



**the young  
employee**

**From School Student to  
Employed Graduate**

**[theyoungemployee.com.au](http://theyoungemployee.com.au)**

## Introduction

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The Young Employee created this guide to empower you to progress from a school student to an employed graduate.

As young employees ourselves we know it can be very challenging for young Australians starting their career. So we've created this guide to help you plan ahead and seek advice from others who have been there before.

This guide is meant for high school students, university students and university graduates to help you identify and achieve your initial career goals.

This guide talks about deciding what you want to be when you grow up, education and experience to help you get the job, what activities to engage in and the recruitment process.

We wish you luck in your career endeavours,

**The Young Employee**

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## Deciding what you want to be when you grow up

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The first step towards achieving your dream future is deciding what kind of future you want.

Some people have always known what they want to be when they grow up, but for the rest of us it's not so easy. The good news is that it's predicted that we'll have many career changes in our lifetime, so no need to feel like you're making decisions now that will last a lifetime.

While it can be hard to start thinking about these things at such a young age, your career choices will have a significant impact on your life including what you actually do all day every day, how much spare time you have to yourself and how much money you have to spend.

A good place to start is to match career fields with your personal interests, skills, preferred work environment and preferred lifestyle. Have a think about the below areas and consider writing your ideas down.

### Interests

#### Consider your current interests including:

- What school subjects did you select?
- Which school subjects do you enjoy the most?
- What you do in your spare time?
- What types of blogs or websites do you visit?
- What types of books or magazines do you read?
- What extracurricular activities are you engaged in?

### Skills

**Identify your skills and talents.** Think about what you enjoy and what you do best. What are you good at?

Consider the skills you have gained through any group work, part time jobs, extracurricular activities or volunteering. For example:

- Do you love making customers happy?
- Are you always the leader in group activities?
- Do you enjoy solving maths problems or do you prefer writing essays and stories?
- Are you very organised and enjoying planning things?
- Are you good at using computers?
- Do you enjoy talking to others or public speaking?
- Do you love fixing things and solving complex problems?

## Work environment

Consider the type of environment you'd like to work in, including:

- Indoors or outdoors?
- Air-conditioned?
- At a desk or moving around?
- Hot desk or permanent desk?
- Quiet work or a loud social environment?
- Calm and steady work or fast pace and high pressure work?
- Set working hours, flexible arrangements or long hours?
- Do you want to work with clients or customers?
- Small or large organisation?
- Not for profit organisation or a profit focused organisation?

## Lifestyle

What kind of life do you want to have? Some things to think about:

- Would you like to travel for work?
- Do you want work life balance?
- Do you want spare time for exercise and other personal interests?
- How long do you want to travel to work each day?
- Where do you want to live?
- Will you be family focused?
- What do you want to be known for?
- Do you want to earn a lot of money?

After considering the above try to match your personal preferences to potential career fields.

When considering each career field on your list some things to keep in mind are:

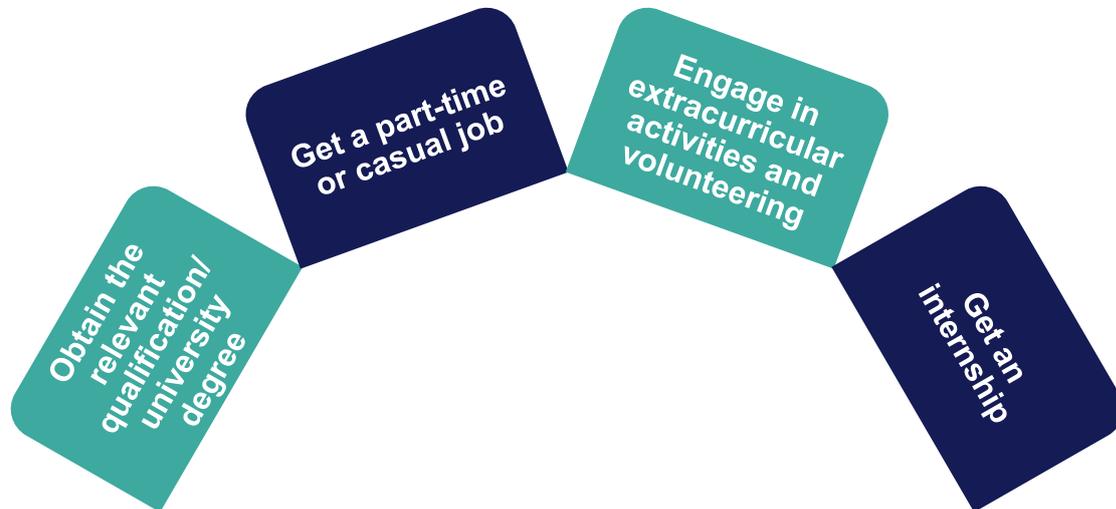
- What further study or qualification you would need?
- What are the requirements for acceptance into the qualification?
- How many years does the qualification take to get?
- What are the different educational institutions that offer this qualification?
- How much will the qualification cost and is there government funded support?
- How far would you travel to get there or would you move to be closer?
- The demand for the career field and likelihood of getting a job after completion of the qualification.

**Tip:** *Especially when you're not exactly sure what you want to do when you leave school it's important to study as hard as you can to get the best grades you can in order to leave as many options as possible open to you in the future.*

## Education and experience to help you get the job

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Once you've decided which career field you'd like to pursue, planning ahead and engaging in the following can help you get the job you want:



### University Degree

The first place to start is to enrol in a university degree or other qualification relevant for your chosen career field. However, in the competitive employment market just having the relevant degree may not be enough to land you a job, so gaining other experience from internships and extracurricular activities is very important. Also maintaining a credit average or above (65% or above) in your university studies is important as it can be a requirement in order to apply for some jobs.

**Tip:** *“Just having the relevant degree may not be enough to land you a job.”*

### Part-time or casual job

Getting a part-time or casual job is useful both to keep money coming in while you're studying and to gain key skills that future employers will value in the graduate recruitment process. Many part-time or casual jobs require you to solve customer queries, take initiative, lead teams, work in a face paced environment, develop communication skills and be organised – skills that are all applicable to your future career.

#### How to choose a part-time or casual job?

There are many factors to consider when choosing a part time or casual job.

- **Location and transport:** consider how far you'd be willing to travel to work and how you'd get to work. It's best if you can travel quickly, easily and safely to and from work.
- **Type of work:** there are so many different types of jobs out there. Some require manual labour, standing all day, sitting all day, being in the sun, being stuck inside,

dealing with customers, working on computers and so on. You should consider your own personal preferences.

- **Flexibility of working hours:** consider how flexible the work environment will be, especially when it comes to fitting the job around your study commitments. Often employers with more staff members and longer opening hours are able to provide more flexibility.
- **Relevance to your career:** considering the skills you'll gain from your part-time or casual job can be an important factor to consider when applying for internships and graduate positions.
- **Reputation and credibility of employer:** will you be safe at work and paid correctly?
- **People you work with:** we spend a lot of time at our jobs and working with great people makes your life so much better.

## Extracurricular activities and volunteering



Having extracurricular activities and volunteer experience on your resume is very valuable when applying for internships and graduate positions. Employers seek well rounded applicants and therefore just simply completing your degree will unlikely equate to a job. You need to develop interpersonal skills through additional activities. Extracurricular and volunteer activities include any activity that you can get involved in outside the scope of your usual studies or paid employment.

Some examples of extracurricular or volunteer positions you could seek to get involved in include:

- University societies / clubs (sign up during orientation week and on university websites)
- Joining a sports team
- Volunteering a local sports club (e.g. committee member, coach)
- Volunteering for local charities
- Peer mentoring programs
- Volunteer tutoring

- Debating or other team challenge
- Australian University Games
- Buddy programs
- Projects Abroad/ AIESEC

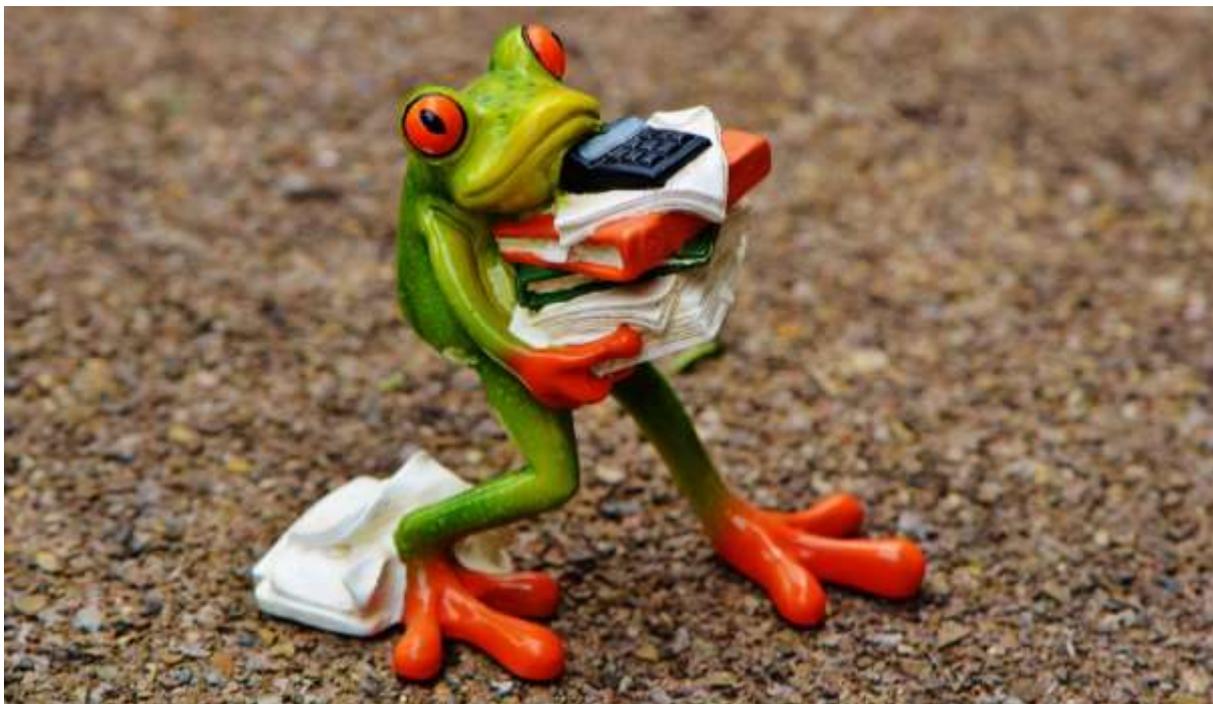
## Internships

In today's competitive graduate market, it's incredibly difficult to land a graduate position without having internship experience on your resume. The purpose of an internship is to learn about the organisation and the work they do, to gain industry experience and try to secure a graduate position.

Benefits of an internship include potentially securing a full time graduate position at that company, gaining access to a relevant professional referee, gaining industry experience, and the skills you gain look great on your resume.

Many organisations offer summer internship programs. These usually involve an 8-12 week placement during university summer holidays. Applications for summer internships occur months earlier, usually opening around February so make sure you don't miss out.

Universities also offer scholarship programs for a select groups of students and some scholarship programs can include industry placements. It's also well worth checking out your university careers page as employers often post exclusive internship opportunities on there. Mainstream job boards such as Seek also include internship opportunities from time to time.



## What should you try to get out of an internship?

An internship is a great opportunity to learn new skills that you'll be able to use as a graduate and to prove your worth to an organisation with the hope of securing a graduate position at the end of it. Even if a graduate position doesn't eventuate at that organisation an internship on your resume greatly increases your chances of getting a graduate job elsewhere. During an internship you should consider whether the organisation and industry are where you think you'd like to work as a graduate and somewhere you could build your career.

As best as possible you should build relationships with your colleagues. Especially if there are other interns you should make friends with them because only they will truly understand your intern life problems. During your internship you should build your network and connect with your colleagues over LinkedIn so you can keep in touch.

## What will people expect of you?

As an intern you're generally coming straight out of university into your first professional environment. Nobody expects you to be an expert in your field or to know all the answers. The best interns have an enthusiastic attitude, are helpful to their team members, listen when people are teaching them and are able to pick things up quickly.

## What will you be doing all day?

Over your first week as an intern you'll likely spend a lot of time meeting new people, setting up your computer and work station and reading about the organisation and what your team does. We know the reading can be very boring and you may feel like you want to fall asleep at the desk because you're not used to waking up so early, but try to seem interested and absorb as much as you can. Typically, the tasks you'll be allocated will gradually increase in difficulty.

The first types of tasks you're usually given can be tedious and administrative in nature, but if you perform these tasks well you'll begin to gain trust from your team members resulting in more interesting and challenging tasks allocated to you in the future. So just make sure you take those initial simple tasks seriously in order to build your credibility.

## What do you do if I run out of work to do?

Sometimes you might run out of work to do. When you do run out of work the best way to approach this is to ask your manager or team members if you can help them out with anything. This shows you're enthusiastic and you don't end up caught lazily sitting around doing nothing.

However sometimes managers and team members won't be able to think of something for you to do, maybe because they're busy or because they also don't have any work to do. So after you've brought the fact to their attention and they're aware you're keen for new tasks avoid constantly badgering them about the fact that you have no work. You'll need to come up with a way to occupy yourself and seem busy. Often a good way to do this is reading up on the company, teaching yourself something new on excel or online learning modules.

# Recruitment process

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During the recruitment process it's time to show off your skills and experiences gained through your education, part-time job, extracurricular activities and internships to help you stand out from other applicants. This is where your hard work and dedications pays off. The below shows the stages commonly involved in the recruitment process.



## Getting organised

Preparation before the graduate recruitment season begins and organisation throughout can reduce the stress and improve your chances of achieving a successful job outcome. See below our tips for getting prepared.

### Consider what types of graduate programs you're interested in?

Decide about what types of graduate programs you'd be interested in applying to for example consulting, auditing, commercial accounting, IT, marketing and economics to name a few.

### How can you keep track of all your applications?

Once you've decided on the type of programs you'd like to apply to then research and prepare a list of all the employers offering these programs and their application opening and closing dates. You can use this list to keep track of your status on each of the applications. It can also be helpful to rank the jobs in order of your preference so that if you're short on time you prioritise the jobs you want the most.

### Should you apply to all the open jobs straight away?

Graduate program applications are very time consuming and often involve submitting a resume, cover letter, LinkedIn profile and answers to specific questions about your motivations and experiences. Based your preference list you could apply to the jobs you want the most first and allow some time to see how they went before applying to further jobs before they close.

### Get prepared in advance

In the months leading up to the graduate recruitment season it's recommended to prepare your base resume and cover letter. This can take some time and once you have the base for each it will be far easier to add customisation for specific job applications where required.

It would also be a good idea to start preparing a list of answers to potential STAR technique interview questions. The STAR technique is used for behavioural based interview questions where by you answer them by describing the **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult. The answers

to these questions are based on situations you have personally experienced so will be applicable to multiple interviews.

## Submit application

Job applications are generally done through an online platform on the company website or through a job seeking website and include submitting your:

- Resume
- Cover letter
- LinkedIn profile
- Application questions

## Resume

The purpose of a resume is to demonstrate your suitability for a particular position with the intent of progressing to the following stages of the recruitment process. The best resumes follow a straightforward structure that's simple in nature and easy to read.

Your key selling points should be on the first page of the resume and easily identifiable. Remember that the reader may only spend 10 - 15 seconds viewing your resume at first glance so you want your resume to make an impact straight away.

### What to include in your resume?

#### Contact and personal details:

Your resume should include your full name, phone number, email address, and the area you live in. This is the information that the employer needs to be able to contact you to progress your application.

#### Career profile:

A career profile is a summary of your professional self and could include your current position and employer, your most relevant qualification, other relevant previous positions held and a summary of key areas of knowledge or experience. You may also like to outline your career ambitions.

#### Education and qualifications:

Outline your education and qualifications. List your most significant qualifications at the top. Include the name of the qualification, period studying and educational institution. You can also outline significant awards or achievements, for example achieved a distinction average or recipient of a university scholarship.

#### Work experience:

Demonstrate your previous experience, starting with your most recent or relevant position. Clearly identify the company and the role you held at that company as well as the duration. List your key responsibilities and achievements under each position, including a combination of soft and hard skills developed. Wherever possible quantify your achievements.

**Extracurricular activities:**

This is an opportunity to outline any other extracurricular activities or volunteering that you have undertaken and is an opportunity to highlight other relevant skills that you haven't already demonstrated in your work experience. Examples can include university groups, volunteering causes and sport committees that you're a part of.

**Personal Interest and Hobbies:**

Inclusion of this section can be a good way to build a connection with the reader and provides further insight about you on a personal level. Ensure these interests are appropriate to mention in a professional environment and show positive aspects about you.

## Cover letter



The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself to an organisation, demonstrate how your abilities align with the position and explain your motivation for applying. A cover letter is also an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to produce a succinct written document.

**What to include in a cover letter?****Letter format:**

Prepare your document in a formal letter format including your personal details in the top left corner of the letter, date of application and available details of the organisation you're addressing the letter to. Include the organisations address or email address and if you don't know who to address it to you could address it to the company recruitment team.

**Subject line:**

Re: Application for [position name] at [organisation name]

### **Addressee:**

Address the letter to someone, either to an appropriate employee, the organisation's recruitment team or to whom it may concern

### **Paragraphs:**

- **Paragraph 1:** State what position you are applying for and provide a brief summary of yourself.
- **Paragraph 2:** Explain why you are interested in this position. Rather than the immediate response that comes to mind - because I need money, a good way to think about this section is reasons why you would prefer this job to another.
- **Paragraph 3:** Describe your experience and qualifications.
- **Paragraph 4:** Describe your skills and abilities. In this section you detail the transferable skills you have gained through your experiences including school, TAFE, university, previous positions and volunteer positions.
- **Paragraph 5:** Thank the reader for taking time to consider your application and note you look forward to hearing from them soon.

Make sure you sign off on your letter at the bottom.

## **LinkedIn Profile**

LinkedIn is becoming an increasingly popular means of recruitment and your profile is essentially an online resume. Employers and recruiters use LinkedIn as a search engine to approach people who meet their criteria for a role.

Even if you're not actively seeking employment LinkedIn is a useful tool to build your professional network and keep in touch with other professionals. You should base your LinkedIn profile on the content you already have included in your resume.

**Below are the key LinkedIn functions you should utilise to create an effective profile.**

### **Profile photo:**

People with profile photos are more likely to get profile views. Your profile photo is a professional representation of yourself and should be a headshot, with a blank background and you should be wearing professional attire.

### **Headline:**

Your headline accompanies your profile photo and is the first thing people read before even deciding to view your profile. Your headline leaves your first impression and it should be a very brief summary of yourself. For university students their headline often describes themselves as a student, what they're studying and at what educational institution.

### **Summary:**

The summary section should be similar to the career profile section on your resume. Consider writing this summary as a standalone statement including the most important things about yourself. You could start with what you've already included in your headline. Generally, the summary will include your current position and employer, your most relevant qualification, other relevant previous positions held and a summary of key areas of knowledge or experience.

**Experience:**

List out all your work history. For each position include the position title, employer name, period of employment and a summary of your position and tasks performed, similar to what you would include on your resume in the employment history section.

**Education:**

List out your qualifications, include course details, period and educational institution.

**Causes:**

List any volunteer causes you have been involved in and the period that you were involved.

**Skills:**

List out the key relevant skills you have obtained through your experience, education and volunteering.

**Accomplishments:**

List out any achievements, awards or scholarships received.

## Application questions

During the recruitment process it's common to be asked to write responses to job application questions. These questions are designed to give the employer further insight into your suitability for the position to help them with the pre-screening process. These questions aim to provide the employer with further information that isn't usually present in your resume. They are also used to assess your communication skills, your motivations, and your ability to interpret and respond to information.

Examples of questions include:

- Outline skills you've developed through your extra-curricular activities
- Why do you want to work here?
- Why have you chosen your particular field (e.g. Human Resources)?
- Why should we pick you?
- Please provide us with an example of a time that you worked as part of a team to achieve an outcome.

## Online testing

There are two main types of online testing:

- 1) Ability/aptitude testing
- 2) Personality testing

Aptitude testing includes numerical, logical and verbal tests. Such tests compare your results with a pre-determined bench mark – generally speaking if you don't achieve the benchmark result your application won't progress to the next stage of the recruitment process. Personality tests evaluate your suitability for a position based on your personality, motivations, and interests.

Online testing is usually conducted on a computer, where applicants are required to answer a series of questions in a set period of time with the majority of test types using a multiple choice format.

Below you will find some hints and tips to help you with online testing:

- Perform your testing in a quiet space where you won't be distracted
- Wherever possible avoid using public Wi-Fi as it can be unreliable
- Have a pen, paper and calculator
- Do the tests by yourself – organisations may retest you later to confirm your result in a controlled environment
- Read all instructions before starting the test
- Complete the practice questions to familiarise yourself with the format
- For personality tests answer the questions honestly
- Work quickly and efficiently but don't rush – many of these tests don't expect you to finish them

## Phone interview



A phone interview is often your first verbal interaction with your potential employer so it's vital you make it count. After all, first impressions matter! The purpose of a phone interview is to further assess your suitability for the role. Essentially, the employer is trying to determine if it's worth their while to invite you to complete the next step of the recruitment process.

Generally, the key things that are assessed during a phone interview are your communication skills, motivations for the position and industry, what you know about the company and industry, and questions regarding your resume (education, work history etc.). The employer is also likely to ask questions regarding your salary expectations and notice period so be prepared to answer these. It's also not uncommon for the employer to ask behavioural based questions during the phone interview.

Below you will find some hints and tips that will help you achieve success during your phone interview:

- Be in a quiet location where you can talk freely and openly
- If it's not a good time to talk, it's ok to ask to give them a call back later
- Stand up during the phone interview – it helps project confidence in your voice
- Talk clearly and make sure you're not talking too fast
- Listen intently to the employer – to make sure you stay engaged in the conversation
- Know your resume, know the company, and know your motivations (why did I apply in the first place?)
- Answer any behavioural based questions using the STAR technique
- Demonstrate you're interested in the role, company and industry by asking questions when given the opportunity at the end.

## Assessment centre

Assessment centres are used by large organisations in their graduate recruitment process. They're intended simulate the real work environment to see your behaviour and skills in action. Common aspects of assessments centres include:

- Case study
- Email preparation
- Problem solving
- Group discussion
- Individual or group presentation

Primarily an assessment centre is focused on your soft skills including how you solve problems, communication and interact with others. It's important to contribute and assert your views without aggressively dismissing the ideas of others. It's can also be a good idea to encourage other team members to contribute and ask questions that facilitate discussion.

## Interview

Being well prepared for your interview will help calm your nerves in the moments leading up to the interview and will leave you better equipped to answer difficult questions.

**See below our strategies to help with your interview preparation.**

### **Research the organisation:**

A good starting point is the organisation's website in the 'About us' and 'Careers' sections. Demonstrating your knowledge of the organisation is a way to impress the interviewer as it shows your interest and that you've spent time preparing. You should acquire an understanding of the organisations structure, current market conditions and trends, competitors, and employee specific information.

### **Research the position:**

Read the job advertisement to ensure you fully understand the requirements and responsibilities of the position, including the desired hard and soft skills. This is a good indicator of the interview question focus areas. Consider how your previous experience and

educational background aligns with the requirements and be prepared to highlight this in the interview.

### **Research the interviewer:**

If you know who the interviewer is going to be it's a good idea to look them up on LinkedIn. This way you getting a better understanding of the person you'll be meeting – specifically their career background and current position at the organisation.

### **Practice answering questions:**

Ask a family member or trusted friend to do a mock interview with you. Try and treat the mock interview like a real one and practice your posture, gestures and mannerisms. Practice eye contact and speaking in a clear, steady and positive tone. Ensure you're providing structured and succinct answers to the question. Seek feedback after the mock interview and improve on any answers that need work. Below is a good base of questions to practice:

- 1) Tell me about yourself.
- 2) Why do you want to work here?
- 3) Why are you interested in your career field (e.g. accounting)?
- 4) Why do you think we should pick you for the role?
- 5) What are your strengths?
- 6) What are your development areas?
- 7) What are your career plans/ goals?
- 8) Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- 9) Why are you leaving your current job?
- 10) What's your biggest achievement?
- 11) What are your salary expectations?
- 12) Do you have any questions for us?

### **Behavioural questions – tell me about a time when you:**

- 13) Demonstrated Leadership
- 14) Solved a problem
- 15) Dealt with a difficult situation
- 16) Overcame a setback
- 17) Demonstrated Communication skills
- 18) Had to make a difficult decision
- 19) Had a goal that you didn't reach
- 20) Had to deal with a difficult team member

### **Prepare questions to ask the interviewer:**

At the end of the interview you should be given to opportunity to ask your interviewer some questions. Use this time wisely. It's a great opportunity to further demonstrate your interest in the role and organisation as well as learn more about the role and organisation and address any other queries you may have. Make sure you prepare at least 5 well thought out questions you would like to ask at the end.

## Reference check

The reference check is so important as a good reference will likely result a job offer where as a poor reference will likely mean you miss out on getting the job. It would be devastating to put in hours of hard work to only fall short at the final stage. So let's look at getting it right.

The point of a reference check is so the employer can find out how well you did your job in the past, your suitability for the position, and how well you work with others. There's often a misconception that a reference check is conducted to simply confirm employment dates, your position title and salary. This is not the case. After all, a payslip could confirm such information. So choose someone that represents you well, not someone that can just confirm basic information.

### How do you choose a suitable referee?

- Choose someone relevant to the position you are applying for
- Wherever possible use a work related referee
- Choose someone who is a good representation of the company and more importantly of you
- Choose someone that knows you professionally and can answer questions regarding your achievements
- Choose someone you trust and who is reliable
- Avoid (if at all possible) using someone from your current employer as a referee.

## What if you didn't get an offer

The graduate recruitment season is super competitive and unfortunately there are only a fixed number of positions. Often there isn't much separating those who did get offers and the next 100 applicants. Whilst it is disappointing it's important not to get too down on yourself. Resilience and perseverance are essential when it comes to getting a job.

Luckily, graduate recruitment season is over early in the year so there's still time to improve before you graduate. It's recommend you reflect on your applications and try to identify why you may have missed out. Did you bomb out in my interview? Did you not have enough work experience? Do you need to engage in more extra-curricular activities? These are all great questions to know the answer to because once you have identified your areas for improvement you can do something about them. This is important to know and improve on for when you get the opportunity to apply to available entry level positions later in the year. Remember, you don't graduate until November and most graduate programs don't begin until February the following year so there will still be time to improve and hopefully achieve.

## Offer



### Congratulations if you've received a job offer!

There's a few things you should do before you start your job:

- Agree on a start date
- Agree on your salary and other employee benefits
- Receive a signed employment contract
- Fill out your banking and superannuation details
- Find out where and what time to meet on your first day
- If you'll have a buddy at the organisation that you can ask any questions to before you start.

**Good luck with your new job!**



Thank you for reading The Young Employee's guide – From School Student to Employed Graduate. We wish you good luck with your career ambitions!

Please feel free to contact us at [contact@theyoungemployee.com.au](mailto:contact@theyoungemployee.com.au). We'd love you hear your thoughts and answer any questions.

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