

Recommendations for preparing for a career as a freshman

As a freshman, the two main things you should make sure to be doing to prepare for a career are to fully explore your options and remain flexible with your plan.

Fully exploring your options means:

- Be fully engaged and open to the courses you are taking as your General Education requirements. It is possible that you will discover a career calling or find things you are passionate about and want to pursue as part of a career while sitting in a lecture for a required course or while reading or completing another assignment.
- Explore potential clubs to join; this might also be a place where you discover things you want to pursue as part of a career.
- Explore and engage in volunteer activities; this might help you determine what types of career paths appeal to you and what types do not. Some students are even offered part-time or full-time positions at places they started working at as volunteers.
- Explore the Psychology Department Advising website Preparing for a Career section. This will get you started with potential career paths and how to best prepare for those careers.
- Explore and take advantage of resources on campus such as the Career Center early on. This can help you consider potential careers and then make a plan for how to best prepare to be competitive when you apply for that job.

Remaining flexible: Another key piece of advice as you consider a career path is to remain flexible. You may change your chosen career path multiple times while in college and even after you graduate. This is perfectly acceptable and you will gain something from the preparation you engage in for each of the potential paths you pursue. For instance, I was originally a Dance major before graduating with a BA in Psychology. The training I received as a Dance major made me more confident speaking in front of others and provided a deep appreciation of the arts.

Utilize breaks: You can also begin preparing for a career during your breaks from school. If possible, you can explore your desired career path by shadowing someone who does that job, volunteering at a business or organization that employs people doing the job you want, or getting a job that relates to the job you ultimately want to get. For instance, if you want to become a mental health technician in a hospital, you could volunteer for the behavioral health unit at your local hospital or even try to get a summer or temporary job there. Even if your job does not relate directly to what you want to do once you graduate, you can practice skills needed for the job you ultimately want. For instance, if you want to become a Child Protection Services worker, you could practice remaining calm in high stress situations while you work the customer service desk at your job.

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The last two pieces of advice are preparing you to ultimately be successful when you do go to apply for positions.

Networking: Remember that the relationships you make will comprise your network. The wider and more connected your network is, the more opportunities you will have when you ultimately go to obtain a job.

Build and maintain a positive reputation and online presence: Also, remember that what you do when around others and what you post online can either benefit you in the future, do nothing to impact your future, or harm you in the future. Try to make decisions that will lead to the first two possibilities. You do not want someone in your network not recommending you for a job or telling you about a perfect fit job because they view you as irresponsible. You also do not want a potential employer to discover things on the internet (e.g., social media posts or videos) that the employer would consider to indicate you should not even get an interview.