

Tips for Graduate Student Career Preparation

1. Figure Out Where You're Going.

Take some time for introspection to think about what you really want to do with your credentials. Network, ask questions and look at real job openings. Learn what's out there and what experience employers want in the positions you are considering. Use your time in grad school to develop the most in-demand skills you need. Early in your program, start reading job boards like:

- b. **Handshake** (industry positions, internships, research, etc.)
- c. Academic/Scientific: Jobs.chronicle.com; Postdocjobs.com; Jobs.sciencecareers.org
- d. USAJobs.gov (federal government agencies)
- e. Buzzfile Employers by Major (employer listings by city and subject)

2. Network Constantly.

85% of positions are secured through networking. People with advanced degrees greatly benefit from being well connected. So build good relationships with classmates and faculty; attend conferences and go out to eat with new contacts; ask organizations for informational interviews; form research collaborations; stay in touch with previous employers and volunteer orgs; and connect with people on LinkedIn. Anyone you know, anyone, could be the key to getting you hired!

3. Put Career Checkpoints on Your Calendar.

You have enough going on with coursework, research, teaching, etc. to keep track of! Career prep often falls by the wayside. So set organized career goals for yourself (try doing one thing per month). It can be as simple as updating your CV, attending a conference or making a new contact. But schedule it out so you stay on track.

4. Meet Regularly with a Mentor.

Especially if you have a niche field with limited openings, it can be really important to have someone outside of your program to advise you and connect you. Ask about in-demand skills. Ask for introductions to people in the field. Ask for a résumé review. Many people like helping and giving back to others. Many professionals are happy to mentor students. Don't hesitate to ask.

5. Create a Winning Résumé or CV.

There is so much strategy behind crafting a CV or résumé that will grab the attention of a hiring committee. So don't assume you're all set, rather, read resources on career.oregonstate.edu, attend a career center lecture and/or run your résumé by at least three people who can give you advice. Don't forget to reorganize and reprioritize for each new opportunity you apply to. (And don't just copy your advisor's CV!) Customize your résumé with keywords from the position description so the organization can see your preparation and envision you in the role.

6. Practice Talking About You.

Chances are your grad work is very technical, so practice talking about it both to a technical and lay audience. Be able to explain: 1) what you do in concise terms, 2) what is exciting or novel about your research and/or what you do and 3) what future opportunities interest you. Practice a 30-second quick summary you will be ready to deliver any time. Think about the value of your degree and how it catalyzes and equips you for your future.