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Introduction

Help! Where do I start?

“ ‘Begin at the beginning,’ the King said, very gravely, ‘and go on till you come to the end: then stop.’ ”

Lewis Carroll

So, what now?

Finding a fulfilling and successful graduate career can be daunting because there are so many directions to take and factors to consider. Nevertheless, you shouldn't be overwhelmed. Once you work out a plan and take your first steps, things usually take care of themselves. Sure, from time to time, you'll pick the wrong options and go down a few blind alleys but, if you use every experience as a chance to learn a little more about yourself and the career you want to enter, you should be alright. Above all, stay positive and open to new ideas. Your determination will be rewarded!

What 'career' means to you

Careers encompass so much more than just finding a job and clocking on for the next fifty years, because everyone has their own unique opportunities, attributes and priorities. Therefore, in order to find fulfilment in your own journey in life, you first need to ask yourself what will make you happy?

Introduction: Help! Where do I start?

PART I: CAREERS IN A COMPLEX WORLD

1. Graduate employment and recruitment
2. Career planning

PART II: FINDING YOUR NICHE

3. Assessing your skills, interests and motivations
4. Identifying your options
5. Choosing a role

PART III: UPPING YOUR GAME

6. Boosting your employability
7. Moving forward

PART IV: MAKING IT HAPPEN

8. Managing your networks and social media
9. Experience and internships
10. Further study
11. Taking time out

PART V: FINDING A JOB

12. Searching for graduate jobs
13. Promoting yourself effectively
14. Targeting your CV
15. Tip-top application forms
16. Cover letters that open doors
17. Impressing at interviews
18. Psychometric tests
19. Succeeding at assessment centres
20. Dealing with job offers

PART VI: AN INTRODUCTION TO SELF EMPLOYMENT

21. Becoming an entrepreneur
22. Getting your business started

PART VII: DOWN THE LINE

23. Moving your career forward
24. Frequently asked questions

Introduction

Explore what will make a career fulfilling for you in the two-minute test shown below, by reflecting on how you personally differentiate ‘careers’ from ‘jobs’.



Two-minute test: The difference between careers and jobs

Take two minutes to list five things that you think differentiate ‘careers’ from ‘jobs’.

Careers are...

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Reflecting on your answers: People usually see careers as being more long-term than jobs and linked to abilities, aspirations and interests. If you struggled to narrow down what it means to you, just close your eyes and envision where you want to be at the highest point in your life journey.

Are you sitting comfortably?

Once you’ve identified some things that are important to you in your career, you’re ready to start making them happen, but first, prepare yourself for the road ahead. Make sure you’re in a safe, comfortable environment and ready to face the inevitable challenges. Avoid putting yourself under too much pressure and ...

- Think of a strategy (read through the following pages).
- Research a wide range of roles. You don’t want to miss your perfect career just because you’ve never heard of it!
- Find a role that makes you excited – you will have a much greater chance of success.
- Ensure that you can support yourself financially while you plan your next steps (you may have to get a part-time or temporary job).
- Get support from friends and family.

Then let’s begin

This guidebook systematically divides the career planning process into seven discrete sections to help you take control of your next steps in life, as follows:

Part I – Careers in a complex world: An outline of who employs graduates, employability and managing the career planning process.

Part II – Finding your niche: Identifying and assessing all your career options and making a choice.

Part III – Upping your game: Boosting your employability and planning your next steps.

Part IV – Making it happen: Managing each step of your route into work including experience, internships, networking, and time out.

Part V – Finding a job: Finding vacancies and succeeding at every stage of the application process.

Part VI – An introduction to self-employment: A brief outline of self-employment with chapters on becoming an entrepreneur and setting up your own business.

Part VII – Down the line: Moving your career forward, changing direction, keeping your eyes open and answers to some frequently asked questions.

You can either follow these discrete, manageable steps from start to finish or dip into them according to your needs. If you're not sure where to start, just turn to the opening chapter and take it from there. Hopefully, before long you'll feel more positive and in control of your own career journey.

Why a book is best

The book is dead – long live the book!

All new inventions supposedly herald the death of old technologies but this book perfectly dovetails with its younger and newer competitors. The key benefits of this resource are:

- You can rely on its quality, authority and advice.
- It has room for numerous examples and exercises.
- The contents focus on every sector, not just the blue-chip employers.
- It provides practical personal guidance as well as information and advice.
- Its uniform structure easily enables quick reference across a broad range of topics.
- It builds up knowledge in a logical, cumulative way.
- It can be used as a universal directory of useful websites and social networks at a time when the World Wide Web is buckling under the weight of resources of varying quality.

Using this book

You may want to tell the world you're researching your career and bring this book out at every opportunity or just sit with it in silence in your bedroom and take it all in. However, whatever you do, make sure you engage with the self-assessment exercises, as the secret to career planning is to make it personal and get away from all the platitudes and jargon that prevail in this area. Also, don't use the book as

Introduction

your only source of research: speak to your family, friends, contacts, academics and, especially, your careers centre. Some of the services they generally offer are:

- Careers advice and guidance on every chapter of this book, and more.
- Employer events.
- Workshops on topics such as CVs and interviews.
- Networking opportunities.
- Job postings.
- Volunteering opportunities.
- Warm rooms out of the rain.

The companion website

This guide also comes with a companion website, available at www.macmillanihe.com/rook-gcg-2e. On this site, you'll find a wide range of additional material.

Extra resources for students

- A selection of the exercises provided in the book.
- Extra examples, case studies, CVs and much more.
- Video advice.
- Extra links to even more online resources.

Extra resources for academics/careers advisers

- Advice on effective teaching and learning in this area.
- PowerPoint presentations for each topic.
- An outline of engaging class activities.
- Assessment suggestions.
- Marking grids for assessments.

Help from the author

For students/graduates

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch (stevenstomasrook@yahoo.co.uk). I am more than happy to help you explore any career related issue.

“ If you need help on any issue, please contact the author at stevenstomasrook@yahoo.co.uk. ”

For academics/careers advisers

I often tour the UK delivering enthusiastic and engaging workshops for students on all employability issues. If you have any questions, or you would like me to come in and speak directly to your students, please feel free to contact me on stevenstomasrook@yahoo.co.uk.

All that's left to say now is 'Good luck and enjoy the journey!'



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