NOVA | Northern Virginia Community College

Career Services Student Handbook



Career planning doesn't start at the end of college — it starts at the beginning.

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We're here for you!

Having difficulty choosing a career path? Want to learn the best strategies for exploring career options? Need help developing goals and plans to pursue career opportunities? Ready to prepare for employment? If so, NOVA Career Services is here to help!

Our career counselors and coaches offer both in-person and virtual appointments for NOVA students. You can request an appointment with a counselor or coach on Handshake, or scan the QR code below.

Log onto Handshake





NOVA career counselors and coaches:

Alexandria: Trevor Blair
Annandale: Vicky White & Maria Olson
Loudoun: Stephanie Allen
Manassas: Theresa Downs
Medical Education: Kyle Bumgarner
Woodbridge: Kimberly Blue

NOVA Career Services website:

https://www.nvcc.edu/career-services/index.html

Counseling Services

NOVA Career Services is decentralized, which means it serves students on all six campuses and NOVA Online. Engaging with Career Services is easy, in person or online.

Before you schedule your appointment, be sure to review the chart below to determine which career counseling/coaching service best fits your needs.

Questions? Contact us at NOVACareerServices@nvcc.edu!

Career Counseling/Coaching Explained
Career & Major Exploration Discover careers, academic majors, and fields of study that align with your interests, skills, values, personality, and strengths.
Career Planning & Strategy Develop a personalized plan to achieve your academic and career goals and prepare for future opportunities through education, skill development, and experiential learning.
Job, Internship, & Networking Strategies: Learn effective strategies to identify, pursue, and secure internships, jobs, and other career-related opportunities.
Resume, Cover Letter, & LinkedIn Review Develop and enhance professional marketing materials that effectively communicate your skills, experiences, and career goals to employers.
Interview Preparation Build confidence and improve your ability to effectively communicate your qualifications during interviews and professional conversations.

Why Career Readiness Matters

Starting your career may seem like a far-off goal, but what you're doing in college today is setting the foundation for your future. The earlier you begin preparing for your professional journey, the easier it will be to navigate.

According to NACE (the National Association of Colleges and Employers), only two of every five college graduates feel unprepared to enter the workforce. On the employer side, 60% indicate that they have sent recent graduates to remedial training to build their professional skills. Working on your career competencies and professional skills helps you avoid common pitfalls and step into your career feeling confident and capable.

NACE's research also revealed that students who take advantage of their college's career services receive 25% more job offers than those who don't. There is a direct correlation between the number of career resources used and job offers received. Now is a perfect time to take advantage of these resources and increase your likelihood of finding a great job after college!





CAREER EXPLORATION

Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce: Definitions

According to NACE (the National Association of Colleges and Employers), developing career readiness competencies is essential for ensuring recent graduates are prepared to succeed in the workforce. Employers evaluate new candidates based on their career-readiness, evaluating their skills, abilities, and challenges. By understanding the eight core competencies of career readiness, you can identify your level of aptitude and what skills you still need to develop.

Career and Self Development

Proactively develop yourself and your career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of your strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities and networking to build relationships inside and outside your organization.





Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts and perspectives with those inside and outside of an organization.

Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.



Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce Definitions (con't)

Equity & Inclusion

Demonstrate awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills required to engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in practices that actively challenge the systems, structures and policies of racism.





Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits.

Leadership

Work to develop personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.



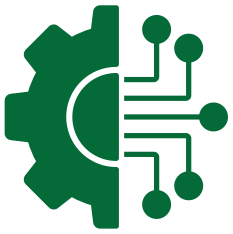


Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Technology

Understand and leverage use of technologies to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks and accomplish goals.



Career Research



Whether you're uncertain of what you want to do for a career, or you're making a plan for how to get to where you want to go, research will play a critical role in understanding a job's duties, lifestyle demands, expected salary and other factors. Research can help you determine whether a job or field is the right fit for you, or if you should explore other options.

Here are some important facts to consider as you research careers and consider your options:

- Job tasks and duties
- Education/training requirements
- Licensing/certification requirements
- Salary (entry level, median and experienced workers)
- Job outlook
- Future trends
- Related occupations
- College majors



SOCIAL MEDIA & JOB HUNTING

Don't limit your social media use to just your leisure time!
It's also a great tool to market yourself and find jobs!



LinkedIn

· Follow companies that interest you to learn more about their culture, job openings and values.
· Join groups and participate in meaningful discussions.
· Keep your Experience section updated.



Facebook

·Keep your About section updated with your current location, education and employment status.
·Join groups and participate in meaningful discussions with industry professionals.



X/Twitter

·Utilize hashtags for tracking job postings and discussion topics.
·Retweet industry-related content, thoughts and articles.
·Follow organizations and recruiters for updates and news.



Instagram

·Follow companies and organizations you're interested in and engage with their posts and InstaStories.
· Post images and content on your page that represent your personal interests and brand.

Social Media Best Practices

A critical component of becoming a professional or continuing your professional career is to thoroughly research companies and organizations before applying. But you're not the only person researching. Companies also use social media as a tool to learn more about their applicants.

While these tips are intended to help you reflect your best self to employers, you may find that they are useful tips for life generally:

Don't use language that is vulgar, offensive, discriminatory, etc., on ANY platforms. Companies do pay attention!

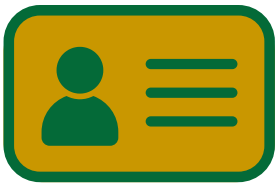




Don't post photos displaying drugs, weapons, alcohol or nudity.

Delete old pictures that are no longer representative of you or your personal brand.





Don't overshare personal information.

Don't feel the need to post constantly.



Leveraging LinkedIn



LinkedIn is a social media platform specifically designed for professional networking and career development. There, you can learn about careers and companies, search for internships and jobs and network with other professionals!

Ways to use LinkedIn

- Use the search feature to find and connect with professionals in your intended field and location. Open up a conversation with them and learn more about their jobs and what they do.
- Follow top companies and leaders in your field of interest.
- Subscribe to newsletters to keep up with industry news.
- Search for job listings in your desired field.

Your LinkedIn Profile

If you want to make a strong impression on employers, you will need to take time to make sure your profile meets their high standards.

On the next page, we'll go over the elements that employers look for on your LinkedIn profile to determine whether you might be a good fit for the job, and what to include to make sure you get noticed by the right recruiters.

Anatomy of a Strong LinkedIn Profile

Profile Picture
High-quality professional headshot/photo with a complementary banner image.



NOVA | Northern Virginia Community College

John Doe
Versatile Business Professional
Fairfax, Virginia, United States Contact info
281 connections

Open to | Add profile section | Enhan... | ...rces

Headline
A relevant headline that includes intended career goals or accomplishments

Job
Education

About

Current student at Northern Virginia Community College, studying cybersecurity with hopes of entering the workforce as an IT and CS professional. Very proficient in Python and C+ coding. Heavily involved in on-campus activities and organizations, including AI and Machine Learning Club and Student Government Association.

About Section
A detailed summary describing current status, relevant skills and competencies validated through experience.

Experience
Complete employment information including a detailed description of tasks, accomplishment and skills.

Experience

Sales Specialist
Retail · Part-time
Oct 2017 - Jun 2021 · 3 yrs 9 mos

Education

Northern Virginia Community College
Pursuing A.S. Computer Science
August 2023 - Present

Education
Provide relevant, up-to-date educational information and activities.

Licenses & certifications

Learning to Write Marketing Copy
LinkedIn
Issued Mar 2022

Show credential

Additional Sections
Relevant information such as volunteer experience, accomplishments, recommendations, interests, certifications/licenses.



INTERNSHIPS

Internships



Internships are a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2019).

Benefits of an Internship

- Provides a valuable hands-on experience in an intended career field.
- Provides an opportunity to meet and network with professionals in your field of interest.
- Enables students to apply skills learned in the classroom in a work setting.
- Positions alumni for the job market.
- May positively affect starting salary.
- In some cases, an internship helps participants identify what they DON'T want to do for a career.
- Helps narrow down your career choices.

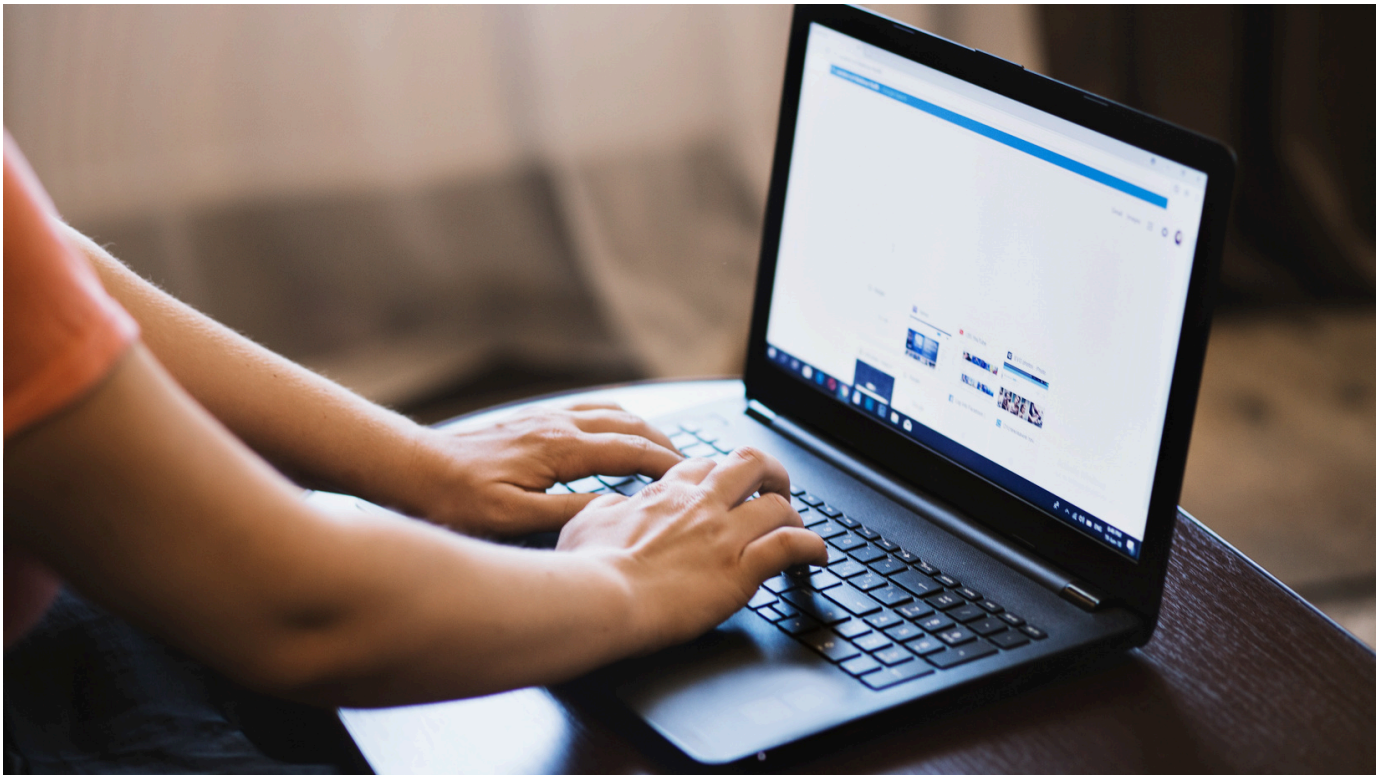
Keys to Internship Success

Internships are often a student's first exposure to the professional world, and their first experience in their selected career field beyond the classroom. Internships are a critical part of developing your career skills and building a professional network that will benefit you for your entire career. In some cases, companies will even hire successful interns full-time after graduation. So, it is critical that you always put your best foot forward in your internship.

The Successful Intern...

- Gets to work on time.
- Is professional and dependable.
- Does what is expected.
- Goes above and beyond.
- Is humble and eager to learn.
- Asks good questions.
- Offers to help others.
- Is proactive.





JOB SEARCHING

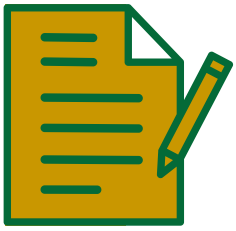
Job Search Strategies

If you want to land a job that will give you the experience, work environment and satisfaction you desire, it is imperative that you think strategically about how to approach your job search. These tips will help you target the best opportunities for your career goals.

Thoughtful Job Searching



When searching for a job, use keywords that match your interests and the location where you desire to work.



Customize Your Resume and Cover Letter

While it may seem like extra work, you should take the time to customize your resume and cover letter to each job you apply for to specifically link your qualifications to the hiring criteria of the jobs you're applying for. On average, employers spend less than 30 seconds going over a resume. Make yourself stand out!

Utilize Your Network

Did you know that a large percentage of jobs aren't advertised? That's why it's so important to tap into your network when job searching. Connect with friends, professors, advisors, former co-workers, etc. to learn of any job openings that may be of interest to you. You never know the power of just one connection!



Use NOVA's Handshake Career Services Platform



Handshake is a free online career services management system available to currently enrolled NOVA students! On Handshake, you can find hundreds of jobs (and internships) at companies looking to hire NOVA students!

Job Search Platforms

Here are some great job search platforms to use when you're looking to secure the job that's right for you.

Handshake
Search and apply to jobs and internships; view and participate in career development workshops, career fairs and employer information sessions; and access resources such as the Resume Optimizer and the AI Skills Studio

Indeed
Find jobs, look at company reviews, find salaries and explore the Indeed Career Guide.

LinkedIn
This professional networking social media site is great for learning about companies and careers.

USA Jobs
Search federal government job postings and create resumes.

LinkUp
Pulls job postings directly from small, medium and large company websites.

SimplyHired
Searches job sites, company websites and classified advertisements all in one search.

Career Builder
Pulls jobs, resumes and career advice.

Handshake

Handshake is NOVA's college-wide career services management system. This is where the Business Engagement and Career Services Team posts jobs, internships, events and more to support students' career development. All NOVA students are automatically signed up for a Handshake account upon enrolling at the College. Current students will log in using their myNOVA credentials and maintain access while enrolled at NOVA.

Log Into Handshake

Every student has a pre-made Handshake account and can log in using their myNOVA username (the section of your VCCS email before @) and their myNOVA password.





Complete Your Handshake Profile

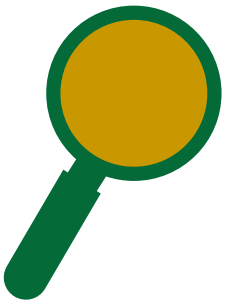
Completing your profile with your education, experience, projects, skills and awards will allow you to better promote yourself during your job search and see content curated to your interests.

Optimize Your Resume

Using the Resume Optimizer in Handshake, get feedback on your resume to help it stand out. Before submitting it to an employer, schedule an appointment with a career counselor/coach for review.



Handshake



Search for Jobs and Internships

When searching for jobs and internships, utilize the search filters and save the jobs that interest you in your favorites so you can apply later.

Research Employers

With thousands of employers in NOVA's Handshake network, explore our Employer Directory and save employers of interest so you will be notified of new jobs and events.





Attend a Career Event

New career events are added daily, so check out a wide range of workshops, career fairs and employer recruitment events, both here at NOVA and in the surrounding community.

Request Career Counseling/Coaching

During your time enrolled at NOVA, don't miss the opportunity to meet with a career counselor/coach through Handshake to discuss your career development process.



Career Services Events



The Business Engagement and Career Services Team offers a wide range of student events that are hosted by NOVA and our employer partners. Currently, we offer three types of career events—career fairs and virtual employer lobbies, employer recruitment events, and workshops and programs. Find a full list of events and information on how to register in Handshake.

Career Fairs and Virtual Employer Lobbies

Students meet directly with hiring employers, either in a group setting or through one-on-one meetings. These events are held both in person and online. All fairs and lobbies are hosted by Northern Virginia Community College.

Employer Recruitment Events

Employer recruitment events connect students directly to employers, allowing students to expand their professional network, hear about companies and learn more about an industry. One example is our employer campus tabling events, where employer representatives set up a table on campus and meet directly with students. In addition to networking, students receive career advice, industry information and resume critiques.

Workshops and Programs

Workshops and programs are held across all NOVA campuses and virtually. They include career development events such as resume workshops, panels and career exploration events.



RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

Creating a Resume



Your resume is your opportunity to highlight the unique skills and experiences that make you a strong candidate for hire. Make sure yours is honed to give you the best possible chance for success!

Resume Tips

- **Your resume should be clear, concise and relevant to the position you are applying for.**
  - Focus on your accomplishments and include metrics.
  - Unless your work history is extensive, try to limit your resume to one full page. If you've been in the workforce a while, you can adjust your resume length goal to no more than two pages.
  - Proofread your resume carefully before submission. Spelling and grammar errors can negatively impact how employers view you.
- **Tailor your resume to each job that you apply for.**
  - Identify keywords in the job description and include them in your resume.
  - Review resume examples for the industry you're applying for.
  - Use a chronological resume format. Leave out unnecessary information. Your full work/volunteer experience may not always be relevant to the position you're applying to.
- **Write a targeted cover letter.**
  - While cover letters aren't always required for a job application, they provide an opportunity to set yourself apart from other applicants.
- **Schedule a resume review appointment with a NOVA career counselor/coach via Handshake!**

Cover Letters

Your resume alone is not enough to prove that you're the right fit for the job, you should also include a cover letter. A cover letter is commonly submitted with a job application or resume and outlines the applicant's credentials for and interest in the open position. Cover letters offer you the opportunity to highlight how your skills are a fit for a particular position and expand upon your resume. Don't merely repeat what is on your resume but rather put your past experience and skills in the context of each role you apply to. Your cover letter should be customized to fit each unique job you apply for!

Tips for writing your cover letter:

- **Explain why you want the job:** State why you're excited about the position and how it fits your career goals.
- **Expand upon your resume:** Do not repeat your resume. Provide specific examples and details of the skills you've developed and how they're a good fit for the position.
- **Describe the ways you will contribute:** Clearly identify at least two skills you possess and how they will complement the position and enable you to succeed in the role.
- **Research the company:** State what you know and like about the company to demonstrate your sincere interest in joining their team.
- **Proofread and edit:** Mistakes on your cover letter, even if small, will negatively impact your application. Take the time to read over all application materials before submitting them.
- **Watch the length of your letter:** Your cover letter should be 3/4 of a page to one page long. Your writing should be clear and concise.

Thank You & Follow Up

It is proper etiquette to a send thank you note or email anytime you meet with someone regarding a career opportunity. A thank you note can set you apart and provide another opportunity to remind the interviewer who you are and why you are the ideal candidate!

Key Points to Writing Thank You Letters:

1. The thank you email/letter should be sent within 24 hours of the meeting or interview.
2. Keep it short, simple and specific to the interview. A half page letter is sufficient.
3. Your letter should be sent to all interview committee members.
4. Make sure your language is warm and professional.
5. Express your continued interest.





NETWORKING

Networking Q & A

What is the purpose of professional networking?

- Professional networking helps to build mutually beneficial relationships with other professionals to exchange information and build contacts in your industry of interest.

What are some practical ways to network?

- Attend social or professional networking events.
- Be active on your LinkedIn account.
- Join alumni groups.
- Join a professional organization in your field(s) of interest.

What are some easy pointers for networking?

- Don't be afraid to introduce yourself and talk to people.
- Engage in the workshops and fairs that Career Services offers.
- Talk to a variety of people. You never know what could come from a connection!



Networking Case Study



Jason Thompson was a second-year engineering student, balancing the demands of a tough courseload and the pressure of figuring out what he wanted to do after college. He knew that he needed a summer internship, and not just any internship—one that would give him real-world experience and put him in front of companies that could help him launch his career.

But finding that perfect internship wasn't as easy as scrolling through job boards. Jason realized quickly that his resume alone wasn't enough to stand out in the competitive world of engineering internships. That's when his professor, Dr. Williams, dropped some advice during class one day: "Don't underestimate the power of networking."

Jason wasn't sure where to start. He'd heard of networking before but thought it was reserved for business majors or people already in the industry. However, the more he thought about it, the more it made sense. What better way to stand out than by connecting with people who could offer guidance or even help him get his foot in the door?

He began by attending a networking event hosted by his university's engineering department. Jason wasn't a natural extrovert, but he made an effort. He introduced himself to a few senior students and faculty members, mentioning his interest in sustainable engineering. One of the seniors, Mia, mentioned that she'd had a previous internship at a company that focused on renewable energy.

"Have you tried reaching out to them?" Mia asked, handing him her contact information. "I know the hiring manager personally. I can send them a recommendation for you."

Jason was surprised by how easily the conversation had flowed, and how willing Mia was to help. The next day, he sent an email to the hiring manager, referencing Mia's recommendation. Within a week, Jason was invited to an interview.

Networking Case Study

The interview went well, but he knew that there were plenty of qualified students out there, and he wasn't sure if he had made an impact. But instead of waiting nervously, Jason decided to take Dr. Williams' advice further. He joined LinkedIn and began connecting with professionals in the field. He reached out to alumni from his college asking about their career paths and any tips they might have for a student looking to break into the industry.

One evening, Jason got a LinkedIn message from an alum named Carlos who worked at a leading engineering firm. He had a few of minutes to chat and offered to review Jason's resume. "You've got a solid foundation," Carlos said, "but I think you should highlight your involvement in his school's robotics team. It's a huge selling point."

Jason revised his resume to include the robotics team and sent it off with a personalized note thanking Carlos. A few days later, Carlos sent a follow-up message: "Our company is looking for an intern this summer. I've passed your resume to the HR team. Expect to hear from them soon."

Within a week, Jason was offered a summer internship with the company. He couldn't believe it—his networking efforts had paid off! The connections he made, both through formal events and casual outreach, had opened doors he never expected.

That summer, Jason not only gained invaluable experience but also made even more industry contacts that would help him through the rest of his college years and beyond. By the time he graduated, Jason realized that the real value of his internship wasn't just the hands-on engineering work—it was the people he met along the way. Networking, he learned, wasn't just a tool for finding opportunities; it was the foundation of building a career.





ATTIRE & ETIQUETTE

Dress for Success

People pay attention to how you present yourself! Having a resume and interviewing well is only half the battle—dressing appropriately matters, too. You do not have to compromise your style to dress professionally. Incorporate fun prints and patterns, pops of color to complement your professional attire if you'd like!

Business Casual

Blouse, collared shirt, dress, polo shirt, sweater, blazer, cardigan or vest

Trousers, khaki pants, chinos or fingertip-length skirt

Dress shoes, flats, heels or loafers

Belt and modest jewelry (tie is optional)









Dress for Success



Professional Attire

Dress shirt and tie, blouse, dress, suit jacket or skirt suit

Suit pants (matched with jacket), slacks or skirt past knee-length

Dress shoes, flats or heels

Belt (matched with shoes) and modest jewelry







How to decide what to wear to your job:

- Review the employee handbook.
- Observe how your colleagues dress.
- Purchase basics first as you build your professional wardrobe.
- When in doubt, opt to dress conservatively.

Professional Etiquette

Professional or business etiquette is the type of behavior that team members are expected to follow in order to uphold the company's image and respect each other. Professional etiquette is more than just a set of rules, it is a critical part of building a productive and collaborative team.



The 5 Basics of Professional Etiquette

1) Be on time

Whether you're attending an interview or a team meeting, being on time shows that you are respectful of everyone's schedule.

2) Recognize your team

Acknowledging others is proper etiquette in casual and formal work environments. You should always greet a person when they enter a room or meeting, whether in-person or virtually.

3) Dress appropriately

Dressing appropriately will be unique to the work environment, but it demonstrates your respect for the company's image and expectations.

4) Respect shared spaces

The way you treat shared spaces will reflect on you as a professional, so it is important to stay organized, be aware of how loudly you're speaking and respect others who also use these spaces.

5) Build your emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, regulate and understand emotions in yourself and in others. These skills can help you empathize with team members and overcome challenges.

Email Etiquette

Whether you're networking, job-hunting or coordinating with your team, it is imperative that you communicate clearly and effectively with fellow professionals. Clear written communication demonstrates competency, allows for greater efficiency and helps you share exactly what you mean with clarity. Make sure you know how to send a professional email before reaching out to professionals, peers or organizations.

Tips for Sending Professional Emails

Know Your Audience

Are you writing to a long-time friend or a new connection? You will approach writing these two audiences very differently. When writing an email, think about how you want the other person to perceive you and how you should address them. Do you know them well enough to call them by their first name, or should you address them as Mr. Roberts?

Use Proper Grammar

You risk harming your professional reputation if you do not use correct grammar and punctuation in your email, especially with first impressions. Write emails with the same care you used to write your cover letter, capitalizing names and avoiding run-on sentences.

Write a Subject Line

This may seem obvious, but it is frequently forgotten. Make sure your email's subject line is not left blank, and that it reflects the reason you are reaching out.

State Your Purpose

Why are you emailing this individual? They want to know, too. Don't "bury the lead"—if you are writing to express your interest in a position, make sure that is clear. If you just want to connect because you are in a similar industry and think it would be good to know one another, say that. There's no wrong reason to reach out to a peer, so long as you are respectful and upfront about why you want to connect with them.

Be Clear and Concise

While it's important to be thoughtful and detailed, simplicity will win in the end. Many professionals don't have time to read a six-paragraph email from someone they don't know. Keep your emails brief and to-the-point for best results, especially with new connections.

Review Before Sending

Make sure your email is complete, clear and follows professional email etiquette before sending it. This can save you from overlooking mistakes or giving the recipient the wrong impression.



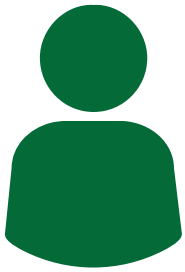
INTERVIEWING

Types of Interviews

Phone

Typically used for the first round of interviews and will be your first live interaction with the employer.



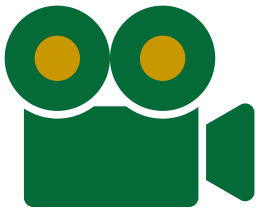


Traditional/Solo

A one-on-one with the interviewer, where you are asked a series of questions based on your experience.

Virtual/Video

The virtual version of the traditional interview facilitated using software like Zoom.





Behavioral

Scenario-based questions evaluate how you would behave or respond in various situations.

Recorded

You will receive a link to recorded questions to answer. Your responses are usually limited to 2-6 minutes long and must be submitted by a deadline.



General Interviewing Tips

Before the Interview

- Research the organization/company prior to your interview and develop a list of questions to ask.
- Schedule an Interview Preparation Career Counseling appointment through Handshake.
- Bring copies of your resume to refer to or to provide in case the interviewer does not have a copy.
- Dress professionally.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- Turn your cell phone off or silence it and make sure it is not visible.

During the Interview

- Speak clearly and succinctly and maintain eye contact.
- Show enthusiasm for the position.
- Ask thoughtful questions.
- Take notes during your interview.
- Be authentic and confident.

After the Interview

- Send Thank You notes to members of the interview committee.
- Follow up to restate your interest in the position.

Sample Interview Questions

Prepare for your interview by reviewing and practicing your answers for these common questions. You can also schedule an Interview Preparation appointment with a Career Counselor to give you feedback about phrasing and delivery.



- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this organization?
- Describe a conflict you experienced at work and how you resolved it.
- How would others describe you?
- What do you anticipate being your greatest challenges in this position?
- Describe a time you went above and beyond at work.
- Describe a time when you disagreed with your supervisor/boss.
- What is your ideal work environment?
- How do you manage working under pressure and meeting deadlines?
- How would you describe your leadership style?
- How well do you work with people? Do you prefer working independently or with a team?
- What are your short- and long-term career goals? How do you plan to achieve these goals?

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Your interviewer shouldn't be the only one asking questions. Asking questions in an interview shows that you're curious, have taken the time to research the company and position and are interested in the role. Before an interview with an employer, prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer about the role and company.

Here are a few examples:

- What are the characteristics of someone who would succeed in this role?
- What would be the first project or initiative for the successful candidate?
- How would you describe the company culture? What is your favorite thing about working for this organization?
- What professional development opportunities would be available to the successful candidate?
- How (and how often) would the successful candidate be evaluated on their performance in this position?
- Can you elaborate on the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- What other functions or departments does this team work with?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process, and what is the timeline?



JOB OFFERS & NEGOTIATIONS

The Dos and Don'ts of Salary Negotiation

When you are offered a job, you will have to consider the salary and benefits you are offered. If you aren't satisfied with the offer, you may have leverage to negotiate the terms of your employment. If you go this route, you will need to consider some criteria to get the best offer possible and avoid creating tension with the employer.

Do:

- Research salary range/cost of living before interviewing.
- Consider the whole package (salary + benefits) to determine the value of the job offer.
- Be positive—always thank the employer for the offer, even if it is lower than you expected.
- Use respectful, positive language.
- Ask if there is room to negotiate.
- Practice your negotiation conversation with a career counselor/coach or mentor.
- Identify the salary range you hoped to receive and explain why based on your strengths, experience and education.
- Get the final offer in writing or in an email.

Don't:

- Discuss specifics during your initial interview.
- Raise salary questions until the employer brings it up.
- Enter negotiations if you know that you won't accept any offer.
- Ask for more time to decide and then never follow-up.
- Ask to negotiate if you lack leverage (relevant experience and education) for negotiating.
- Renege on an offer after you've already accepted it.

Helpful websites:

www.salary.com; www.salarylist.com; www.payscale.com; www.glassdoor.com

Accepting a Job



Congrats! Your hard work job hunting has paid off, and you are ready to accept an offer from a company that you are excited to work for. Before you accept the offer, it's important that you cover your bases. Make sure that you receive the answers to all of the following (preferably in writing, and best in the form of a contract) before officially accepting a job offer:

- Starting Salary
- Benefits Package (insurance, time off, etc.)
- Start Date
- Expected Working Hours
- Remote/Hybrid/In-Person
- Job Location

If an employer is unwilling to answer these questions, it is a sign that things may be chaotic behind the scenes, or worse, that they are not a trustworthy employer. Be cautious about proceeding.

Once you accept a job offer, ask about next steps and thank the employer once again for selecting you. Now, it's time to begin the onboarding process and preparing for employment!



Thank You

We hope you found this handbook helpful. We're here for YOU! Don't hesitate to reach out to us for any of your career-related needs.

NOVA Career Services Website: https://www.nvcc.edu/careerservices/index.html
NOVA Career Services Email: novacareerservices@nvcc.edu
NOVA Career Services YouTube: NOVA Career Services — YouTube
Handshake: Student/Alumni Sign-in (nvcc.joinhandshake.com)

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