

I've completed school.
How Do I Know
 what to do next?

The first thing to do when you complete your program of study is to take a little time to congratulate yourself. You deserve it! You've completed a very important step in pursuit of your career goal.

Finishing school is just one of the first steps to entering the career you have chosen. If the occupation you are entering requires you to be licensed or certified, make the necessary arrangements to apply for your license or take your exam.



Welcome!

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Getting the information you need before making the best choice for you is just as important. And while continuing your education is always a wonderful endeavor, be certain that you don't take on any more debt than you can reasonably pay back once you land that first job!

This series of brochures is intended to provide you with information and resources each step along the way. From finding the career and school that fits you, to starting your job search, it's my hope you will find these brochures a guide to help you realize your dreams. Make certain to also get a copy of the *Student Bill of Rights*, which lists your rights as a student in California.

On behalf of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, I wish you success in the next step of your education and in attaining your goals.

CARRIE LOPEZ, DIRECTOR
 Department of Consumer Affairs



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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 DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS



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PRIVATE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

For more information, contact the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Consumer Information Center:

1625 North Market Blvd.
 Suite N-112
 Sacramento, CA 95834

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 (916) 322-1700 (TDD only)

www.bppve.ca.gov

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Paperwork

You probably received a certificate of completion or a diploma when you finished your program. Whether you decide to frame it and hang it on the wall or mail it to your best friend as evidence that you “did it,” make a copy of it and put it with the rest of your school paperwork in a safe place. Also, request at least one copy of your transcript. A transcript is a document that lists all of the courses you took and the grades you received. Most schools destroy student records after a period of time. You want to make sure you have documentation of the courses you took in case you ever need it.

Financial Aid

If you have loans, you need to make sure your lender knows how and where to find you. Contact your lender and let them know that you have completed your schooling and verify your correct, current address. Just because a lender can't find you doesn't mean you don't owe the money. In fact, a lender will track you down eventually, and that may cost you more in fees or penalties.

Attend your school's loan exit interview. You will get important information on your rights and responsibilities. If you have problems paying your loans, talk with your lender. Again, avoiding the facts does not make them go away. It is better to be honest and document that you tried to resolve issues rather than avoid them.

Maintain all of your paperwork in a safe place until, at least, your loans are paid in full. You never know when you'll need the information in the loan documents.

Finding a Job

If your school has placement assistance, take full advantage of the services that are offered through your school. Remember, you didn't come this far to ease up now. Do the research, make the phone calls, and follow through. You are responsible for your own success.

Resume and Cover Letter

If your school did not offer a workshop in writing a resume and cover letter, get some help. There are many sites online that are free of charge and provide instruction or ideas on writing an effective resume and cover letter. Some sites provide examples so look around for the best one for you and get started. Many new job seekers will write a resume using the



template on their personal computer. Don't use any template that includes grids. Most employers recognize these as a template and it leaves them with the impression you are not resourceful.

Three pieces of advice as you write your resume and cover letter:

First, one size does not always fit all.

Adjust your resume and cover letter to the needs of the organization. Read job announcements and mission statements to find out what is important to the company and highlight those areas on your resume and then reinforce those skills or abilities by mentioning them in your cover letter. Look for “buzzwords” in the mission statement that you can use in your cover letter. For instance, if a mission statement or job announcement uses the phrase “team approach” or “team environment,” it would make sense to highlight your ability to work well with others by defining yourself as a “team player.” Those buzzwords are clues to what the company has determined is important.

Second, don't include or highlight anything on your resume that you don't want to do.

You may be the best window washer in the United States, but don't include that on your resume if you don't want to at least talk about

washing windows. Include the information that is important to the job you are seeking, don't feel you need to include every job you had since high school unless you gained a skill or ability that will be useful in your new career.

Finally, double-check your spelling and punctuation. The worst thing that can happen to a job seeker is to spend time, energy, and effort to write the perfect resume and cover letter only to be rejected because the person you sent it to is put off by typographical errors. Even if spelling and punctuation is your strong area, find someone to review the resume and cover letter for you.

Job Leads

If your school has a constant stream of job leads that you can follow, that's great! But you need to take charge of your search. Again, there are many sites on the web that offer job advertisements free of charge. Don't forget to go back to the people you spoke with as you were researching possible careers. Often the people working in the profession know of current or future openings or have ideas where you can look for jobs.

Interviews

If you are called for an interview, make sure you are prepared. Most interviews focus on questions and conversation about three subjects: You, the company, and the job. Make sure you have as much information as possible about all three. Be on time for the interview. Dress to make a good first impression.

Good Luck!