

TIPS FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT DURING THE QUARTER-LIFE STAGE

1. Avoid the “Major” trap. Many recent college grads feel compelled to pick a job that’s based on their college major. But just because you were a Sociology major, you don’t have to be a sociologist! College was a time to develop fundamental skills—how to investigate and research, how to write, and how to balance school-work with social life. Most employers—especially those trying to fill entry-level positions—place more emphasis on a candidate’s general abilities than on a specific skill set.

2. Assess yourself. Most of us spend our teenage and college years trying to “fit in.” However, a key to finding a satisfying career comes from recognizing your unique qualities and how they can best be used to contribute to an employer. Career assessment tools can help you discover your skills, interests, values, and motivators as they relate to work—and these can help you clarify and identify career choices.

3. Get informed. Informational interviewing is the best-kept secret to finding a job. Are there careers that you have always been curious about? Even if you think it’s totally unrealistic, what’s your dream job? Developing an informational interviewing strategy will help you learn about an occupation before diving into it. By talking with people in a variety of careers, you’ll learn about the day-to-day realities of a range of jobs—even juicy details like salary.

4. Hone your marketing materials. Every job search requires an effective resume, an articulate cover letter, and polished interviewing skills. First or second-time job seekers may have less confidence about their accomplishments and limited experience with articulating them to strangers. Good interviewing skills are not something you’re born with—practice makes perfect. Likewise, developing a targeted resume helps you feel more confident and prepared to meet a prospective employer.

5. Find a mentor. Talk to someone 5 to 10 years older than yourself; they will have experienced the “quarter-life” stage of life fairly recently. You’ll discover that they—and, indeed, like most people—followed a winding path before finding their ideal career. A mentor can help guide you along your own path.