



Framingham
STATE COLLEGE

Career Services and
Employer Relations

INFO TO GO

**INTERVIEWING &
CAREER SEARCH**

College Center Room 412

508-626-4625

www.framingham.edu/careerservices

INTRODUCTION

Searching for a job can be challenging at times, but if you prepare well and use a variety of strategies, you will manage your job search with more confidence and success. There are four basic steps in the process:

1. **Researching:** clarifying what you want in a career and learning about the world of work
2. **Finding job openings:** using several key methods to generate job leads
3. **Interviewing:** discussing your interests and skills with potential employers
4. **Receiving a job offer:** negotiating salary and benefits, and accepting or rejecting an offer

This packet will give you the basic information you need to get started. Consider meeting with a career counselor for help with developing a strategy that will reflect *your* specific needs and help make your job search a success.

The Job Search Process Table of Contents

1. **Researching**
 - Self-assessment
 - The world of work
 - Putting it all together
2. **Finding Job Openings**
 - Networking
 - Informational interviews
 - Advertised leads
 - Internships, part-time work, volunteering
 - Job and career fairs
 - Avoiding pitfalls
 - Job search checklist
3. **Interviewing**
 - The interview
 - Before the interview
 - During the interview
 - After the interview
4. **Receiving a Job Offer**
 - Evaluating an offer
 - Negotiating an offer
 - Declining an offer
 - Accepting an offer

1. Researching
 - Self-Assessment
 - The World of Work
 - Putting It All Together

2. Finding Job Openings
3. Interviewing
4. Receiving a Job Offer

STEP 1: RESEARCHING

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The first step in the job search process is researching, starting with learning about yourself. What are your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses? If you can't answer these questions easily, we encourage you to get started with the self-assessment process. Gaining insight into your values, interests, personality, and skills - called "self-assessment" - can help you identify the type of work you will find satisfying. Being able to clearly describe your skills and interests can help you market yourself in your resume, cover letters, and interviews. The more you know about how your interests, skills, and abilities match specific positions, the better you'll be able to articulate this to employers.

THE WORLD OF WORK

The next step is to research the world of work. Knowing about a job, organization, field, and industry can help you assess whether it's right for you. Doing this kind of research can help you identify which companies have the type of job you're looking for. Typical questions to research include:

- About the field: What education or training is required? What is the employment outlook?
- About the industry: What type of industry do I want to work in? Which are the leading companies?
- About the company or organization: What is the mission of the company? Who is the CEO/President and what is his/her philosophy? What is the culture of the company?
- About the job: What is the typical career path? What tasks and skills are required? Salary range?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

If you would like help developing a job search strategy based on your research, you can:

- Make an appointment with a career counselor to discuss your career plans.
- Use FOCUS, an interactive computer-based system that can help with clarifying your career direction. FOCUS is internet-based, and you can access this tool at www.framingham.edu/careerservices/careertests.htm.

1. Researching	<h1 style="margin: 0;">STEP 2:</h1> <h1 style="margin: 0;">FINDING JOB OPENINGS</h1>
2. Finding Job Openings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Networking ▪ Informational Interviews ▪ Advertised Leads ▪ Internships, Part Time, Volunteering ▪ Job and Career Fairs ▪ Avoiding Pitfalls ▪ Job Search Checklist 	
3. Interviewing	
4. Receiving a Job Offer	

NETWORKING

Networking is the process of contacting people who can help you learn about careers or find jobs. Most job hunters, at one time or another, have said, “It’s all about who you know and I don’t know the right people!” But networking doesn’t require that you know scores of influential or powerful people. Anyone you come in contact with in your daily life may have heard of a job opening or can directly or indirectly guide you to someone in a position to hire you. Talk with everyone you meet about the type of company or position you’re interested in, and follow up on any leads.

Start with Who You Know

One of the easiest ways to begin networking is to make a list of everyone you know including family, friends, and professors. Call everyone on your list, describe the type of job you are looking for, and ask if they know anyone who can help you. Remember, even if the person you are speaking to isn’t in your field, he/she may be able to introduce you to someone who is.

Keep in mind that when you network with a contact, the relationship is a professional one. For example, if your contact is busy when you call, arrange to call back at a better time. Always follow up when you say you will. Even if a contact can’t offer you any job leads at the present time, it’s possible that you could cross paths with that person in a future job search, so you want to be sure to leave a positive impression.

Contact FSC Alums

CareerLink is a searchable database of FSC alumni who are available to talk with you about your career plans and how you can reach your goals. You must first register with Alumni Connections at www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/FRC/register.html to obtain a user ID and pass code. Once you are registered click on **CareerLink**. Various topics of discussion could include: career advice, informational Interviews, internship & summer job opportunities, shadowing, and networking events.

Join a Professional Association

You can also build your network by joining a professional association, a group of people who come together around a common interest. There are associations for all kinds of professions and interest groups. You can find chapters of almost any association listed in the directories available at Career Services. Our website, www.framingham.edu/careerservices, has links to some associations, and a web search will provide additional links.

Professional associations often have newsletters or web links where positions and internships are listed. Positions are also often announced at meetings or posted at association-related conferences, speaker events, or trade shows. Consider having business cards made so you have contact information other than your resume to pass out to people you meet.

Since there is often a fee charged to join an association, attend a few meetings to be sure the group will meet your needs. Once you've joined an association, become an active member by volunteering to help with programs or by running for committee or board positions – you'll continue to build your professional network for future career moves.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Conducting informational interviews is an opportunity to learn more about the field you're considering. Informational interviews also give people in the field a chance to learn about you and what you are looking for in a job. Unlike job interviews, informational interviews do not require that there be a current position open with the company, or even that the person you are interviewing has the power to hire you; these interviews are simply a tool for gathering information. At the end of every informational interview, ask for referrals to other people you could talk to. As your list of contacts increases, so does the chance that you will hear about job openings.

Be Prepared

You want to share as much information about yourself as you can, while allowing plenty of time to learn about the person you're interviewing. Be sure that you prepare your questions in advance and bring a copy of your resume. (Even a rough draft is OK – you can ask for advice on strengthening your resume.)

You: Hi, I'm Jessica Thompson. I'm currently a senior at Framingham State College majoring in Fashion Design. Can you tell me a little about what you do?

Contact: I plan and organize fashion shows in the New England area for XYZ Corporation, which involves

You: That's fascinating. I was able to help coordinate a fashion show during my internship at ABC Designs and it was quite challenging. You must be very well organized. I know that's how I was able to keep everything straight with our show.

Contact: Tell me a little about what you did at ABC. I'm familiar with their work.

Sample Informational Interview Questions

- What do you do in a typical workday?
- What kind of problems/decisions do you deal with?
- What sorts of changes/trends are occurring in your field?
- Is there a logical career path in your field/organization? Can you describe it?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this field?
- How does this job fit into the organization/department?
- How long have you had this job/been with this organization?
- What are your major responsibilities?
- How did you enter this field?
- How has the company changed over the past 5-10 years?
- How did you reach your current position?
- Would you recommend your field to others? If so, what skills, education, and experience are required?
- What are typical entry-level jobs in your field?
- Could someone with a liberal arts background obtain a position in this field? What additional courses or work experience would you recommend?
- What do you like most/least about your job?
- What social obligations outside of the normal workweek go along with your job?
- How many hours do you work during an average week?
- If you were hiring someone today for an entry-level position in your field, what would be the most critical factors influencing your choice of one candidate over another?
- How do candidates typically learn about openings in your field?
- If you could change your job in some way, what would that change be?
- What do you find most rewarding in your work?
- What degrees, licenses, or other credentials are required for entry and advancement in this work?
- What interests, values, and personality characteristics are important for effectiveness and satisfaction in your field?
- Can you suggest any other people I could talk to who work in this field or related fields?

Follow Up After an Informational Interview

Evaluate what you have learned. Are you hearing the same things regarding industry trends and the job market from one person to the next? Are the descriptions of job functions, titles, and expectations consistent? Keep in mind that you're getting one individual's viewpoint in an informational interview, which may or may not be representative of the field, organization, or employer. Be sure to conduct several interviews to get a balanced picture.

Send a thank you note to everyone you interview. These are contacts that may be useful in your job search so use every effort to cultivate and stay in touch with them.

Keep the Information Organized

Collecting business cards is one of the easiest ways to keep an accurate record of the people you've met and how they can help you. Whenever you meet with someone, ask for his or her business card. Afterwards, write on the back of the card where you met that person and make notes about your conversation. Did you promise to send an article that you were discussing, an example of your work, or your resume? Make sure that you follow up. It's a great way to remind them of your interest.

Maintain Your Network

Even after you have a job, it is important to maintain your network. Be sure to thank your contacts for any help they provided during your job search. Keep in touch - your contacts can give you advice on trends that are occurring in your industry or information about a new opportunity for someone with experience ...which you now have!

Once you're working, people seeking information about your field may approach you. Offering career advice to students or other colleagues can be a great way to give back to your professional community.

ADVERTISED LEADS

Although most jobs are found through networking, responding to advertised jobs can be an important part of your job search. Job listings can appear in many places:

- www.collegecentral.com/framingham – job vacancies posted with Career Services and Employer Relations
- www.framingham.edu/careerservices – our website has links to many other job sites, including “[Monster](#), [CareerBuilder](#), and [craigslist](#).”
- Professional organizations, their journals and newsletters

INTERNSHIPS, PART-TIME WORK, VOLUNTEERING

Some fields can be difficult to get into without experience. Doing an internship, volunteering, or working part time can help you further develop your skills and make you a stronger candidate. Also, employers often fill full-time positions with interns or part-time employees from within their company.

Some internships pay, some do not. If you have financial concerns, consider combining part-time paid employment, which can be related to your career goals or simply “a way to pay the bills,” with an unpaid internship or volunteer opportunity. You'll strengthen your resume, gain valuable additional experience, and position yourself to be considered for full-time employment with your employer.

JOB AND CAREER FAIRS

Know why you're going

Many people think the only reason to attend a job fair is to find a job, but you can also attend to gather industry information and learn about employers. Think about what you want to achieve by going to the career fair, then get prepared.

Be Prepared

- Find out which employers will attend the fair and research those that interest you. Use your research to prepare discussion points and questions. When you're considering potential employers, think broadly (e.g., not just PR, but also communications and advertising).
- Be ready to present your best self. Dress as you would for a job interview to make a strong first impression.
- Review your goals for attending (e.g., to find a job or to research careers) then prepare and PRACTICE a 1-minute "elevator pitch" about who you are, why you are interested in the employers, and what you can offer them.

Work the Career Fair

Have a strategy when you attend a career fair:

- Determine where your target employers are seated and visit them first.
- Take notes about each employer as you go.
- Use the time waiting in line for popular employers to listen to what the recruiter is telling other students, or to review your research notes.

When you approach an employer's table:

- Offer a firm handshake and maintain comfortable eye contact during your conversation.
- Ask for and keep each person's business card.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. It shows your interest.

Keep in mind that during even the most informal exchange with employers, you are being assessed as a possible candidate. To make your best impression:

- Don't bring a backpack. It can get in the way and make you look more like a student than a serious candidate.
- Don't ask questions about salary and benefits too early in the conversation.
- Don't interrupt the recruiter when he or she is speaking with another student.
- Don't just drop your resume on the table; hand it to the recruiter and have a brief conversation whenever possible.
- Don't dive for the "giveaways." Its okay to take the free items employers offer; just don't let that be the first thing you do when you approach the table!

Follow Up after the Fair

Your work isn't done when you leave the career fair. Write a follow-up letter to every company representative you spoke with. Send your follow-up letters with a copy of your resume within 24 hours of the fair. (The sooner you follow up, the more likely they are to remember you.) Immediately return any calls that you receive from employers following the fair.

AVOIDING PITFALLS

Looking for a job, especially when you are not currently employed, can be a frustrating and ego-deflating experience. You may find yourself slipping into some self-defeating behaviors that can interfere with your job search.

Here are some common pitfalls:

- *Procrastination* is a common problem for job searchers. Do you put off starting your job search, replying to want ads, or following up after interviews? Do you put off making calls to prospective employers? Do you find yourself thinking “Another day won’t matter” and then a week later think, “I guess it’s too late”?
- *Giving up* can be deadly to your job search success. Do you stop your job search activity after a few rejections?
- *All-or-nothing thinking* can also work against you. Do you use the words “always,” “never,” “everyone,” and “no one”? Do you recognize the following thoughts?
 - “I’ll never find a job”
 - “I have nothing to offer an employer”
 - “Everyone else is so much more qualified”
 - “There are so many people out of work; I’ll be competing with hundreds”

There are several things you can do to get back on track if you find yourself procrastinating, giving up, or using all-or-nothing thinking. For example:

- Talk with someone you trust (a relative, friend, career counselor) on a regular basis so you can share your concerns about job hunting. Make sure your confidant is a good listener and is someone who helps you feel better about yourself.
- Schedule appointments or activities every morning so you have to get up and out of the house. Make a schedule for your job search activities and stick to it.
- Reward yourself for sticking to your job search schedule. Even if you are on a strict budget, treat yourself once in a while.
- Stay socially involved. Accept invitations or call friends to initiate activities. Remember, social events can also be great places to network!
- Keep rejection in perspective. Rejection from an employer has nothing to do with who you are. Rejection is a normal, expected part of any job search. You will probably hear a number of “no thanks” before you hear a “yes.”
- Tell everyone you meet that you are looking for a job. Most people will be sympathetic, and perhaps even helpful.
- Realize you are not alone. Most people have been or will be unemployed at some time.

JOB SEARCH CHECKLIST

Before You Start

- Attend workshops on resume and cover letter writing and interviewing
- Have your resume critiqued
- Revise each cover letter to target the specific job opening
- Practice interviewing
- Create a job search binder to keep track of everything

Contacts to Make

- Family
- Friends and neighbors
- Past employers
- Professors
- Career counselors
- Other job seekers
- Co-workers from past and present jobs

Places to Look

- Career Services and Employer Relations
- Online: Search job sites and use search engines
- Ads in professional journals
- Local newspapers
- Directories of employers
- Job search networking groups
- Department of Employment and Training
- Professional associations
- Local Chamber of Commerce

Things to Do

- Check out the FSC Career*Link*
- Register on College Central Network (CCN)
- Participate in on-campus recruiting
- Attend off-campus job and career fairs
- Send a mailing to specific employers
- Call employers
- Respond to ads
- Attend professional association meetings

Who's There for You?

- Find a mentor to advise you
- Use informational interviews to learn about the field and make contacts
- Ask faculty and supervisors to serve as job references
- Create your own job search support group with some friends

1. Researching 2. Finding Job Openings	<h1>STEP 3: INTERVIEWING</h1>
3. Interviewing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Interview ▪ Before the Interview ▪ During the Interview ▪ After the Interview 	
4. Receiving a Job Offer	

THE INTERVIEW

Interviewing is a chance for you and the employer to have a conversation and assess your fit for the position. If you reach the interview stage, there’s a chance you could be hired -- but you *must* be prepared. There’s a lot of work to do before, during, and after an interview.

It’s common to get nervous when you think about interviewing. Remember that interviewers want to hire a qualified person; they want to find out if *you* are that person. When you’re called for an interview it means you appear to be qualified for the position based on your resume. The employer wants to find out if your personality matches the position and the organization. So try to relax and let them see what a great candidate you are!

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Practice, Practice, Practice

Practice answering interview questions with a partner. Have answers prepared for questions you know will most likely be asked (see *Common Questions*, below). It’s very important to practice your responses out loud – don’t just think, “Okay, I have an answer.” Verbalize your answer and see how it feels. Practice the questions over and over until you’re happy with your performance.

Common Questions

Here’s a list of questions you may be asked during an interview. Use this list as a starting point for your practice.

- What are your long-range and short-range goals? How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- Tell me about a time when you resolved a conflict.
- Why did you choose your college major? What were some of the classes that you particularly enjoyed?
- Tell me about a time when you were involved in teamwork. What role did you play?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- Are you willing to travel/relocate?
- What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?

- How do you think a friend or professor who knows you would describe you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- How has your college experience prepared you for your career? For this job?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- Why should I hire you?

Your Questions

An interview is a *two-way* conversation. The employer will obviously ask questions, but you will be given a chance to ask questions as well. Here's a list of sample questions to consider:

- What is your method of training new employees?
- What type of orientation would I receive?
- How closely would I be supervised?
- How often are performance reviews done?
- How soon would I be given responsibility?
- How much travel is normally expected?
- What are some of the major short- and long-range goals that the company has?
- What outside influences affect the company's growth?
- In what area does the company excel, or in what area does the company have limitations?
- What are some of the characteristics that the company considers to be unique or attractive about itself?
- Has the company had to lay off employees in the past couple of years? If so, how has this affected staff morale?
- Who would you consider to be your major competitors?
- What are some of the qualities that it takes to succeed here?
- Based on what you have seen of me so far, where do you think I could contribute most effectively?
- Is there anything you perceive as a weakness in my background?
- Can you give me an idea of the projects that I may be working on?
- Could you describe any opportunities for advancement within the company? What is the typical time frame for these advancements?

Note that you will appear unprepared if you ask questions that are easily answered through prior research. For example, you should already know the employer's main products and services, and something about the job. Do not ask, "What does your company do?" Instead, use your interview time to dig deeper into what the company has to offer and what the job entails.

Prepare for the Interview

- For some positions it may be appropriate to dress casually for an interview, but for most it is not. If you aren't sure how to dress, it's safest to dress conservatively. A business suit is appropriate for both men and women and is a sign of professionalism. It shows you are taking the interview seriously.

- Make sure your interview outfit is clean, pressed, and ready to go *before* the day of the interview.
- Don't forget to polish your shoes!
- If you wear a dress or a skirt, you should wear hose.
- It's best not to wear fragrance of any kind to an interview; you could turn off an interviewer just with the scent you choose.
- Have a professional-looking folder or portfolio in which to carry copies of your resume, your references, and paper for taking notes.
- Remember to get a good night's sleep before the interview day. You will be sharper if you are well rested.

Know How to Get There

When employers call, it's easy to get nervous and forget to ask for directions to the interview site. Remember to get directions and try driving the route a day or two before the interview. If you're planning to take public transportation, do a trial run as well. Do your run-through on a similar type and time of day (e.g., Monday morning traffic is very different from traffic on a Sunday afternoon). Make sure you have a full tank of gas and money for parking, or funds for public transportation.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

There are many things to think about during the interview process. Here are a few key items to remember:

- Arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled appointment.
- Be professional with everyone you encounter, including receptionists.
- Extend a firm (but not crushing) handshake.
- Be aware of your nonverbal signals (eye contact and posture).
- Show enthusiasm.
- Be aware of your "like's" and "um's."
- Have your questions ready.
- Collect business cards from everyone you speak with, if possible.
- Ask about the next step (when can you expect to hear from them?).

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Your work is not done yet! Here are some steps to remember after the interview:

- Shake the interviewer's hand firmly and thank him or her.
- Act professionally all the way out of the building and while you are in the parking lot.
- Jot down notes as soon after the interview as you can so you can incorporate them into your thank you notes.
- Write and send your professional thank you notes, by regular mail or e-mail, within 24 hours of the interview.
- Be sure to follow up within a few days.

1. Researching
2. Finding Job Openings
3. Interviewing

4. Receiving a Job Offer
 - Evaluating an Offer
 - Negotiating an Offer
 - Declining an Offer
 - Accepting an Offer

STEP 4: THE JOB OFFER

EVALUATING AN OFFER

Whether you are offered the job on-the-spot or days after the interview, it's important to thank the interviewer for the offer and ask when you can get back to them with your answer. Even if you're really excited, take some time to think about it. Most employers will give you at least a few days to decide.

People work for many different reasons. The key to evaluating whether an offer is right for you lies in understanding what's important to you. Take some time to think about what you want from work, and think about whether the job offer will meet your most important needs.

Remember: there is no perfect job, so you may have to compromise on certain things. For example, a short commute may be more important to you than the actual work hours, so you may opt for a job that's closer to home even though it requires working your second choice of shifts.

Here's a sample list of what some people value in a job. Use it to begin thinking about what's important to you. Meet with a career counselor for help in clarifying your needs and motivations around work.

What's Important in a Job?

- Salary and benefits
- Opportunity for advancement
- The work setting
- Your work space
- Your co-workers
- Time off
- The requirement for travel
- Helping people
- The chance to learn new information
- The opportunity to learn and use certain skills
- Working with the public (or not)
- The pace of the work
- The distance from home
- Anything else?

NEGOTIATING AN OFFER

When you have a job offer you're interested in, you may be in a position to negotiate some of the details. Your power to negotiate will vary based on your experience (are you a beginner or a master?) and on the strength of the job market (are there many other candidates who have what you have or are you unique?). Many candidates accept a job on the employer's terms, no questions asked. Typically, if you do this, you lose any leverage for negotiation once you start working.

Some things that may be negotiable include:

- Salary and commission
- Start date
- Vacation time
- Time of first review and raise
- Signing bonus
- Tuition reimbursement
- Health and dental benefits
- Retirement
- Profit sharing
- Company car or club memberships
- Relocation costs

Salary Negotiations

The best way to negotiate salary is to be well informed. You should know what people in similar positions make at other organizations. If you are asking for too much or too little, the employer will think you don't understand what the position entails. Research salary ranges with resources such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook by the Department of Labor and web sites such as www.salary.com. Call and ask the company's Human Resources department for the salary range on file and any other information it can provide. When asked what your salary requirement is, always state a range so you don't limit yourself.

Employer: What sort of salary are you looking for?

Candidate: From my research I have found that most entry-level Technical Writers make in the low thirties. I feel this would be an appropriate range.

DECLINING AN OFFER

If you decide to decline a job offer, call the employer as soon as possible. Turn down an offer in a professional manner, since you may be interested in future work with this employer. Here's an example of what you might say when you call:

“Thank you for your offer of employment as a Technical Writer for your company. I have given it a great deal of thought and have decided to decline the offer at this time. You have a fine organization and there are many aspects of the position that are appealing to me, but at this time I have decided to pursue other opportunities.”

ACCEPTING AN OFFER

After negotiations, remember to get everything *in writing* before you give notice to your current employer. After you decide you want the position, call the employer and accept the offer verbally. Complete and return any written acceptance as required by your new employer.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Call Career Services and Employer Relations at 508-626-4625 to schedule an appointment with one of our Career Counselors. Or visit us online at www.framingham.edu/careerservices.

GOOD LUCK!