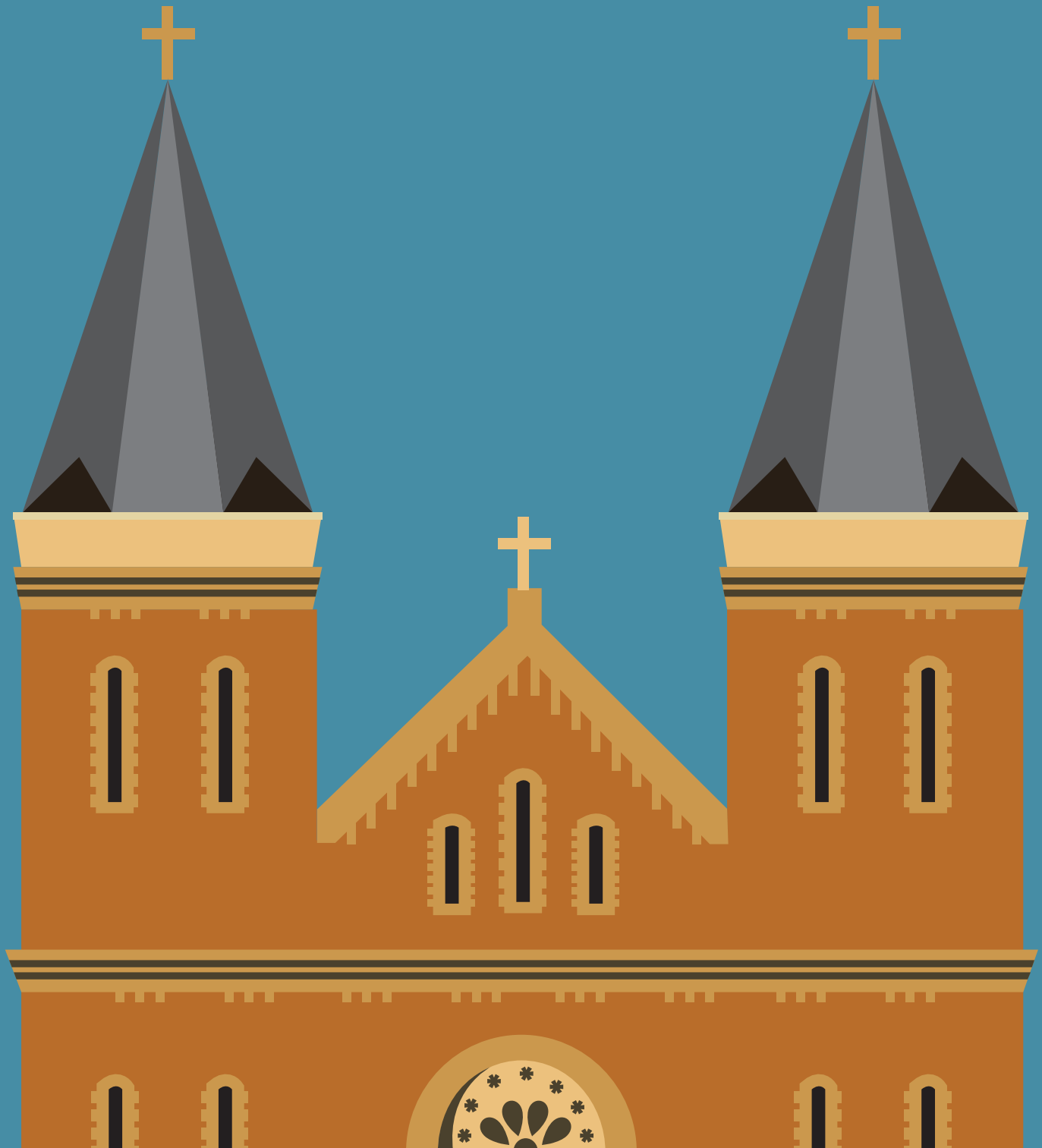




SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE

CAREER GUIDE

CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER



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300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

www.stvincent.edu



Message from the Career and Professional Development Center

Hello Bearcats!

This *Career Guide* is intended to serve as a resource throughout your entire four-year experience at the college and beyond. The information in this guide is to be used as a reference when exploring your career, learning how to network or preparing for an experiential learning opportunity such as an internship or campus job. You will also find other tips on suitable dress attire, appropriate professional communication, interviews and job fairs.

In addition to using the guide, you should make an appointment with your career consultant. We offer services on all career-related topics regarding your post-graduate aspirations as an employee, entrepreneur or future graduate student. We encourage you to not only gain valuable experience on campus, but also to gain skills that have practical applications to both on- and off-campus experiences.

We hope you will stop by our office, attend our career-focused events and engage with our community so you can build a successful academic and professional future doing what you love!

Sincerely,

The Career and Professional Development Center Staff

Career and Professional Development Center Vision

The Career and Professional Development Center Vision is to send each student into the professional world, giving them the strength and confidence to succeed. Without forming opinions or making assumptions, we will treasure each student, listening to their stories, opening our hearts and sharing our genuine compassion.

Services and Resources

YOUR SUCCESS is important to us. Since success requires planning, we provide a shared journey encouraging you in your career discovery practice at Saint Vincent College. The Career and Professional Development Center is an integral component of your education. We provide career and professional activities designed to support and challenge you through your career development process.

The following information highlights the services, programs and resources offered by the Career and Professional Development Center for all Saint Vincent College students and alumni. To learn more about each, please visit the Saint Vincent College portal page and join Handshake to make an appointment with your career consultant.

The following is a list of topics your career consultant may assist you with during an appointment:

- Career exploration, planning and assessment tools
- Handshake
- SVCBearcatREADY Program
- Resume, cover letter and employment letter writing
- The Student Employment Program
- Job shadowing
- Internship search
- Full-time job search
- Mock interviews
- Employment and graduate school informational interviews
- Negotiating a job offer or salary
- Employer contacts and networking opportunities
- Employer presentations
- On-campus interviewing
- Graduate and professional school application process
- Internet resources
- On-campus networking events
- Off-campus events and job fairs
- Building a LinkedIn profile

Career and Professional Development Center Mission

The Career and Professional Development Center supports the academic and professional growth of our students and alumni by offering services that assist in the formation of career goals, pursuing those goals, attaining practical experience and then finding suitable employment or acceptance into graduate and professional school programs. The Career and Professional Development Center helps students transform their liberal arts foundation into practical skills and successful careers, while serving as an internal resource to students and faculty and as an external partner to employers, post-secondary institutions and local communities.

Services and Resources *continued*

handshake

Discover the jobs you actually want—Handshake shares recommendations based on your interests, major and skills. Explore collections of jobs just for you.

Complete your profile to attract top employers and land your next job.

Favorite jobs to prioritize applications and never miss a deadline! Download the app and keep up with the latest opportunities!

<https://stvincent.joinhandshake.com>

Ask your career consultant about other available resources!

Focus 2

FOCUS 2 CAREER is an online, self-guided career and education planning system designed to help you make decisions about your future vocation, career goals and education plans.

FOCUS 2 CAREER will guide you through an interactive process that will assess your:

1. career planning involvement
2. work interests
3. values
4. skills
5. personality
6. leisure time
7. career competency levels to help you gain skills through the SVC Bearcat Ready Program

Remember!

The Career and Professional Development Center assists students in all aspects of the career exploration and planning process. So please check out the Timeline on pages 6-7 to start the process.

Steps to Professional Success

Step One: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Knowing your interests, values and abilities are key when beginning the career planning process. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, from self-reflection and exploration to taking a career assessment and meeting with your career consultant to have it interpreted.

Step Two: DEFINE YOUR GOALS

Understanding **YOU** is the most important aspect of the career planning process. In order to define your goals, you must know your skills and abilities. You also need to understand your values and interests and how these will have an impact on your future as a professional. Ask yourself: "What makes me happy?" "What motivates me?" and "What am I good at?" If you cannot answer these questions, ask parents, siblings and other family and friends. They may offer insight or have ideas you had not considered before. This will help you to get started and define your goals.

Step Three: GATHER INFORMATION AND EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

Once you know more about yourself through assessment, you can use this information as a basis to learn about specific career areas that are a good fit for you. Exploring options can be done in a number of ways including participating in our SVCBearcatREADY program, gaining practical experience through shadowing, internships, part-time jobs, student employment or community engagement activities.

Gathering information and exploring your options is a step that should not be rushed as it is more important to take your time to ensure you are confident in your decision.

Step Four: GAIN EXPERIENCE

Now that you have taken the time to learn about yourself, and assess your interests, skills and personality, you are ready to gain practical experience in a professional setting. By participating in the SVCBearcatREADY program you will be able to:

- demonstrate increased self-awareness.
- identify personal talents and interests.
- gain a greater knowledge of career goals and objectives.
- perform better in school.
- gain valuable employment related to your future career goals.
- receive more job offers.
- earn a higher starting salary.

At the Career and Professional Development Center

FIRST YEAR

Visit the Career and Professional Development Center and schedule a First-Year Check-in appointment with your career consultant. He or she can assist you with:

- assessing your interests.
- defining your career goals.
- gathering information and exploring your major or career options.
- shadowing or seeking a career-related experience.
- using your Handshake account.

On Your Own

- Complete your career consultant's "homework" before your next scheduled meeting.
- Make a tentative list of career goals.
- Regularly log in to Handshake to find on- and off-campus positions including student employment and service opportunities.

Timeline to Get

SOPHOMORE &

Schedule a time to meet with your career consultant to:

- update your resume, learn of open internships and make contact with potential employers.
- continue to explore your career and major options by using the results of your assessments.
- participate in the SVC BearcatREADY program by shadowing, completing an internship or actively working in the community.

- Attend Career and Professional Development Center employer-related events.
- Make or confirm your choice of major.
- Continue to use Career and Professional Development Center services.
- Attend on-campus interviews.

to Your Destination

JUNIOR YEARS

- establish a LinkedIn Profile using resources at the Career and Professional Development Center and optimize your profile for the job search.
- learn how to build a network or utilize your network of family, friends, alumni, coaches and faculty.
- schedule a mock interview which will prepare you for interviews in the professional or academic world.

- Access Handshake and maintain your profile.
- Assume a leadership role in campus organizations or participate in service or volunteer projects.
- Develop relationships with advisers and faculty members. They have much insight and can serve as future references to employers or universities.

SENIOR YEAR

Schedule a time to meet with your career consultant to:

- update your resume.
- learn how to perform a full-time job search tailored to your interests.
- review your LinkedIn profile.
- schedule a mock interview and review dress for success tips.
- discuss full-time job vs. graduate school options (see the Graduate and Professional School section in this *Guide*).

- Take advantage of any career-related program geared toward resumes, dining etiquette, networking and interviewing skills.
- Connect with employers by participating in on-campus recruiting events, off-campus job fairs and industry-specific events.
- Update your LinkedIn profile.
- Review job postings in Handshake.
- Request faculty members and employers to serve as references.

Networking and Professionalism



DEFINITION: Networking is the process of using contacts made in business, through college or family and friends for purposes beyond the reason for the initial contact.

Steps to Successful Networking

1. Name the People in Your Network

Be sure to include all contacts you have met (high school and college):

- Friends and family
- Parents of friends and roommates
- Coaches
- Faculty and teachers
- Staff and administrators
- Academic and club advisers
- Alumni and previous employers

2. Define Your Network

Research everyone in your network and gather as much information on each person as possible. This should include:

- Company and position title
- Phone, email, address
- Where you met
- Who introduced you
- What you have discussed
- What you would like to learn
- Comments about the network

3. Record All Networking Activity

This will help you stay organized. Be sure to track all of the information you have gained and keep business cards given to you by people in your network. Keep expanding your network by attending conferences, joining professional organizations, volunteering in your community, or making new connections on LinkedIn.

4. Discover Your Networks

Finding an internship or job in today's market is a very competitive process as you could be one of hundreds of applicants. Having a network may give you an edge allowing you to obtain position openings more efficiently. A network will make it easier for you to stand out in a large crowd of qualified individuals. It is the most effective way to find a job.

5. When Is Networking Appropriate?

Networking is an ongoing process which can begin as early as the high school years and is especially important during your college career.

Because networking is ongoing, it is important to maintain your network, even once you have secured a job. Reconnecting with your network allows you to seek a job or internship with ease.

6. What Career Field Is Most Suitable for Networking?

Networking is suitable for all professionals regardless of the career field or professional level. Depending on the culture of the profession, networking experiences may differ. Some organizations may encourage networking through various work functions such as professional or social gatherings. In other industries, you may have to work more independently to network.

7. Follow Up with Contacts

It is most appropriate to follow up with each person you contact by writing a brief thank-you letter immediately after your meeting. Be sure to maintain ongoing interactions with your contacts. The purpose of keeping in touch is to be sure your network will think of you when an opportunity arises.

Some reasons you may want to follow up with your network include:

- Sending an updated resume
- Updating the contact on the progress you have made and making them aware of any results based on the contact's recommendations
- Sharing new personal information (i.e., academic success, marriage, new baby, change of address)

Networking is imperative to the job and internship search process. Your network should include people who are willing to give you information about the field and industry of employment, as well as feedback on your career development. Your network should also include people who may be in a position to tell you about job opportunities that are open either within their organization or elsewhere.

Always Remember to:

- Treat networking as a two-way process; help others and serve as someone else's contact.
- Keep up-to-date lists of your networks.
- Keep time open for networking during events.
- Follow up on all leads provided to you and listen to advice.
- Thank your contact for his or her time and be patient throughout the process.
- Take advantage of as many networking opportunities as possible.

Social Media and Professional Networking

SOCIAL AND professional online networks have been integrated into our daily lives. Although there are many benefits to these sites, it is important that you understand each may have a negative impact, especially if you are a young professional seeking employment or acceptance into graduate or professional school. Here are a few guidelines to help you represent yourself in the best possible way.

Tips for Social Networking

- **Can having a blog, a personal website or an account on a social networking site impact your job search, for better or for worse?** It could. Some people list their personal website or blog on a resume for employers to see. Employers may Google a prospective employee to learn more about that individual. Posting company news, pictures and even making positive comments about a company have cost bloggers and social networkers potential jobs or internships.
- **Is your content appropriate for all eyes to see?** Although your primary audience may be your friends or family, often employers will take initiative to review content, messages, postings and any other information that will help them learn more about you. You may not want to write about controversial topics.
- **Would you want your future employer seeing your page?** If not, set it to private. Even if your personal content is not unprofessional, you may be linked to others who do have inappropriate messages on their site.

Professional Networking

- **LinkedIn is a popular professional networking site.** If you have your profile on LinkedIn, treat it as you would your resume and cover letter. Keep it updated, professional, and error-free. Check connections regularly as a means of networking and communicating with professionals in your field. Choose connections that you are comfortable with and who display appropriate information.
- **Be consistent.** Be sure your resume reflects the same information listed in your LinkedIn profile.
- **Should prospective employers be reading your personal information?** Maybe not. However, if you put it on the Internet and it is readily accessible, they might.

Job Fairs



THE THOUGHT of a job fair may conjure up visions of convention centers filled with recruiters collecting resumes, asking questions and assessing your interests and qualifications. This is an accurate description of most job fairs, whether recruiting for internships, full-time jobs or even graduate school. It can be both intimidating and exciting at the same time. That is why it is crucial to be prepared so that you can make the most of the day.

Keep in mind that a job fair may not get you a job right away, but making contacts with employers and alumni is sure to lead you in the right direction. The fair will give you a chance to gain confidence in the skills you have, a greater knowledge of what employers are looking for, and can enhance your networking abilities and narrow the industries and opportunities to those that best fit your targeted career.

Making the Most of a Job Fair

Prior to the Fair

Prepare Your Resume

- If you need assistance in preparing a resume, use the examples found on the Career and Professional Development Center website and portal pages. Once you have started, meet with your career consultant to perfect your resume.
- Have extra copies of your resume in case of last-minute additions to the employer directory.

Research the Employer

- Identify employers you would like to meet and make notes regarding each employer. Review comments the day of the fair.
- Research company websites; connect with friends or alumni already working at the organization. Check with the Career and Professional Development Center to gain a better understanding of the employer.

Research Yourself

- Review your resume, experiences, career goals and transferable skills.
- Practice discussing your qualifications and goals.
- Consider where you want to work geographically, what you like doing and what you are generally looking for in an internship or full-time position.
- Prepare an elevator pitch and practice in front of a mirror or with friends and family to gain confidence. (See page 12).
- If you need specific accommodations at the job fair (such as accessible ramps, accessible parking spots, interpreter), you should inform the Career and Professional Development Center.
- Prepare your professional business attire. Make sure it is ironed and clean.

The Day of the Fair

Arrive at the Fair

- Arrive at check-in and obtain an updated list of employers and job fair literature.
- Budget your time. Explore the job fair layout and map out your strategy to reach the companies most important to you.
- Avoid personal phone conversations in the restroom or other areas near the fair.

Meet the Employer

- Always visit your target companies (top 10-20 choices) first, then work toward other interests.
- Some lines may be extremely long. If this is the case, make contact with other employers and come back to the employer when the line has subsided.
- Approach employers on an individual basis, not in the company of your friends.
- Smile, offer a firm handshake and introduce yourself to the employer.

Three to five days after the event, write or email a follow-up thank-you letter expressing your gratitude and your interest in the position and company.

- Offer your resume and present your elevator pitch.
- Talk to the employer about your job interests.
- Do not ask an employer “What does your company do?” even if you are visiting an employer you have not researched. Instead, take a moment to review his or her display materials and ask questions seeking additional information about something you see.
- Ask questions about the position and the organization.
- Try to prepare questions based on what you have already learned about the employer. For example, ask the employer to clarify something specific that you read or have him or her expand upon

something he or she discussed previously. The question could be specific or general to the industry. See page 30 for questions to ask the interviewer.

- Take ALL literature presented to you by the employer.
- Complete an application if asked to do so by the employer.
- Learn the next step in the interview process and ask the employer for a business card.
- Thank the employer and offer a firm handshake.
- After leaving the booth, take notes about your conversation with the employer.

After the Fair
Follow Up

- Gather all information and business cards collected at the event.
- Three to five days after the event, write or email a follow-up thank-you letter expressing your gratitude and your interest in the position and company.
- Add all contacts to your list of “networks.”

Keep Records

- Assess interactions with employers and decide which positions interest you.
- Create a spreadsheet with important notes about the employer, the interactions and the next step in the process.

The Elevator Pitch

THE ELEVATOR PITCH is one of the most important aspects of your career and professional development. Always tailor your “pitch” to the unique needs of each employer. It can be used during:

- Job fairs and networking events when introducing yourself to an employer.
- An interview to answer the question “Tell me about yourself?”
- Other social, academic or professional gatherings.

Purpose

It is a brief statement describing the benefits of investing in a particular product or service, or YOU. This format enables the listener to quickly learn your specific, unique and impressive attributes.

Benefit

You will come across more poised, confident and career-focused by opening with your elevator pitch.

Use

- In a cover letter — to highlight your background and key abilities.
- During an interview — in answering the question “Tell me about yourself.”
- During professional, social and organizational meetings — when you must introduce yourself (i.e., job fairs, networking events, informational interviews, presentations).

Contains Personal Attributes

- Details the job title or the type of position you are seeking.
- Sells your professional abilities and experiences.
- Emphasizes your individual strengths and links them to the needs of the employer.
- Uses descriptive statements of your skills and abilities.

General Structure

- Opening Statement — Discuss what you are currently doing (describe job or education), and what you know about the company.
- Next Statement — Discuss two or three skill sets you have and how they relate to the position and employer.
- Closing Statement — Remember to:
 1. Ask the next step in the interviewing process.
 2. Offer a firm handshake.
 3. Obtain a business card from the professional.

Elevator Pitch—Example 1

My name is Janine Thomas. I am a current senior at Saint Vincent College majoring in psychology. I will be graduating in May. As you can see on my resume, I have had much experience working with children and teenage populations. I would like to work for The Children’s Group and use the education and skills I have gained during my internship and classroom experiences.

I am here today to discuss the full-time Counselor I position at The Children’s Group. I learned from your website that you specialize in emotional and behavioral issues. I have been interested in this type of work since my internship last summer at Pressley Ridge where I had the opportunity to work with children serving as a role model, assisting with behavioral modification. I also served as the facilitator for both group and family interventions. I am hoping this experience, along with my psychology background, will allow me to succeed in the Counselor I position.

Could you tell me a little more about the Counselor I position and what you are looking for in an ideal candidate?

Email or LinkedIn Connection Request Etiquette

INTERNSHIP AND job searching can be done in a number of ways. The up-to-date approach to cold calling is either an email introduction or a connect request on LinkedIn. When using these techniques you need to be sure you are following some basic guidelines. Read the following etiquette tips to be sure you are leaving employers with a positive impression.

Before You Reach Out

- Do your research. Know as much as possible about the organization before you contact someone. Determine what your purpose is. This will also help you decide who to contact.
- Be sure to get the proper spelling of the person's name.
- Be prepared and have questions ready.
- Be specific about your request but get to the point in a kind manner.

The Request

- Begin your introduction with a statement instead of a question. If it's Monday morning, "Good morning Ms. X, I hope you had a nice weekend."
- Explain your interest in their work and how you came to know about it or explain your interest in their company's work.
- Have a clear understanding of the reason you are reaching out and be able to articulate your motives politely and concisely. Are you connecting for a job, internship, informational interview or other reason?
- If you are sending a LinkedIn connect request ask them if they would like to connect.
- Close with thanks and kind regards.

Following Up

- LinkedIn — Connection requests may go unanswered for some time depending on how often a person uses the service.
- Email — Wait a week before emailing again. When you follow-up you can offer your phone number as a convenience.
- If you engage in a regular correspondence, or they complete an informational interview, remember to say thank you.

Sample Introduction for Email or LinkedIn

Good afternoon Mr. X,

I hope your week is going well so far.

I recently read your somnambulation article on LinkedIn and would like to discuss the results of your study in greater detail. My interest is in the research field, and particularly sleep studies in teens.

Continue your email with: Would you be available for a 10-minute phone call sometime this week?

Best regards,

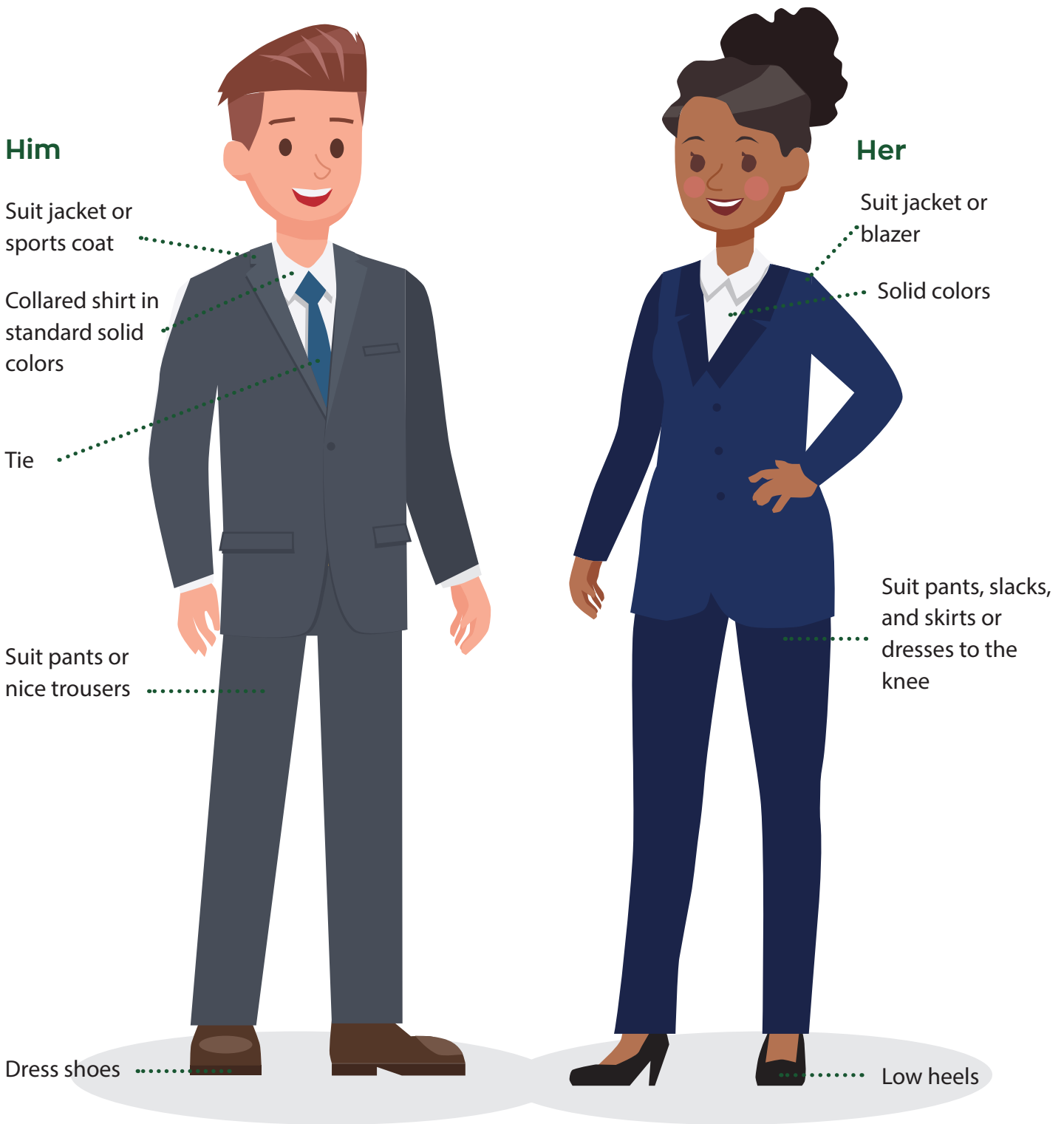
Your name

Continue your LinkedIn request with: Would you like to connect on LinkedIn?

Best regards,

Your name

Dress for Success—Professional



Tips for Success In Any Business Situation

- When in doubt, dress conservatively
- Be wrinkle-free
- Use modest amount of jewelry and/or fragrance
- Check your hair for the “wind-blown look” and your suit for lint or misalignment

Dress for Success—Business Casual

Him

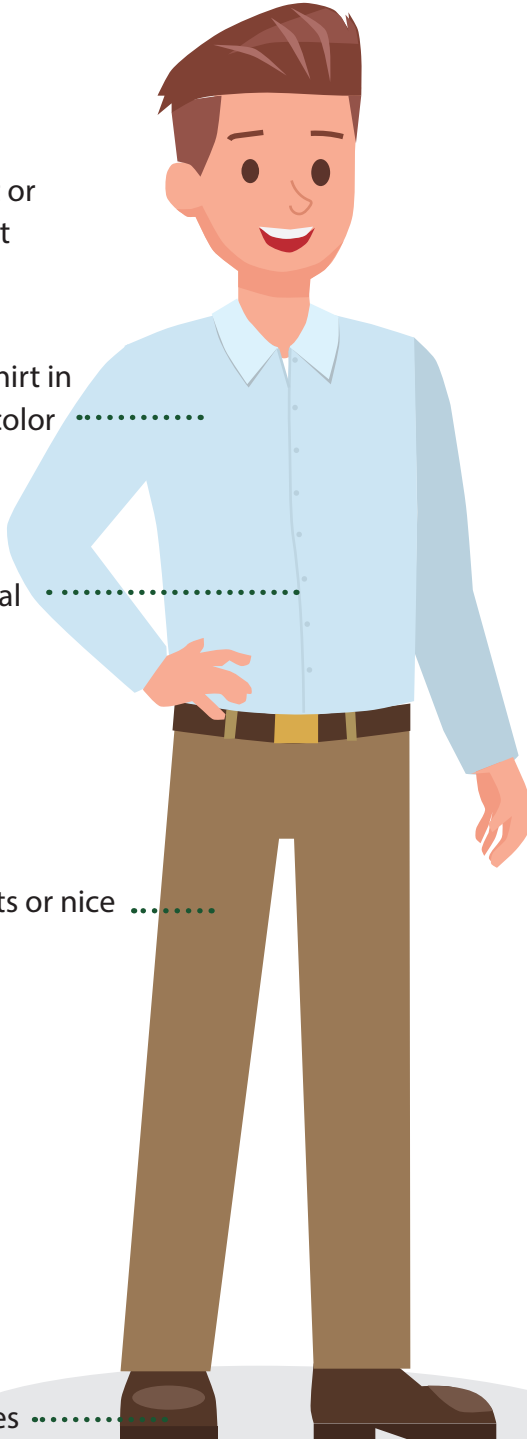
Suit jacket or sports coat

Collared shirt in standard color options

Tie optional

Khaki pants or nice trousers

Dress shoes



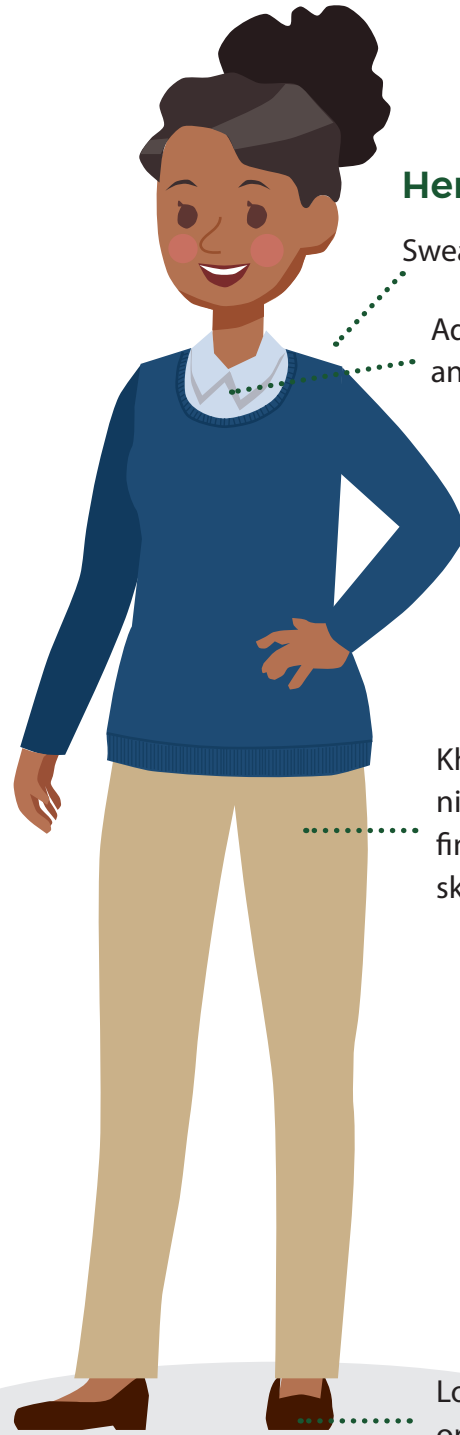
Her

Sweater

Add bright colors and/or patterns

Khaki pants, nice trousers, or fingertip-length skirt

Low heels or flats



Cover Letters



WHO NEEDS a cover letter? Everyone who sends out a resume! Even if the letter never came up in conversation or was not mentioned in an advertisement, it is expected that you will write one. Cover letters, also known as “letters of application,” should be tailored to the specific company and the specific job or internship for which you are applying.

The cover letter is a three-to-four paragraph, one-page letter, typed in a business format that introduces you and your skills. It has the purpose of making the employer aware that you are available and interested in a position. Your cover letter is a reflection of you and is used to convey your experience and abilities. It will offer another chance to emphasize what you have to contribute to the company or organization, giving you an edge over other applicants. A cover letter demonstrates your written communication skills, your ability to apply your skills to a professional setting and your understanding of the company and position of interest.

Submitting a Cover Letter



TECHNOLOGY HAS quickly become our primary means of communicating and, with that, comes email and social media. With online job postings being so prevalent, emailing or submitting an application on the company’s website are the most likely ways you will send your cover letter.

When applying via email, you attach your resume to the email, but that leaves one question, “Do I type my cover letter in the body of the email or do I attach a separate Word document with my cover letter?”

It is best to type the cover letter in the body of the email for two reasons. It will save the reader the extra step of opening an attachment. The employer can quickly and easily read your cover letter upon opening his or her email and then open the attached resume. Secondly, if the reader forwards your email to an ATS system (Applicant Tracking System), the ATS “reads” the text with more clarity than a PDF.

When submitting your cover letter via an online application, copy and paste your letter if given the option to do so.

When typing your emailed cover letter please remember the following tips:

- This is a formal, business-style letter. While email is often considered a casual method of communicating, remember you are a job seeker and must follow the proper letter writing format. Follow all rules as though you were writing a formal letter.
- Keep the cover letter concise so the reader does not have to scroll far, but be sure to include the necessary information to grab the reader’s attention.

Cover Letter Format



Your Address

Date

Contact Person, Title

Department, Company Name

Address

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. (Contact Person):

Introduction Paragraph I (2 - 4 sentences)

Establish the purpose of your letter, attract attention and generate interest

- State why you are writing by naming the specific position or type of job and how you heard about the position/employer.
- Demonstrate why you are interested in the position by explaining that you have researched the position and employer and tie it in to your candidacy.
- Insert a brief sentence that provides degree, major, college affiliation and graduation date.

Body Paragraph II & III (2-4 sentences each)

Indicate how your skills, education and experience match the employer's needs

- Indicate how you can help the employer achieve organizational goals in your specialty by focusing on what you can do for the employer rather than what the employer can do for you.
- Highlight your most significant accomplishments, abilities and experiences specific to the position and company.
- Sell your credentials; prove you should be invited to an interview.
- Use the third paragraph to discuss more of the "soft skills" that cannot be seen on the resume using carefully selected keywords.

Closing Paragraph IV (3-4 sentences)

State your commitment to action

- Mention enclosed resume, sample work or portfolio if applicable.
- Take the initiative to make clear what happens next: "I will be in touch to follow up."
- State your availability. Let them know if/when you will be in the area, especially for positions that will require relocation.
- Restate contact information including phone and email so the employer can contact you.
- Thank the employer.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name Typed

See cover letter examples on the Career and Professional Development Center website.

Using Personal Experiences in a Cover Letter

USING PERSONAL experiences to highlight your interests in a position can enhance your cover letter if done correctly. When getting personal, do not reveal information that can become uncomfortable for the employer or detract from your qualifications.

When considering putting personal information in a cover letter, stop and think:

1. Will this interest my employer?
2. Is it relevant to my career?
3. Will this add to my qualifications?

Be cautious about employers who may unintentionally discriminate based on what you discuss in your cover letter. It may be better to discuss these personal experiences during an interview when you can explain in more detail.

Cover Letter Reminders

Each letter should

- be individually tailored to each position.
- use the same paper for your resume and cover letter (good quality 8 ½ x 11).
- conform to good business style and must be free of errors.
- be addressed to a specific person when possible.
- be no longer than one page in length.
- indicate a special interest in the specific organization.
- use self-descriptive words to highlight your “soft skills.”
- reflect the fact that you have researched the organization or company.

Before Writing Your Cover Letter

- Review job descriptions:
 - Read the entire description thoroughly
 - Pay attention to job responsibilities
 - Highlight your skills which match those in the job description
- Research the employer:
 - Visit company websites and social media
 - Speak to employer ‘insiders’ when possible
 - Read company literature, business publications or the company annual report
- Use appropriate adjectives related to the position of interest:
 - Sales/Marketing (assertive; persuasive)
 - Counseling/Education (empathetic; sensitive; approachable)
 - Accounting/Business (detail-oriented; organized)
 - Computer Science/IT (analytical; problem-solver)
- Determine what kind of candidate the employer is seeking:
 - Skill sets (functional, technical, adaptive, transferable)
 - Practical experience; education/training; personality traits

See cover letter examples on the Career and Professional Development Center website.

Thank-You Emails

FOLLOWING A job interview, job fair meeting or an informational interview, a thank-you email should be sent to the employer. Remind the interviewer of your interest in the position and thank them for taking the time to discuss the company and position. The email will also remind them of your meeting place and date and possibly put your resume at the top of the pile. It does not guarantee the position but will definitely earn you a few bonus points.

Regardless of the outcome, follow-up emails are important. They will set you apart from other job seekers and leave a great, lasting impression for consideration of future positions within the company. You can follow up with a thank-you letter, but start with the email for promptness.

Thank-You Email Format

Thank-You Email Tips

- For the sake of speed, follow up with an email since recruiters travel often.
- Add the interviewer's name and email address to your contacts so his or her name appears. This shows an extra level of commitment on your part.
- Remind the interviewer of the details (event and date) of your meeting.
- Communicate additional relevant information if appropriate. Or just remind him or her of the particular skill he or she seemed most interested in when you talked.
- Offer to provide additional information and include your phone number. Close the letter with a suggestion for further action, such as your availability to meet or speak again.
- If you are sending thanks after a group interview try to get the emails and names of each interviewer.

To: Their Name (See the tips for more information)

From: Use an email account that includes your name

Subject: Thank you for the interview/information

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. (Contact Person):

It was a pleasure meeting you on [DATE], at the [TITLE] job fair. I was pleased to learn about the Leadership Training Program at the Medical Society of Pennsylvania (MSOPA). I would like to further express my interest in both the leadership program as well as my enthusiasm in working for MSOPA.

After our conversation, I am even more excited by the possibility of sharing my communication skills and technical expertise with MSOPA as a Leadership Trainee. This, along with my education and experiences in business and operations, is what will allow me to succeed at MSOPA. I believe I can progress steadily through your training program and become a successful member of the leadership team.

Again, I would like to thank you for your time earlier this week. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my skills and qualifications in an interview. Please feel free to contact me if you need further information. I may be reached via email or at 123-456-7890. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name Typed

Resumes

DEFINITION: A resume (or résumé) is derived from the French meaning “brief history.” A resume is a document containing a summary or listing of relevant job experiences and education, usually for the purpose of securing a new job. Often the resume is one of the first items a potential employer encounters regarding the job seeker. The goal of a resume is to get you an interview, not a job offer.

The resume will be an employer’s first impression. The employer will look at not only the content, but also the punctuation, grammar, format and other details that may not seem relevant to you. This is why it is important to have an acceptable, one-page resume. However, there may be special circumstances for alumni or experienced professionals when a one-page resume is not sufficient. That is why it is crucial to have at least one professional review your resume. We recommend having your resume reviewed by your career consultant.

Resume Guidelines

- Keep your resume to one side of one page.
- List items in each section in reverse chronological order (most recent to the oldest).
- Start bullet phrases with strong action verbs and keep them brief and concise.
- Present yourself accurately and positively.
- Stress accomplishments and outcomes of projects and experiences.
- Quantify when possible using specific populations, percentages, dollar amounts and numbers to substantiate claims.
- Use present tense verbs when describing a current position; past tense for previous positions.
- Write out acronyms.
- Resume font size and style should be consistent. (Size: 11-12 point)
- No personal pronouns (I, me, my, they, them, etc.).
- Use bold and italics sparingly — do not use underline.
- Use black square or circle bullets instead of dashes, asterisks, graphics or other symbols.

- Use email address, cell phone number and LinkedIn profile address.
- Do not use borders, graphics or shaded boxes and use only black ink.
- Use off-white or white 24# resume paper when attending job fairs, networking events or interviews.
- Creative majors such as graphic design or art may deviate from these guidelines. These should be approved by a career consultant professional to be sure they are appropriate.

Resume Don'ts

- Don't crowd margins or use excessively small font.
- Don't over-design your resume or use a pre-formatted template resume.
- Don't include information that will be difficult to justify or explain during an interview. (For example, list only activities with active participation).
- Don't waste space discussing all aspects of the company and the company's clients.
- Don't include references. Reference requests should be made once you are a final candidate.
- Don't use pronouns, abbreviations, conjunctions or jargon unless terms are widely known.
- Don't have someone else write your resume (you can ask for advice, but you know yourself best and will have to defend the content).
- Don't disclose a disability on your resume.
- Don't include photographs, social security numbers or marital status.

Resumes *continued*



Resume Categories

Objectives

- Objectives should only be used when you are applying for a position that may not be obvious to an employer based on your education, skills, experience or activities. (e.g., A student has been an accounting major for three years but has recently discovered he is interested in the field of public policy.)

Contact Information

- Contact information appears first on the resume and should include name, address, phone and one email address.
- No more than three names should be listed (first, middle, last or first, "nickname," last).
- LinkedIn and/or professional website.

Education

- This should always be the first category on your resume.
- List the name of your most recent school first — Saint Vincent College — with city and state.
- List the degree exactly as it will appear on your diploma.
- GPA should be listed if 3.0 or above.
- Major GPA may also be appropriate. See a career consultant to determine the best way to list on your resume.
- List only institutions from which you are earning a degree/certificate.
- Do not include high school if you are pursuing a post-secondary degree.

Research

- This section may list your senior thesis. Listing the title of your senior thesis (e.g. Senior Thesis: "Ascorbic Acid and Serum Cholesterol: A comprehensive review of the effects of mega doses of Vitamin C on HDL and LDL cholesterol,") is most appropriate when describing this experience.
- This section can also include additional classroom projects as well as research done independently, outside of the classroom.

Course Work

- This section is especially for those seeking an internship or those who may have little experience upon graduation.
- Remember to list courses related to the position of interest. The relevant courses could vary based upon the position of interest.

Course Work *continued*

- Do not list more than 7-10 courses. Do not list course numbers.
- If necessary, create sub-categories to separate the different types of courses (you may have two sub-categories that demonstrate your areas of expertise or education).

Experience

- Relevant work experience should be toward the top of the resume, the section after education.
- All work experience should be listed in reverse chronological order.
- List organization or job title first, depending on marketing appeal.

Skills

- Skills should be included on every resume. This may include: technical skills; laboratory skills; foreign language; certifications and anything relevant to the position of interest.
- This is not the place to list your soft skills. Those should be mentioned in the cover letter.
- Depending on your intended career your skills may be best toward the top or bottom. Ask a career consultant for more details.

Military Service

- Include military service from beginning to end date. If applicable, site honorary discharge.
- This section should be organized similarly to the experience section.
- Discuss military experience in 'layman terms,' translating military jargon into civilian lingo.

Additional Categories

Additional categories may be used individually or combined into two sections. It is appropriate to combine if you do not have at least two examples in each category. Additional categories may include, but are not limited to:

- Leadership
- Honors or awards
- Activities
- Volunteer work
- Publications
- Project experience
- Service learning
- Certifications
- Professional development

See resume examples on the Career and Professional Development Center website.

Interview Preparation

AN INTERVIEW is used to assess your suitability for the position of interest. There are several types of interviews, and each company may elect to use more than one style of interviewing. To better prepare for an interview, students are encouraged to become familiar with the different types of interviews that may be encountered. Just like a resume is used to get you an interview, the interview is what will get you the job. Be sure to follow the proper interview guidelines by speaking with your career consultant. Afterward, landing the perfect job will be that much easier.

How Do I Prepare for My Interview?

- **Self-assess!** Take time to critically think about your education, experiences and skills and how they relate to the career you are seeking.
- **A large portion of your interview is how you prepare for your interview.** Have thorough, organized responses to anticipated interview questions. Support all of the skills and knowledge you claim to have with examples.
- **Do a “dry-run” to the interview site.** Be sure you know the route to avoid getting lost and assess the parking situation.
- **Do your research.** Know where the company is, what the company does, its culture and details about the job description. Thoroughly read the company’s website and any recently published articles.
- **Arrive early, dress to impress and have your materials well-organized and error free.** Arriving approximately 15 minutes early is the standard. Be sure you are dressed professionally (no exceptions.) You should be prepared with multiple copies of your resume, reference page, transcripts, work samples and any other materials you believe will help showcase your abilities.
- **Notify the employer ahead of time about any accommodations needed** (i.e.: wheelchair accessible buildings, interpreter, enlarged print materials).
- **Respond to the interviewer with the appropriate media.** If the employer called you to set up an interview, you should respond by calling.
- **Do not drink the night before your interview!** Alcohol impairs long-term memory and shortens attention span up to 48 hours after drinking.
- **Make sure that you are well-rested and alert for the interview.**
- **Turn your phone off, entirely, prior to the interview.**
- **Ask for the names and titles of your interviewers.**

What Else Should I Be Aware of During My Interview?

- **Be enthusiastic and smile.** Remember your manners and always greet and leave with a firm handshake. A positive, upbeat attitude makes you likable! Address the interviewer(s) by name.
- **Remember to provide examples when answering questions and do not hesitate to ask the interviewer for clarification or to repeat a question if you are unsure.** Be prepared to ask several of your OWN questions.
- **A successful interview is a conversation, not a one-sided interrogation.**

Use the SOLER Approach

Be aware of non-verbal cues.

- S** Face Interviewer **Squarely**
- O** Maintain **Open** stance
- L** **Lean** forward slightly
- E** Maintain good **Eye** contact
- R** **Relax**

Types of Interviews



Traditional Interview

You should always be prepared to answer some traditional interview questions. Many times, employers will combine another type of interview with traditional interview questions.

Case Interview

This interview is most commonly used among consulting firms. During a case interview, you will be given a scenario, asked to identify the problem and to solve the identified problem. This type of interview is not as common and can be difficult. Often the employer will be looking at “the process” of HOW you went about solving the problem, not necessarily the solution. The focus is primarily on analytical skills, but other skills are reviewed such as attention to detail, how you handle pressure and time management.

Phone, Facetime or Skype Interview

Telephone, Facetime or Skype interviews are scheduled for a variety of reasons. Most often, they are used as a method of prescreening job applicants for employment to narrow the pool of candidates before determining who is going to be invited for an on-site interview. This saves the company money and time. Often, this type of interview is considered the “first-round” interview. The questions you are asked may be more general and less technical — basic questions about your classes, career interests, and why you applied. They will want to know your availability and even ask you some preliminary behavioral questions and, although less common, some technical questions to determine your skill level for the particular opening. The interview can last anywhere from a few minutes to an hour.

How to Prepare

Now that you have begun internship or full-time job searching, be prepared for unexpected calls from employers. Although most employers call Monday through Friday during business hours, it is possible to receive a call from a prospective employer in the evening or during the weekend.

- Answer your phone professionally at all times.
- Only answer if you are in a quiet place; otherwise, locate a place that is free of distractions as soon as possible and call the employer back.
- Always have a professional voicemail message on your phone and a professional ID for your Skype account. State your name and message clearly and slowly.
- If you miss a call from an employer, return the call as soon as you can the same day or, if in the evening, early the next day. Leave your full name, contact information and best time to be reached.
- Read the job description to which you applied and research the company.

- Review your resume and be prepared to elaborate on any portion of it if asked.
- Prepare a list of questions for the employer.
- Do not chew gum, eat or smoke during your interview.
- Dress professionally. If you “dress the part” you will naturally project yourself with more confidence. Following the same philosophy, smile. That too can radiate over the phone or through Skype.
- Speak slowly and concisely. Since the listener cannot see your body language, your verbal skills become even more important. Convey your enthusiasm and confidence by speaking at an appropriate tone and volume.
- Do not interrupt the interviewer. If you are unclear about a question or topic, it is appropriate to ask for clarification.
- Pausing momentarily to think or arrange your thoughts before speaking is perfectly acceptable.
- Throughout the conversation, refer to the employer as Mr., Ms. or Dr. unless they have invited you to use their first name.
- In addition to your resume, have a pen and paper available to jot down notes or questions you may want to ask at the end.
- When the interview ends, thank the employer for his/her time and ask about the next step in the process.

If you have a disability you believe may affect your phone interview (examples can include stuttering, hearing disability or a speech impairment), it may be beneficial to inform your interviewer ahead of time. This can be done through email or at the beginning of the phone interview. Be sure to mention any accommodations you need (i.e.: TTY). This will make the phone conversation more comfortable for you and the interviewer.

Here is an example of how to inform your employer of a disability before the interview:

“I am really excited to speak with you about this opportunity to interview with X company. I believe my qualifications and experiences will contribute to X company’s continued success. Before our phone conversation, I want to inform you that I do stutter. I want to reassure you that my stutter only affects the fluency of my sentences but does not affect my communication skills. During our phone interview, please don’t be afraid to ask me to repeat myself.”

Behavioral Interview

Behavioral interviewing asserts that “the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation.” In a behavioral interview you will have to demonstrate your knowledge, skills and abilities, collectively known as competencies, by giving specific examples from your past experiences. Many examples are acceptable and could include previous internships or other relevant work experiences, course projects, accomplishments, difficult situations and leadership roles held in on- or off-campus organizations.

Answering behavioral questions requires that you give relevant examples to “prove” you have that skill or strength. The S.T.A.R. technique is an excellent way to answer such questions.

While many candidates are intimidated by this method, a behavioral interview gives you the opportunity to demonstrate to a prospective employer why you are well-suited for the job.

Group Interview

Group interviews may take place in order to determine how you interact with various groups of individuals. It could involve several people taking turns asking questions or presenting scenarios for you to solve. During this type of group interview (also referred to as a panel interview) there will be more than one interviewer. If this happens, be sure you respond to all interviewers even if only one is asking the questions. Maintain eye contact with all interviewers.

Group interviews could also include several candidates being interviewed at once. Be sure to be honest in your answers and try to focus on your experience, not how other candidates answered the questions. The interviewers will be focusing on one answer at a time, so be sure to remain calm and demonstrate all that you can about why you are the most qualified person for the position.

Stress Interview

Stress interviews are very uncommon. They are sometimes used by financial service employers, advertising agencies and government agencies that perform clandestine operations. The purpose of these interviews is to see how you react to a stressful situation. You may be asked difficult questions in a pressuring manner or be given a complicated project to work through in a tense atmosphere. One example that has been used is “What is charisma and do you have it?”

The S.T.A.R. Technique

When providing an example from a past experience, include the following information and your answer will be concise.

Situation—what was the situation?

Task—what task were you doing?

Action—what action did you take?

Result—what was the result (choose only positive experiences)?

Try One!

When practicing a behavioral interview, be sure to use the S.T.A.R. technique. Try to practice using the guide below.

Situation: _____

Task: _____

Action: _____

Result: _____

Questions Asked by Interviewers

Most Common “Traditional” Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
3. Why are you interested in working for us?
4. Why should we hire you?
5. Where do you want to be five years from now?
6. Why did you choose your major? Saint Vincent College?
7. What courses did you enjoy the most? The least?
8. Are you willing to relocate? Are you willing to travel?
9. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working alone? In groups?
10. Do you possess good communication skills?
11. Which is more important to you, money or the type of job and why?
12. How do you feel about working with people from diverse backgrounds?
13. How do you feel about being an entry-level employee?
14. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
15. What do you do in your free time?
16. Do you think your grades are a good reflection of the type of work you can do for us?
17. Tell me about your greatest achievement.
18. Tell me about your work experience.
19. What was the last book you have read?
20. Why are you qualified for this position?

Most Common “Behavioral” Interview Questions

1. How would a previous employer describe you? A professor? A friend?
2. What motivates you to put your best foot forward?
3. Tell me about a mistake that you have made recently and what you have learned from it.
4. How have you demonstrated your ability to contribute to a team effort?
5. Give me an example of how you have performed successfully under stress.
6. Tell me about a difficult co-worker. How did you handle him or her?
7. How do you prove your credibility to a team member or employer?
8. How do you handle disappointment and criticism?
9. Tell me about a time you set a goal and failed to reach it.
10. In what ways do you feel that you will be able to contribute to this company?
11. What did you enjoy most about Saint Vincent? What would you change about your experience?
12. If you were the boss, how would you motivate your employees?
13. When working in a team, how do you get others to follow your ideas?
14. If you could change one thing about your previous job, what would it be?
15. Tell me about the most difficult decision you have ever made.

Practice your responses to these questions, so you are comfortable answering them naturally.

Illegal Interview Questions

AN EMPLOYER may ask a question you do not feel comfortable answering. Many of these questions might be illegal. Illegal questions may include but are not limited to topics regarding:

- Religion
- Age
- Gender
- Personal Information
- Disabilities
- Marital/Family Status
- National Origin
- Sexual Orientation

If you are asked an illegal question, you have one of three options:

1. You can answer the question. If you decide to answer, frame your response in a positive way.
2. You can ask the intent of the question (e.g. "How is this relevant to this position?"). Then answer the question in the best way possible.
3. You can refuse to answer the question, however, keep in mind that this may harm your chances of getting the job.

If you believe you have been asked an improper or illegal question, **DO NOT** accuse the interviewer to his/her face, but instead bring your concern to the Saint Vincent Career and Professional Development Center. We may be able to address the issue with the employer, at a later date, without doing harm to your job or internship search.



Practice Your Interviewing Style

Big Interview is an interview training system that provides hands-on practice with mock interviews tailored to your specific industry, job and experience level.

Access Big Interview through the Career and Professional Development Center's website.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

THE MOST CRITICAL QUESTION in the interview and the one that often makes for sweaty palms and a racing heartbeat is often the last one. The recruiter smiles, leans forward and says: **“Do you have any questions?”** Many candidates do great on the interview but do not prepare questions to ask the interviewer and neglect this most critical question. This is your moment to leave a lasting impression. Do not ask questions that are clearly answered on the employer’s website or in the interview. You can, however, ask for further information on a question that arises from doing your research. There are topics you should never initiate, such as salary or benefits. That said, there are many great questions you can ask that will help you land the internship or job of your dreams. Good questions show that you are genuinely interested in working for the employer and that you want to ensure it is also a good match for you.

- What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- What are you looking for in an ideal candidate?
- When should I expect to hear from you? (This should always be the last question.)
- What is the next step in the interviewing process?
- What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
- What is the company’s policy on providing seminars, workshops and training so employees can keep up with their skills or acquire new ones?
- How and by whom will my performance be reviewed? Are there specific criteria upon which I would be evaluated? And how frequently are reviews given to new employees?
- What does the company expect in the way of personal and professional growth for a person hired into this position?
- How much guidance or assistance is made available to individuals in developing career goals?
- What’s a typical day like for someone in this position?
- What do you like about the company?
- I’ve been told that I work very well as a team member. What are some of the ways your company encourages teamwork?
- I love your published mission and values. How are these reflected in day-to-day life at the company?
- To whom does the individual in this position directly report?
- What are the challenges and rewards of working in your department?
- How would you describe the work culture in your department?

Do Not Ask

- About the salary or compensation of any kind
- About another company that may be a competitor
- About how many hours you will work

Navigating the Job Search and Interview with a Disability

DECIDING IF you should disclose your disability in an interview or face-to-face event can be a difficult decision. If your disability is visible, it is only natural that the interviewer will have questions regarding your abilities in relation to the position. In this situation, it is best if you address any potential concerns immediately. If you decide to disclose an invisible disability, wait until after you have accepted the position. Be aware that if you want accommodations, you must disclose your disability to the employer.

Before an Interview or Employer Event

If you need specific accommodations to succeed at the interview or employer event you should tell the Career and Professional Development Center ahead of time. They may be able to contact the appropriate people to set up the accommodations.

During an Interview or Employer Event

If Your Disability Is Visible:

An employer may have questions regarding your ability to complete the job, but he or she is not allowed to ask if you have a disability. This can create an uncomfortable situation for the employer and you. If your disability is visible, it may be best to initiate the conversation about your disability and set a positive tone while you address his or her concerns.

- Positively frame the conversation by starting with your abilities, references, past work and progress to how you expect to complete the tasks for them.
- Use examples of how you have completed similar tasks in the past. It is easiest for employers to understand how you will complete tasks they may assume are difficult by giving them a picture of how you have already done so elsewhere.
- Suggest reasonable accommodations that will help you successfully complete the position's responsibilities. Articulate how the accommodation will enable you to complete the tasks successfully because it has helped you in the past.
- Be confident about your skills and how you can contribute to the company. If you are confident in yourself, they will be confident in you too.

If Your Disability Is Invisible:

- You should not disclose a disability unless you believe it is essential the employer know.
- If you decide to disclose an invisible disability, wait until after you have accepted the position.
- Disclose if you believe it is necessary or if you need accommodations to complete your job.

Disclosure Example

"You may not be aware but I have a visual impairment. At times, it is difficult to read small print. In the past, I have used NaturalReader, a free text-to-speech software that reads aloud any Word, web page, PDF file or email. I have used this successfully for materials such as class instructions, emails and newspaper articles. With the assistance of NaturalReader, I have never had my visual disability negatively impact my work. I intend to use this free program in my next position, and I will bring headphones into work to ensure I do not disrupt my co-workers. As for print-outs, I would ask to be sent the print-out ahead of time and I will enlarge the font on my own. With this assistance, my work will not be impacted by my visual disability."

Resources

Job Accommodation Network

www.askjan.org

Confidential consultation on the type of accommodations that will best fit your needs

Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

U.S. Department of Labor
<https://www.dol.gov/odep>

The ADA on Disclosure

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits interviewers from asking about your disability. However, if you bring up your disability, they are then allowed to ask questions about it **only as it relates to the position you are applying to and the skills needed**. They cannot ask how you acquired the disability or how many vacation/sick days you take.

Use Your Common Sense...



Is your email address professional? It should consist of your name or initials.

Is your voicemail message clear and professional?

"Hello. You have reached Jennifer Smith. Please leave your name, number and message and I will return your call. Thank you."

Keep your social media pages private. Google your name and review the results.

Mirror the employer's method of communication. Return a call with a call, and an email with an email.

If you are not sure how to respond or handle a situation, call the Career and Professional Development Center for assistance. We offer guidance based on scenarios many students and alumni have encountered.

What Are the Next Steps After My Interview?

- Write a thank-you note to the employer and send within 24 hours. (See page 20)
- Critically think about how you did, what you could have done differently and what you may want to ask in a second interview or upon a formal offer.
- Haven't heard back? Wait one to two weeks before following up. When you do, re-introduce yourself and give the date you interviewed, reiterate your interest in the position, and ask the status of the opening.

Graduate and Professional School... Getting Started

Decide if Graduate or Professional School is Right FOR YOU

Graduate School Options

Reasons to pursue an advanced degree:

- Your career goals require an advanced degree.
- You want to become an expert in a specific field or industry.
- A graduate degree may allow you to advance in your career.
- A graduate degree may allow you to focus on a career change.
- A graduate degree is necessary for your desired professional field.
- You are still motivated and in the studying mode.
- You want to enter your profession as soon as possible.
- You do not have any financial obligations right now that would detract from financing graduate school.

Reasons NOT to pursue an advanced degree:

- You are avoiding the job market for fear of not finding a job.
- You plan to use graduate school to explore a career field.
- You are not sure which career options are relevant to your major.
- You enjoy the intellectual stimulation and the lifestyle of being a student.
- Someone else expects you to go to graduate school; it is not your choice.
- You don't know what else to do with your future.

Do not attend graduate or professional school solely for financial gain. Consider the intangible factors associated with a graduate degree, such as knowledge that cannot be obtained through on-the-job training and intellectual stimulation.

Advanced Degree, Employment or BOTH?

Benefits of obtaining an advanced degree:

- Your career and academic goals are well-defined.
- You have the drive and enthusiasm to continue your higher education.
- You have the financial means in terms of loans, savings, grants, fellowships and assistantships.

Benefits of obtaining employment:

- You need time to clarify your career goals and select an area of study.
- You feel drained academically and need time to recharge your academic batteries.
- For some fields, practical experience may allow you to have greater success as a graduate student.

Benefits of obtaining an advanced degree while working:

- Many employers offer tuition reimbursement for graduate and professional school.
- Taking courses preserves and maintains academic study skills.
- You are able to maintain a salary while gaining experience in the classroom.
- Working while pursuing an advanced degree can create networking opportunities that could lead to a job after graduation.
- Pursuing an advanced degree concurrently while working enriches both educational and work experience by applying classroom knowledge on the job.

Some employers offer tuition reimbursement as a benefit that will pay partial or full tuition for qualified employees while they maintain their professional position within the company.

Selecting a Field of Study

DID YOU know that it is possible to obtain your doctoral degree directly after graduation, without obtaining a master's degree first? Many students do not, but depending on your field, it could be a viable option that saves you time, money or both.

Doctoral vs. Master's Degree

Peterson's, the guide to undergraduate and graduate institutions, notes that every program and every institution is different. Some require all students to begin as master-level candidates. Others will offer master-level status to some entering students, but doctoral status to others. Obtaining doctoral status is usually contingent upon academic and career objectives. When you attend a combined program, you complete master-level work as part of your doctoral requirements.

Benefits of obtaining a doctoral degree:

- Doctoral candidates often receive more funding (research and teaching internships), although the positions can be more competitive.
- Pursuing each degree separately can take longer.
- You have to go through the application process only once.
- You are completely dedicated to your area of study.
- You want to work in a highly competitive field, and a doctorate is required.
- You plan to teach or research at the university level or study in a research-intensive field.

Obtaining a master's degree first may be the right choice if:

- Your college grades are not strong enough to get you into a doctoral program.
- You need only a master's degree to qualify for the job of interest.
- You are continuing your education as a means of changing careers.
- You may not be entirely sure a doctorate is the best choice for you.

Regardless of which path you choose, it is essential to research your options carefully. Obtaining a doctorate is an exciting step, but it is also a great commitment!

Assessing Your Goals

ONCE YOU have determined that you want to attend graduate or professional school there are a number of factors to consider. Certainly, the location and setting is important. Do you want to go to school in a major city or a more rural location? The size of the institution is also a factor. With the location comes the cost-of-living factor, especially if you determine that you do not want to live in university housing. Location, size, cost and reputation should all be taken into consideration when making a final decision about graduate school.

The reputation of the institution is also a factor to think about. Is the most prestigious school that, for instance, has the highest *U.S. News and World Report* rankings the best fit for you? With prestige comes a certain culture with expectations that may not fit your personality and goals. In certain disciplines, the prestige of the school may have an impact on your first job and your starting salary.

Of course, a major determining factor is cost and the availability of financial aid. What financial aid opportunities such as scholarships, research assistantships or fellowships are available at the school?

Another factor associated with reputation is where students are finding employment after graduation. Does the program have a national reputation, or is it more specialized to a particular region? What are the average salaries of graduates, and which industries and employers are hiring them? Are the graduates getting positions related to their field of study?

The size of the program and university are also issues to consider. Making the transition from a small, private, religiously affiliated college, like Saint Vincent College, to a large public university can be daunting. Both the size of the institution and the culture of the university can be quite different.

Graduate or Professional School Timeline

With a Career Consultant or Your Academic Adviser

FIRST YEAR

- ❑ Remember to do a First-Year Check-in with your career consultant to discuss any other interests or concerns you may have regarding your future as a graduate student.

SOPHOMORE & JUNIOR YEARS

- ❑ If your plans for graduate or professional school are not yet defined, you may want to investigate the course requirements for entry into a program. For instance, if you are in a non-business major, but are considering pursuing an MBA a few years after graduation, you may want to take the necessary courses to meet the minimum entrance requirements.
- ❑ Attend Career and Professional Development Center events on graduate and professional school topics.
- ❑ Speak to your academic adviser about GPA expectations and other academic credentials for programs of interest in your career field.

SENIOR YEAR

- ❑ Meet with your career consultant to have your essay reviewed and go over any last-minute questions regarding the application process.

On Your Own

- ❑ If you know that graduate school may be an option for you, take advantage of networking with upperclassmen to learn more about opportunities and schools that may be a good fit for you.
- ❑ Establish a rapport with three or four professors to build relationships for future recommendations.

- ❑ Research schools via their website for the particular field of study. Narrow your selection to two or three reach institutions, competitive schools and safe schools.
- ❑ Determine the degree you wish to pursue.
- ❑ Organize a binder or spreadsheet to track your research, necessary credentials for admission, deadlines and applications.
- ❑ Investigate national and local scholarships, fellowships and assistantships. Pay close attention to application deadlines.
- ❑ Take free online practice exams.
- ❑ Consider taking a test preparation course or purchasing a test prep book if your practice results do not meet requirements.
- ❑ Define your goals. Your graduate or professional school is for defining your interests in what you want to do.
- ❑ Find out which admission exams are required and take required exams.
- ❑ Determine application deadlines and admission procedures.
- ❑ Visit institutions of interest and consider whether you have the credentials to be a competitive candidate.

- ❑ Connect with your references and ask them to write you a letter of recommendation. Provide them with your resume and any information needed in order to submit your letter on time.
- ❑ Check with all institutions before the deadline to make sure your application and all supporting materials have been received.
- ❑ After acceptance, notify other colleges and universities that you have chosen a different program, so they may admit students on their waiting lists and send a deposit to the institution(s) you are interested in attending.
- ❑ Send thank-you notes to your references.
- ❑ Relax and enjoy the rest of your senior year!

Academic GPA



FOR STUDENTS with marginal undergraduate grades, doing well academically in post-baccalaureate course work could enhance the probability of getting into the institution of your choice. The most commonly-used criterion for admission to graduate school is undergraduate grade-point average (GPA).

Why is GPA so important to admission committees? Unlike standardized tests, the GPA reflects your long-term academic success as a student. To a certain degree, beyond innate intelligence, it reflects your motivation to academically apply yourself. More weight is placed on the GPA with highly competitive graduate and professional school programs.

Major GPA vs. Overall GPA

Depending on the program, admission committees look at your major GPA first, then your overall GPA. Other programs focus their attention on your GPA over the last two years, realizing that you may have changed majors or had some other factors influence your GPA during the first two years.

In addition to GPA, graduate and professional school programs look at the academic rigor of the courses you have taken. A high GPA comprised of a high percentage of introductory courses or “easy-A courses” will have less value than a GPA with more challenging subjects. Generally speaking, if the graduate or professional school knows the undergraduate institution and has a track record correlating student academic performance with undergraduate GPA, they may place more weight on the GPA, rather than other criteria, like standardized test scores.

It is true that in most graduate or professional school programs, grades are important means of evaluating applicants. It is also important to realize that this is only one of the important criteria and that a shortcoming in your grades can often be compensated by excellent performance on some of the other important criteria.

Consideration in other areas of evaluation is key when applying to graduate school with a less-than-stellar GPA. This may include things like having strong letters of recommendation, composing a well-thought out statement of purpose or personal statement and doing well on standardized tests. One of the best ways to compensate for mediocre grades is to get experience in the field in which you plan to study. Whether it be research or practical experience, doing so shows you are serious and committed to the area of interest and are likely to succeed while in graduate school.

You still do not think you can get into graduate school? Well, students applying directly to graduate or professional school gain acceptance to top-choice graduate schools, often with average grades. Grades can be extremely important, however, so if you know you are going to be attending graduate or professional school, you should do your best at all times, while trying to maintain a well-balanced academic, professional and personal life.

Another way to overcome grades as a criterion for selection into graduate and professional school is to visit the school and talk to the professors in the department.

In addition to GPA, graduate and professional school programs look at the academic rigor of the courses you have taken.

Standardized Tests

STANDARDIZED TESTS have become a way of life for every student. Standardized tests level the playing field for admission staff when they evaluate the academic backgrounds of students from a variety of educational institutions.

The question remains: How do I best prepare for a standardized test? What effect will test scores have on getting into graduate or professional school? Test preparation is key when gearing up for any test; how you prepare is a very individual matter.

Some students elect to buy study guides or previously administered tests to prepare for standardized tests. Other students take free practice exams online. Various test preparation providers offer options such as classroom courses, virtual class meetings and weekend workshops.

Which standardized test do I need to take?

Each program of study will provide information on which standardized test is required or acceptable to complete the admission application process. Each program is different, so be sure to get your facts from each individual institution and more specifically the adviser or admission representative for each specific program of study.

How do I prepare for a standardized test?

Preparing takes time, so be sure you do this well in advance of the test date. While you might be able to retake the exam, it is best to plan ahead so you do as well as possible the first time you take it. Many schools will review your first score as well as any additional test scores.

When should I take the test?

This depends on which test you are taking, which type of graduate program you seek and when you want to start school. Talk with your current adviser and the admission staff at each of your prospective schools.

How important are my scores?

All schools have a unique admission formula. Test scores are often just one factor the school considers when admitting applicants. Other key considerations are grades, recommendation letters, your personal statement and, in some cases, the interview.

Also worth noting is that some schools review multiple test scores differently from other schools. For example, some schools will take your best score, some will average all of your test scores together and some use only the most recent score. A school's admission office may be able to tell you which method they use.

Can I receive accommodations for a standardized test?

Yes, you can receive accommodations if you have a documented disability. You should contact the host of the exam to arrange for the accommodations. Typical accommodations include extended time, a reader or a scribe. Contact the Career and Professional Development Center with any concerns about receiving accommodations.

Key Preparation Tips

- **Attend workshops:** Take practice exams and attend offered workshops.
- **Buy prep books:** Any good bookstore will have many preparation books or guides, and the testing entities themselves provide study guides.
- **Review the exam:** Review an old copy of the exam to identify skill sets and the types of questions asked. You can usually find old copies of the exam in the registration booklet, on the test website or in study guides.
- **Take the online sample tests:** Some test prep companies offer free sample online tests.
- **Take classroom courses or online courses:** Be sure to do research prior to signing up for a class. They can be costly so it is important to understand what will be gained from the course.

Personal Statements and Essays

WRITING A personal statement or application essay could have a profound effect on getting into the graduate and professional school of your choice. For many students this is often the most difficult part of the application process. It is critical that the essay is clear and compelling for the reader, so be sure to spend a considerable amount of time writing, editing and revising. A career consultant or professional can also read your essay or offer some advice, prior to submitting your final document.

Admission or Application Essay

The admission or application essay is written by an applicant to the graduate or professional school in response to an assignment posed in the graduate application. These terms are often used interchangeably.

VS.

Personal Statement

The personal statement is more akin to writing your autobiography within the context of applying to a graduate or professional school program. In this case, you would describe your total life experiences and goals and what makes you a unique candidate.

In borderline cases, personal statements and essays can be pivotal if you can prove that you bring distinctive traits and experience to the table. In the few cases where the submission of a personal statement is optional with your application, it would be wise to submit one. This may give the admission committee compelling subjective information to admit you.

According to Peterson's, writing requirements vary widely. Some programs request only one or two paragraphs about why you want to pursue graduate study, while others require numerous specific essays. Since personal statements/essays can reveal your character more clearly than other application materials, they may provide evidence that you bring something distinctive to the field.

Writing the Essay or Personal Statement

Self-Assessment

There are many things you must know before making a decision. Where will the graduate and professional school education lead you? What career paths are associated with this credential? Is there a demand for career fields associated with this specialized degree or credential? Will this degree or

professional designation necessitate living in a certain part of the country or world where this credential is in demand? What are the benefits and shortcomings of pursuing this degree and associated career paths? If you are still not sure after reading these questions, please visit the Career and Professional Development Center to validate your career interests and learn more about career paths.

Getting Started

Research all institutions of interest. Part of the essay is to identify what is distinctive about the program and the institution. Why do you want to apply there, and why will the admission committee think you are a good fit for the program?

If the basic task of the essay is to follow directions and you do not do what they ask, the admission committee will question whether you will be able to follow directions in their program. Too many students think it is okay to ignore page and word limits when writing the essay. If you are over the word limit, rewrite and revise until you reach the target. However, be sure the key points you want to make are clear and concise. Typically, you want to show the reader the journey in reaching your academic and career goals, why their program is a good fit and what unique attributes you bring to the program and institution.

*Why is this program the right program for you?
What is distinctive about the faculty or the recruiters
who hire graduates of this institution?
What do you like about the curriculum and perhaps
the research facilities you might be using?*

Field of Study

How you became interested in the field of study is a question you will no doubt be asked in either the essay or the interview. You may also be asked when you became interested in this field of study. No matter what the particular moment, you will want to give the reader a vivid scenario of the situation, task, action and result, much like you would do during an interview.

The Program

Why is this program the right program for you? What is distinctive about the faculty or the recruiters who hire graduates of this institution? What do you like about the curriculum and perhaps the research facilities you might be using? Here is where you get to use the knowledge you have gathered from visiting the school, reading professional journals, researching its website and understanding rankings. Perhaps you have written to professors to learn more about the program or have become knowledgeable about specific faculty in those programs through your own faculty at Saint Vincent. It is highly advised that you mention appropriate and compelling reasons as to why you chose this institution.

Write About Yourself

You can always write something about yourself. As we mentioned, it is good to relate specific activities or events that have shaped your decision to go into a specific field of study. Tell your story using a lot of concrete detail; this keeps the admission committee engaged. Although the essay is personal, you should not include any personal information that may be uncomfortable for the reader or can be interpreted incorrectly.

Research and Scholarly Activity

There are very few undergraduate programs that require a senior thesis. You want to exploit this experience as a demonstration of your ability to do scholarly work. If you did not complete a thesis during your time at Saint Vincent, make a list of your undergraduate papers, memorable research projects or presentations that you are able to discuss. Also be sure to cite presentations and publications at academic conferences or other professional organizations.

Experiential Learning

Explore your career goals through our SVC BearcatREADY Program. Experience in the work-place such as job shadowing, internships, part-time positions, on-campus student employment and community engagement all offer opportunities to engage with future employers, peers and graduates of Saint Vincent. Writing about how a practical experience has inspired your career will be an excellent addition to a graduate school application.

An Obstacle You Have Overcome

Have you had to overcome adversity to get where you are today? Tell your story and what strengths and unique personal qualities you exemplify.

Study Abroad Experience

Experiencing another culture demonstrates that you can adapt to unfamiliar environments. It also shows that you can interact or work with people with diverse backgrounds and ethnicity. By studying abroad, you show initiative and eagerness to undertake personal and academically challenging experiences. These experiences can be invaluable in getting into a world-class graduate or professional school program or the program of your choice.

Letters of Recommendation

THE LETTER of recommendation is an essential component of the overall evaluation of a candidate. This letter fills in the gaps about your candidacy for graduate or professional school that are not conveyed in other aspects of your application. A convincing letter from a faculty member or previous internship supervisor can often persuade graduate admission committees. This can be particularly true if the committee is having a difficult time making a decision about whether or not you should be accepted into a specific program. These letters can serve as a very strong piece of the overall application process.

Depending on the graduate or professional school, there are certain technical, transferable, functional, and adaptable skills not measured by standardized tests. These are broad-based skills such as critical thinking skills that are a hallmark of a liberal arts education. These skills are often written about in a letter of recommendation.

A good letter can provide admission committees with the “total package” of information that will supplement the criteria of grades, class rank and test scores. For instance, you may have one poor semester in an otherwise stellar academic background or one poor grade in a relevant course. You may also have a family, health or financial issue that was the reason for a substandard semester. A well-written letter of recommendation may be able to demonstrate your ability to overcome these issues, while discussing your positive and outstanding attributes.

When Requesting a Letter of Recommendation:

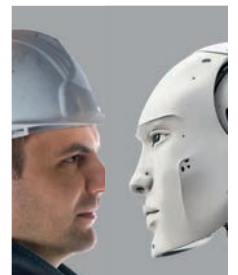
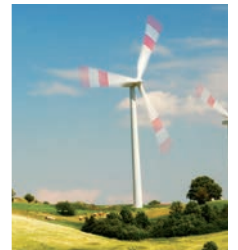
- Ask the supervisor or faculty member if they could write you a strong letter of recommendation. If the potential reference cannot assure you that they can write a strong letter of recommendation, solicit another reference.
- Provide references with a transcript, updated resume, senior thesis, writing sample or portfolio.
- Be prepared! References may require that you list some talking points highlighting your strengths and why you think you would be a good candidate for a particular advanced degree or program.
- Keep the references apprised of application deadlines for letters of recommendation so they do not have to search for the information.
- Ask the references in a courteous manner about the current status of the letter.
- Be diplomatic and subtle; faculty members and professionals are very busy. It takes time and effort to write a strong letter of recommendation.

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References



AN IMPORTANT component of an application process is being able to provide appropriate references. An employer or graduate study program may use references as the last step to assess your candidacy.

Guidelines

Obtain Permission

Never give the name of someone without permission.

Know What the Reference Will Say About You

It is perfectly acceptable to ask a potential reference if they can give you a strong recommendation. Identify people who are enthusiastic and easy to talk to since most reference checking is done by phone.

Students with physical or visible disabilities may benefit from asking their references to initiate the conversation about their abilities and past successes, in relation to the disability. This should only be done if the reference is contacted AFTER you interview with the employer.

Provide Your References with Adequate Information

If possible, give your references a description of the job/graduate study program for which you are applying. If a complete description is not available, tell your references the kind of positions for which you are applying. If asking for a written reference, give the person adequate time to prepare a letter. Also provide them with your resume. It is also a good protocol to provide a reference with a resume.

Remind Your References Occasionally

Someone may give you permission to use their name and not intend it as a perpetual request. Periodically, remind your references that someone may be calling. This is especially true when using former professors or those that you will have minimal contact with after graduation. Remember to write a thank-you note to your references as a courtesy.

Tailor Your References to the Position

Develop separate lists of references for each type of position you are seeking. A psychology professor may be best in one instance and accounting professor in another. Your reference lists should not be static.

Make Sure to Use Professional References

References should be supervisors or faculty members who know you in a professional context (Some companies will ask you for personal references, in addition to your professional ones).

Reference Contact Information

When listing a reference, be sure you obtain their most up-to-date contact information. For example be sure to ask your references which telephone number and email they will be using during the time of your candidacy. Many contacts may not use the same contact information throughout the year. Be sure to keep this up to date as you continue to apply for internships, full-time positions or graduate programs.

Header (Should match your resume header)

Reference's Name
Title
Company/Institution/School Name
Address
Phone Number
Email Address

Reference's Name
Title
Company/Institution/School Name
Address
Phone Number
Email Address

Reference's Name
Title
Company/Institution/School Name
Address
Phone Number
Email Address

Graduate School Interview

A REVIEW of the literature and graduate and professional school websites reveals that admission interviews are becoming more commonplace. While interviews are not a requisite part of all graduate and professional applications, be prepared for the possibility of being interviewed. This is especially true if you will be working with faculty as a teaching assistant or research assistant. The faculty will be eager to meet you since the employer-employee relationship exists in addition to being accepted into a particular program.

Prior to the Interview

- Dress professionally.
- Avoid strong perfumes and colognes.
- Cover any body art and remove piercings.
- Bring copies of your resume, portfolio and/or senior thesis.
- Learn about the program and faculty.
- Review faculty publications in your field of interest.
- Prepare at least three intelligent questions about the program or field of study that cannot be readily found on the school's homepage or publications.

Sample Interview Questions

Being granted an interview is a significant step in the process of being accepted to the graduate or professional program on your targeted list. What questions can you expect? It depends on who is doing the interviewing. With faculty, the interview could revolve around your resume or senior thesis as a focal point. With admissions staff, you could encounter the traditional or behavioral questions listed in the interviewing section of this guide. You may also encounter these graduate school-based questions:

- If you are not accepted into graduate school, what are your plans?
- What do you know about our program?
- Why did you choose to apply to our program?
- What other schools are you considering?
- In what ways have your previous experiences prepared you for graduate study in our program?
- What do you believe your greatest challenge will be if you are accepted into this program?

- In college, what courses did you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
- Describe your research project (senior thesis).
- How would your professors describe you?
- What types of literature do you read in your spare time?
- What are your career goals? How will this program help you achieve your goals?

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

- What percentage of graduates find employment related to their field of study after graduation?
- What types of employers hire graduates of this program? Where are these employers located?
- What changes do you foresee in the profession?
- What distinguishes the curriculum, in the eyes of the employers, from other institutions?
- What opportunities exist to work with faculty on their own research?

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