

# Top tips for graduates

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The highs of graduation are often followed by a harsh reality check with many job seekers coming down to earth with an unexpected bump. The tough economic landscape, shrinking job market and heightened competition can be disheartening to graduates, but here are 12 tried-and-tested tips on how to front up to these challenges.

1. Be positive and embrace the challenges: Life after graduation is a journey with many ups and downs, unexpected twists and turns, dead ends and crossroads. Embrace the challenges and make a positive attitude your constant travel companion.
2. The success of failure: "I've failed over and over and over again in my life and that's why I succeed." Michael Jordan's wise words illustrate the importance of learning from mistakes and turning obstacles into opportunities.
3. Be open minded: Graduating is an achievement, but it's not an entitlement - you've got to earn your future. Your education may have opened up pathways to progress, but it doesn't have to be prescriptive. Keep a perspective on the big picture and be open to change.
4. Spring clean your digital profile: Reputation is everything. Take a long, hard look at your digital profile from a potential employer's perspective. Clean up and clean out if necessary, change your privacy settings and be smart about what and where you share.
5. Make a plan: Set a framework for life after graduation. Identify your goals and prepare a plan in bite-sized steps. Identify potential employers and recruitment options, and keep records of which organisations you have approached and who you spoke to.
6. Be CV savvy: Get professional advice on writing your CV. Keep it crisp, short and factual and, where appropriate, change the emphasis to suit the job description (e.g. leadership qualities, teamwork, organisational skills etc).
7. Job-seeking techniques: Be flexible with your job-hunting techniques. Approach recruitment agencies, look online, work your contacts, don't discount small businesses and initiate your own contact with your preferred employers. Different techniques work better for different industries, so be flexible and broaden your search.
8. Research: When you write an unsolicited letter, meet recruitment agents or get a job interview, knowledge will be power. Research the company, read recent media announcements, show genuine interest in the business and tailor your responses to demonstrate that your skills and talents suit their particular needs.
9. Interview techniques: First impressions count. Be professional, be prepared and be enthusiastic. If you want the job, go after it - and give the interviewers every reason to choose you over every other candidate.
10. Take the job: Even if it's not your dream job, take it. In this tough market, any job can be a good job - and remember, there's an upside everywhere. Strive to progress, look for ways of developing your skills even if you find yourself in an unexpected or unconventional position - and enjoy banking the cheque!
11. Don't sit idle: If you can't find a job - don't do nothing. Do volunteer work, take an unpaid internship, become a tutor. This adds depth to your CV and may open doors for you.
12. Don't lose hope: It's not easy keeping positive, especially in the face of setbacks - but negativity gives others the chance to overtake. Be strong, maintain your individuality and sense of self, find positive ways to stand out from the crowd and believe in your future. You've earned it.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Niteske Marshall is the MD of Network Recruitment.