



10 Top Career Tips to Learn In College

Critical classroom skills that jump-start career success.

For many, college is both the primary and last stop before the professional world. In addition to your immediate degree, there's also plenty more to be gained *beyond* the syllabus—valuable information and skills that will serve you well, both before *and* after graduation. Here are 10 classroom lessons that will cross over, jump-start, and shape your job search and career, regardless of your current major or future profession.

#1. Follow directions. This is a no-brainer. Read all materials, if asked, including the course syllabus or employee handbook; the information and details they contain are for everyone's benefit. Follow assignment instructions and requested formats—PDF, Word, jpg, etc.—when submitting papers; it saves instructors time when grading and is good practice. In the professional world, disregarding directions from recruiters, job descriptions, or supervisors can cost you your job application, report, or client proposal. Mistakes can cost clients and your employer time and money, and you a job.

#2. Meet deadlines. Time management is crucial. Be on time for class, interviews, and work. While you may wheedle an extension from an instructor or try to cram for an exam the night before, deadlines are deadlines in the working world. Learn to self-manage. Make assignment and course due dates a priority while in school; there's no do-over, second chance, or make-up for extra credit later on if you miss a job application or project deadline. Also, plan ahead; never make last minute requests for letters of recommendation; it will work against you.

#3. Get to know your instructors. Many professors are professionals and experts in their fields who can offer course and career guidance. Introduce yourself, take advantage of faculty office hours, and don't be embarrassed to seek assistance; being proactive now can save you grief later on. Be professional and respectful of others' time; you'll be remembered positively. Besides gaining knowledge nuggets, investing in academic and professional relationships demonstrates your commitment to the class or organization. Plus, who better to write a letter of recommendation for an internship, job, or promotion than a teacher or manager who knows you and your capabilities well?

#5. Network. Use college to expand your mind, form valuable relationships, and develop the social skills and confidence needed later when interacting with clients and colleagues. Reach out to classmates, upper-level and grad students, and alums; it will prepare you for teamwork when you collaborate with co-workers. Stay in touch with instructors. Your contacts and connections are invaluable lifelong professional and personal resources.

#6. Mind your body language and social skills. Etiquette matters in any social situation, and how you present and carry yourself, physically and virtually, affects how others perceive you. Your attire (and hygiene) should convey a positive impression. Don't slouch, text, chat with others, or show disinterest, whether in class or a business meeting; it's a turn off for instructors and employers. Stand out with handwritten thank yous. Use clear subject headings, proper titles, polite openings/closings, good grammar, and conciseness in emails to teachers and supervisors.

#7. Be prepared. Study and know your material before class or a meeting. Plan ahead. Have paper and pen as backups if electronics fail or are not permitted.

#8. Show up. Attend all classes; after all, you paid for them. And, avoid missing meetings at work. In both cases, in-person is the best way to stay current.

#9. Communicate effectively. Hone your verbal and written skills in school, and proofread everything. It will pay off when you interview; give presentations; and craft résumés, cover letters, applications, proposals, and projects. Learn to *listen*, and be open to peer reviews and constructive criticism.

#10. Maintain good grades. Get help, if needed. Even if you don't have a 4.0 GPA, grades demonstrate dedication and work ethic. They can also matter for a first job or internship when you don't have sufficient field experience on your résumé.



i n a nutshell:

To transition smoothly from college to company culture, maximize your academic resources and “prepare while others are daydreaming” (William Arthur Wade):

- **Follow directions**
- **Meet all deadlines, be on time, plan ahead, be prepared**
- **Get to know instructors, attend all classes, show appreciation**
- **Start networking, build contacts and relationships**
- **Mind your manners, behavior, appearance, body language**
- **Sharpen communication skills**
- **Keep up your grades**

Practice makes professional. Start honing your skills in a safe setting; you'll graduate with a degree, good habits, and a wealth of resources.