the academic world to other satisfying careers. (See their web site for more info on the book: www.phdcareer.com .)

Outside the Ivory Tower: A Guide for Academics Considering Alternative Careers. Newhouse, Margaret, Ph.D. Cambridge, MA: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1993.

- This book, published by Harvard and using the stories of many graduate students the university's career advisor author worked with over the years, may be a bit hard to find at Border's (libraries, including our Career Library, and used book sellers are probably your best shot) and it is a bit older. But its first sections on self-assessment are useful if you are deciding whether to transition "outside the ivory tower."

What Color is Your Parachute?: A Practical Guide for Job Hunters & Career Changers Bolles, Richard Nelson. Ten Speed Press. 2004.

- Written by arguably the world's most famous career counselor, this book takes you through a series of exercises that draw out your priorities and goals. If you get this book, it is most useful treated as a workbook. Take the time to complete the exercises in sequence; it isn't a skimmer.

Another great option is to make an appointment with the UCSD Career Services Center to take a comprehensive online self-assessment test and discuss your results with a career advisor. Our online tests delve into your personality preferences and strongest skill sets to help you consider complementary careers. You can also do your own self-assessment by journaling, talking to people outside of academia, and thinking hard about your priorities, your previous career goals, what aspects of academia excited you in the first place, and where you see yourself in the future.

The following pages will take you through some other basic aspects of self-assessment, from considering the myths and realities of leaving academia to making a list of your skills acquired from your education, work, volunteer, and personal experiences.

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF LEAVING ACADEMIA

If you decide that an alternative career path is right for you, you will likely have to face up to several common myths held by many Ph.D. students. Facing and “busting” these myths can help you move forward in pursuing the alternative career path you choose.

Several of the following myths are taken from the book, *So What Are You Going To Do With That?: A Guide To Career-Changing for M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s* by Susan Basalla and Maggie Debulius:

Myth: *"I don't have any skills that will be useful outside of academia."*

Reality: In graduate school you develop a number of skills and personal qualities that are applicable to many types of jobs. Ph.D. students often need to just work on transferring their mindset and materials from content-based academic style to skill-focused industry style. Read on in this packet for some tips to help you inventory your skills.

Myth: *"No one will hire me with so little work experience."*

Reality: Each year there are many Ph.D. students and alumni with limited work experience who become successful job seekers, finding employment in fields that range from publishing to policymaking to information technology. Again, the key is reframing your academic experience into marketable skills.

Myth: *"People who work in the business world are stupid and boring."*

Reality: You will be amazed. While we may want to believe that academia is the only place where intelligent and engaging people work, multitudes of smart people with diverse and interesting backgrounds work outside of the academy (with and without Ph.D.'s).

Myth: *"Jobs in the business world are stupid and boring."*

Reality: There are plenty of jobs out there that require innovation, independence, and critical thinking – if you do the work to find them. Consider this: Of more than 800 English Ph.D.'s surveyed by the Council of Graduate Schools 10 years after graduation, 40% were employed outside of academia; and that group was slightly *more* satisfied overall with their jobs (in terms of autonomy, content, prestige, flexibility, advancement, location) than those who were professors.

Myth: *"It's too late to change careers. I'm too old."*

Reality: In today's society, changing careers at any age has become more than common – it is thoroughly acceptable. Don't get stuck on age as a problem – it is often an advantage. Think in terms of your experiences, the skills you have developed, and what you have to offer an organization in terms of maturity, tenacity and insight.

Myth: *"I am a failure if I leave academia."*

Reality: While tenure-track faculty may be the only definition of success in some academic departments, it is critical that you step out of that mindset and redefine success. Why not think of a successful outcome to your graduate work as a satisfying career, a balanced life, a stimulating job? All of these things are possible outside of the academy. Remember that only 1% of Americans possess a Ph.D., and a good percentage of those people are not university faculty. Do the math; there must be more successful people in the world than that.

THINKING “SKILLS”: CONVERTING YOUR ACADEMIC MINDSET AND MATERIALS

Marketing yourself outside of the academic setting means selling the “skills” you have acquired during graduate school and from other experiences. After you have assessed your values and priorities and decided to pursue an alternative career path, the next step is to make a list of all the skills you have gained in your education, work, volunteer, and life experiences. This process will help you begin to see that you have a number of new career options to consider – and you *can* be a success on the job market outside of the academy.

SELECTED SKILLS ACQUIRED IN A TYPICAL UCSD GRADUATE EDUCATION

Research /Analytical Skills

- Ability to locate and assimilate new information rapidly
- Ability to break down and understand complex content
- Ability to think on one’s feet
- Ability to reach and defend independent conclusions
- Problem-solving tools and experience
- Intellectual maturity

Communication Skills

- Ability to convey complex information to non-expert audiences
- Ability to write at all levels: brief abstracts to book-length manuscripts
- Editing and proofreading
- Ability to speak before large groups

Interactive Personal Skills

- Persuasion
- Leadership
- Ability to cope with and manage complicated personalities
- Ability to thrive in a competitive environment
- Ability to navigate complex bureaucratic environments

Entrepreneurial Skills

- Ability to work independently and in self-directed manner
- Ability to acquire funding and write successful grant proposals

What it Takes to Advance to Candidacy

- Exceptional intellectual horsepower
- Track record of achievement
- Ability to perform under pressure
- Ability to learn and adapt at a high level
- Ability to meet high expectations

What it Takes to Finish

- Focus, Tenacity, Stamina, Discipline
- The ability to close the deal

CAREER FIELDS BY SKILLS

CAREER FIELD SKILLS	Business & Finance (including High Technology)	Media	Education	Nonprofit (Public Service, Arts)	Public Policy
Research And Analysis	R&D (e.g., bio & high tech.), risk analysis, market research, consulting	Journalism, market research	Research centers, educational research & evaluation, archival work	Organizations with research efforts, think tanks, research centers, foundations	Congressional Research Service, analytical division of state or local agency
Teaching (Presenting, Inspiring)	Sales, training and development	Sales, advertising, radio/TV, journalism	Teaching (adult ed., secondary, comm. colleges), freelance, lecturing	Public education, development, community organizing	Politics, executive branch positions, fundraising, interest groups
Writing, Communication	Corporate communications, communications analysis, advertising & PR	Journalism, writing, editing, publishing, advertising & PR	Publishing (specialized, educational), reporting, writing	PR, newsletter editing for nonprofit or professional publications	Speech and report writing for government agencies or interest groups
Administration and Management	Management positions reached from line positions in specific companies	Editing, publishing, corporate communication, management	Academic administration (e.g., principal, headmaster, college dean)	Administration, management, development (event planning), foundation management	Administration of various public agencies, program management
Problem Solving	Consulting, marketing, management	Investigative reporting, PR, management, specialty consulting	Academic administration (e.g., principal, headmaster, college dean), educational consulting	Management, nonprofit consulting, think tanks	Most high-level govt. positions, political/policy research, political consulting
People Skills	Consulting, human resources, sales, training & development, management	Sales/marketing in publishing, interviewing	Student services (counseling), academic administration, educational consulting	Development, management, advocacy	Politics (as candidate or staff), fundraising, lobbying
Technical and Scientific Skills (including Computer Programming)	Info. systems, R&D, CAD, actuarial, consulting on sci./tech. matters, software companies	Specialty publishing, professional journals	Computers in education (e.g., TERC, EDC), curriculum development	R&D, consulting for hospitals & other nonprofit, info. systems, environmental groups	National labs, EPA, NSF, NIH, Census, OTA, int'l. scientific agencies
International Expertise (Area Studies, Languages, Int'l Experience)	Cultural consulting, int'l business, country risk analysis in financial institutions	Specialty publishing, foreign desk of various media	International education, curriculum development, educational tours, conferences	Nonprofit orgs. (county or region specific), consulting on international health & welfare	International orgs., federal agencies, congressional staff, policy think tanks, Peace Corps
Arts and Other Creative Skills	Advertising, computer music, technical illustration	Specialty publishing, criticism, writing, dramaturgy, art, illustration, photography	Arts education in various settings	Community arts orgs., specialty museums, art/drama/dance/music therapy	Administration of arts agencies & organizations (e.g., NEA, state arts councils)

From M. Newhouse - *Outside the Ivory Tower*

STEP 2: EXPLORING CAREER OPTIONS

Once you have spent some time on self-assessments -- inventorying your own skills, experiences, values, and priorities -- you can move on to exploring more in-depth the careers that most interest you. As a start, you may want to consider careers that often appeal to many UCSD graduate students and employ many professionals with advanced degrees:

- Biotech Industry
- Business
- International Relations
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Policy & Government
- Teaching & Education
- Writing & Editing

To find out more about these careers and any others, four main sources offer a plethora of insights and information (including job openings) on career fields:

1. People in the Field

Professionals already working in the field you want to pursue can be your greatest resource, offering insights into what it's "really like", connections, and information that can help you learn about and break into that field. The following pages delve into the idea of "networking" and "informational interviewing" to both explore careers and find jobs. A good place to start is CSC's *Career Consultants* database, found on our Web site, in which you can search for professionals in your field of interest who have volunteered to talk to UCSD students about their careers. Also *professional associations* exist for every career – use them! You will find a list on our web site under "Professional Associations."

2. Career Services Workshops (& Videos!)

Every year, the CSC offers Alternative Careers for Ph.D.'s and Career Exploration panels featuring professionals in various fields. CSC also keeps a video collection of past panels in the Career Library. Check them out for information on what Ph.D.'s are doing with their post-academic professional lives, and for possible contacts in your field of interest.

3. Web Sites

For general information on any career field, including work conditions, job outlook, requirements, salary, related jobs, and more, check out the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* online, compiled and regularly updated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics: <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/>.

For specific web resources categorized by both discipline and the career fields listed above, log onto the "Special for Graduate Students" section of our web site: <http://career.ucsd.edu>.

For first-person accounts and advice for graduate students and Ph.D.'s seeking non-academic careers, check out the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* career section: <http://chronicle.com/jobs>.

4. Books

Visit our Career Library in the CSC and check out the array of reference books we offer, categorized by career field and including a special section, Especially for Graduate Students.

USING "NETWORKING": THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO EXPLORE (AND FIND!) A CAREER

“People are better than paper,” Howard Figler, Ph.D., writes in *The Complete Job Search Handbook*. He says this because **80% of jobs are acquired through knowing someone** – in other words, networking. Networking can be achieved through talking to people in your circle (friends, family, people at the gym, day care, church or temple, etc.) and attending professional conferences and meetings. It is done through internships, volunteer work and part-time jobs.

It can also be incredibly effective to conduct individual networking meetings, also called "informational interviews," during which you meet with a person who works in a field you are exploring to evaluate the fit between your skills, interests, and values and the position in which you are interested. Information interviews also help you discover inside information about an organization's or field's culture and expectations. This process will help you get an inside look at a career before you jump into it, and avoid making a poor match.

Steps to Conducting Successful Information Interview

1. Identify individuals who would be willing to conduct information interviews. Friends, family, alumni, and others are a good place to start. Start with the one person with whom you would feel most comfortable speaking. This type of person won't mind if you're nervous or don't have your routine down. Many students use the CSC's online Career Consultants service (200 professional contacts, many with advanced degrees, in a variety of fields).
2. Research your contact's career field and organization. Information is available through the CSC Career Library and Web site.
3. Request advice, allowing your contact to be expert. Ask open-ended questions starting with "how," "what," and "in what ways..."
4. Bring your vita or resume and recap your skills, experience, and target employers.
5. Develop specific questions tailored to your contact.
6. Ask for referrals after you have established a relationship and developed his/her confidence in you.
7. Always offer to pay for any coffee or meals.
8. Keep the meeting to a maximum of 30 minutes, unless your host volunteers more time. A telephone informational interview should not run beyond 15 minutes.
9. Thank the person and keep him or her informed about your progress.

Tips on Getting Through to the Right Person

- When you call companies you've decided to target, ask for the name and title of the head of the specific department in which you'd like to work.
- At this stage, don't disclose unnecessary information about why you're calling with people who are simply there to answer the phone.
- If you try the right approach, you can usually find a way to connect with hard-to-reach managers. For example, if you get the receptionist, tell him or her: "It's regarding information I forwarded to her/him last week. I'm sure Mr./Ms. _____ will be familiar with it. Is Mr./Ms. _____ available?"
- If the person you are trying to reach is unavailable, ask the receptionist for the best time to call the following day.

How to Set Up a Networking Meeting

Ideally, you should write an approach letter (no more than one page) to your contact introducing yourself and asking for a meeting. In addition, you can phone your contact directly. Informational interviews are far more effective when conducted in person than over the telephone. Don't expect your contact to call you back or to set up the meeting. You must initiate the call back and other arrangements.

Structure of an Actual Informational Interview

Stage 1: Introduction - indicate your appreciation for interviewee's time.

Stage 2: Purpose - review your purpose in asking for a meeting.

Stage 3: Build Relationship - ask your general questions allowing the interviewee to be the expert.

Stage 4: Your Background - briefly describe your background and current situation.

Stage 5: Career Preparation/Opportunities - ask questions about entering the field with your goals in mind.

Stage 6: Ask for Referrals - ask if they would be willing to refer you to others in the field.

Stage 7: Acknowledgement - thank the person for their time and interest.

Useful Questions to Ask in an Information Interview

- What attracted you to the field? How did you get into it?
- Describe a typical day on the job.
- What personal attributes, skills, and qualifications are needed to be successful in your field?
- What are the satisfactions and disappointments in your job?
- What are the possible career paths and salaries at various levels?
- If you had a choice, would you still enter this field? Why or why not?
- What trends and opportunities are developing?
- What professional associations are you involved in?
- What advice would you give to someone entering the field?
- Who else could you refer me to who knows about this career field?

STEP 3: PREPARING JOB SEARCH MATERIALS

Once you have made your list of skills, the next steps are creating your resume and cover letters and preparing yourself to go on interviews. The following pages offer resources to help you create these materials, and re-create your interview-ready self. First, here is an overview of what to consider as you embark on your materials preparation.

TEN DIFFERENCES IN JOB-SEEKING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF ACADEMIA

1. **Vitas are often longer than two pages; resumes are not.**

Try to keep a resume to one or two pages. If it goes to a second page, make sure the first page contains the key information (including, usually, your objective) and the second page includes your name in the top corner.

2. **Vitas don't emphasize skills; resumes always emphasize skills.**

Emphasize prominent organizations with which you have been affiliated, functional skills, and special knowledge (computer languages, foreign languages, etc.). Use "action verbs" (a list of which is in this packet) to describe your experiences. These skills, or things you "did", are more important than detailed content on resumes. Take out specific publications, lab work, etc., unless it is relevant to the job to which you're applying.

3. **The appearance of the vita is less important than the content; the visual appearance of the resume is very important.**

Make sure the resume is visually effective to communicate professionalism and clarity. Use capital letters, bold, underlining and spacing to highlight your strongest credentials (unless the resume is being "scanned"). Don't make it too dense or busy. Proofread your resume several times for spelling, grammar, and structure.

4. **Your academic letter of inquiry for a job is sometimes addressed to an anonymous committee; industry cover letters need to be addressed to the right person.**

Address your letter to a specific person, particularly the one most likely to make the hiring decision. This may require calling the organization to get the best name.

5. **Cover letters for academic positions are often two pages in length; cover letters for other jobs are rarely longer than one page.**

Be concise and specific on your cover letter. It should not be any longer than one page. It's acceptable to repeat certain activities that you listed on your resume, but choose those that are most relevant to the employer.

6. Academic positions require references/reference letters; other jobs often do not.

Omit references unless the employer is familiar with the actual person. References are used primarily for positions in academia and graduate school. When asked for the names of references, you can then choose and present them selectively.

7. Academic positions are posted publicly; many positions outside of the university are never even advertised.

It is estimated that only 20% of jobs in industry and non-profit organizations are publicized – which means the vast majority of openings are in “the hidden job market.” Often employers want to keep openings quiet, as they look for people within their contact networks – “known quantities” – to fill their positions. This is why networking is the best way to find jobs.

8. Academic interviews last a full day; other interviews may last less than one hour.

Unlike the academic hiring process, there is no set timeline or structure for non-academic interviews and hiring. But the norm is that first round non-academic interviews will last 30-60 minutes. Thus, you will need to be able to summarize concisely how your background fits the position.

9. The dress code for academic interviews can be informal; other interviews require appropriate business attire (suit, tie or dark skirt, conservative colors, etc.).

In a non-academic interview you are almost always expected to dress conservatively and as if you were making a presentation to a senior manager or client.

10. “Marketing yourself” may be uncouth in academia; it is expected in industry.

Marketing yourself is absolutely a part of the academic selection process as well, of course, but perhaps in subtler or less explicit ways. In industry, it is simply a fact. You must get comfortable articulating what you have to offer, not expecting your publication record or grants to speak for themselves, as they may inside the academy.

TEN STEREOTYPES OF PH.D.'S AND HOW TO COMBAT THEM

On the flip side of academic myths about careers outside of the academy, there exist myths outside of the ivory tower about Ph.D.'s. Understanding what to expect and how to counter these myths is crucial for you to successfully present yourself and shape your job search materials as you pursue an alternative career.

Think about these myths (courtesy of UC-Berkeley Career Services) when you are writing your resume and practicing for job interviews – they will help you proactively present your Ph.D. as an asset, never a liability, to what you offer an organization.

1. Academics Don't Work Very Hard

Describe all the steps required to complete the Ph.D. program with appropriate framing:

- Gain expertise in broad fields and particular specialty.
- Pass qualifying exams (most people would blanch at having to write a six-hour exam or face cross-examination for three hours on 18th century French drama).
- Develop a unique project, secure funding, manage a diverse committee of busy and often exacting faculty experts, and research and write a book-length manuscript while also teaching UCSD undergraduates.

2. High Performers Don't Come from The Academy

- Highlight your track record of achievement (i.e., GPA, Phi Beta Kappa).
- Emphasize the extreme competition to get into elite graduate programs like UCSD and to secure fellowships/grants from national funding sources.
- Explain your ability to perform at a high level for national/international experts in your field. (Silicon Valley, biotechs, and increasingly management consulting are prominent professional realms that are full of high performers with academic backgrounds.)

3. Ph.D.'s Are Just Overgrown College Students

- The difference between your analytical and communication skills and theirs is not one of degree but of kind -- the quantum leap kind.
- You have been selected to teach one of the strongest student bodies in the nation (hundreds of high school students with 4.0s can't even get into UCSD).
- As a TA, you provide students with the skills and training these same firms target when they aggressively recruit UCSD undergrads.

4. If You Don't Go Into Academia, There's Something Wrong With You

- My career goals fit better with industry than in the confines of the academy.
- I want to use my energy and talents to effect change directly, to have an impact.
- I am looking to use my skills & abilities in a more applied setting.
- I have taken the time to make a considered, thoughtful choice.
- These days most talented people have multiple careers.

5. You're Just Marking Time Until An Academic Job Comes Along

- Explain your interest in the position/ organization in terms of your personal goals.
- Explain that you've done significant research on the organization and can clearly articulate why you are sincerely interested; that you are not there out of dire necessity or on a whim.
- Link the job you are applying for to analogous prior experience as a means of demonstrating your prior interest in the field or type of organization.
- Consider doing an internship or volunteer stint to show your willingness to invest in the kind of work they do before asking them to invest in you.

6. We'll Have To Pay You More

- Ph.D.'s offer enhanced value and a track record of achievement and accomplishments.
- You bring to their work not just the specialized knowledge of an academic domain, but advanced skills and experience (see skills chart in this booklet).
- You have demonstrated entrepreneurship (think about the parallels between a dissertation and a start-up), initiative, and ability to complete complex projects with minimal supervision.
- Ph.D.'s are used to working long hours to meet deadlines with high-quality work.

7. Ph.D. = Elitist, Anti-Social, Abstract

- Emphasize role as teachers demystifying material for diverse student population.
- Tone down your vocabulary; avoid the use of academic jargon.
- Stress collaborative experience you have had and your desire to work in more of a team setting where your work will have more of an impact.

8. Ph.D.'s Lack Management/Collaborative Skills

- Explain the concrete management tasks involved in shepherding your project to completion in a complex bureaucratic environment (the necessity to sell the idea; to balance input and expectations from multiple sources; to organize research, writing, travel, presentations all while working to earn income).
- Illustrate your extensive experience in project management, moderating discussions/meetings, mentoring/training derived from working as a TA, organizing a panel/conference, running a study/lab group, serving as departmental representative, etc.

9. Your Type Of Ph.D. Is Irrelevant

- Emphasize the process; skills and experience gained, rather than the end product created.
- Describe your research as a series of puzzles you have solved and search for analogies to the kind of problems/puzzles they confront in their work.

10. Ph.D.'s Will Correct Others' Grammar; Be Prissy & Precise

- Eliminate the use of jargon, even if asked to describe your academic work.
- Use humor, empathy, open body language, and active listening.

PREPARING FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

Interview Tips

- Research the organization, job, and career field using career directories, and CSC Web site; talk to people in your network about the company.
- Recall specific experiences and accomplishments to use as examples.
- Review a list of typical interview questions (see below).
- The best days to interview are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday at mid-morning.
- Dress in appropriate business attire.
- Arrive at least ten minutes early for your interview.
- Make eye contact with people that greet you and have a firm handshake.
- Make polite conversation/chit chat at the very start of the interview.
- Don't apologize about your background, lack of experience, etc.
- Be yourself, but always stress the positive.
- Don't assume the employer has read your resume.
- Don't ask about salary or benefits in the first interview.

Common Interview Questions

1. Could you tell me something about yourself?

Provide a short two-to-four minute summary of your background hitting the most relevant highlights. Conclude with a restatement of your objective.

2. Why are you interested in this position?

Provide a substantive answer with specifics based on the job and organization.

3. Why have you decided against a career in academia?

Focus on the positive qualities of your new career decision. You might mention that you enjoy "applied" work. Don't spend very much time discussing the gloomy academic job market.

4. *Behavioral Questions are widely used in employment interviews in most fields.*

Example: Tell me about a time when you had to organize a project under tight time frames. How did it turn out?

The key to answering these questions is to cite **specific evidence/proof** of your successes.

5. What would you describe as a weakness?

You need to come up with an answer because you will look arrogant if you say you can't think of anything. "I'm a perfectionist" has been overused. The best answer is to be honest about a relatively minor weakness that wouldn't be terrible in the job.

6. What are your future goals?

This usually not a critical question since people change jobs more frequently than in the past. It is best to mention that the job you are interviewing for appears to fit your plans well.

7. Do you have any questions for us?

Don't ask about salary or benefits. Ask questions that have to do with the day-to-day functioning in the job. For example, "Could you give me an idea of a possible project I would be involved in within the first few months on the job?"

TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN STARTING YOUR RESUME

- ***Not all resumes follow the same template.*** The samples in this handbook give you ideas of some effective ways to structure and design resumes, representing candidates in different fields and with different levels of experience. None of them is more “correct” than another. Order and structure your resume to best reflect your own experiences and career goals.
- ***Consider you resume as “telling your story.”*** And it should be a clear and easy-to-follow story with a central theme.
- ***Employers look at resumes for a matter of seconds.*** Use bold lettering, italics, bullets and spacing (within reason) to make the most important points stand out in a 20-40 second read.
- ***Focus on SKILLS!*** Refer back to page 5 for a list of skills acquired by typical UCSD graduate students and use the action verbs on the next page. Describe your experiences in these terms.
- ***Clarity, Conciseness, Organization.*** Like a guiding light, keep these three factors in mind as you write.
- ***Use 11-pt. or 12-pt fonts.*** These are the most readable.
- ***Don’t cheat on margins.*** Many a grad student has taken cues from their undergrad students and fudged margins (i.e., made them nonexistent) to fit information into two pages. As you tell those undergrads, it’s obvious and not fooling anyone. Keep the white space; it’s more readable that way.
- ***Purging can be healthy.*** It may be painful to cut the academic terms and advisor names you worked so hard to collect, but it clears your way for new opportunities. Axe the jargon and minor details – and feel the liberation!
- ***Proofread!*** And have someone else proofread when you’re done with it.
- ***Relax.*** You can do this. Just start -- and breathe. It might even be fun.

SAMPLE ACTION VERBS FOR RESUME-WRITING

Communication/ Interacting with People

Aided
Composed
Arbitrated
Conceptualized
Advised
Appraised
Arranged
Clarified
Conferred
Consulted
Contributed
Cooperated
Coordinated
Counseled
Debated
Defined
Directed
Enlisted
Explained
Expressed
Helped
Influenced
Informed
Inspired
Interpreted
Interviewed
Manipulated
Mediated
Merged
Negotiated
Participated
Promoted
Recommended
Represented
Resolved
Spoke
Suggested
Unified
Verbalized
Wrote

Creative

Acted
Abstracted
Adapted
Composed
Conceptualized
Created
Designed
Developed
Directed
Drew

Fashioned
Generated
Illustrated
Imagined
Improvised
Integrated
Innovated
Painted
Performed
Planned
Problem Solved
Shaped
Synthesized
Visualized
Wrote

Detail Oriented

Analyzed
Approved
Arranged
Classified
Collated
Compared
Compiled
Documented
Enforced
Followed Through
Met Deadlines
Prepared
Processed
Recorded
Retrieved
Set Priorities
Systemized
Tabulated

Financial

Administered
Allocated
Analyzed
Appraised
Audited
Budgeted
Calculated
Computed
Developed
Figured
Managed
Performed
Bookkeeping
Prepared
Projected
Tracked Records

Investigative/ Research

Calculated
Cataloged
Collected
Computed
Correlated
Critiqued
Diagnosed
Discovered
Examined
Experimented
Extrapolated
Evaluated
Gathered
Identified
Inspected
Interpreted
Investigated
Monitored
Observed
Organized
Proved
Reviewed
Surveyed
Tested

Managerial

Achieved
Assigned
Administered
Consulted
Contracted
Controlled
Coordinated
Decided
Delegated
Developed
Directed
Established
Evaluated
Fired
Hired
Implemented
Initiated
Lead
Negotiated
Organized
Planned
Prioritized
Produced
Recommended
Reported

Manual Skills

Arranged
Assembled
Bound
Built
Checked
Classified
Constructed
Controlled
Cut
Drove
Drilled
Handled
Installed
Lifted
Maintained
Prepared
Pulled
Operated
Tested

Provided

Effective Service

Advised
Attended
Cared
Carried Out
Coached
Coordinated
Counseled
Delivered
Demonstrated
Earned
Empathized
Expanded
Explained
Facilitated
Furnished
Generated
Inspected
Installed
Issued
Mentored
Referred
Related
Repaired
Provided
Purchased
Sent
Served
Serviced
Submitted
Transmitted