

International Students – Job Search Tips

Job searches for international students can be especially difficult because employers are frequently unaware of cultural differences and employment restrictions, which may dissuade them from interviewing international students. International students must educate themselves about these topics so they can educate and make a good impression on employers during the interview process. They must also educate themselves about the American job search process and how it may differ from the processes they are accustomed to.

Before the Interview

1. Research employment regulations

International students should become thoroughly familiar with the immigration regulations and benefits attributed to their immigration status. Oftentimes, students are expected to educate the employer during interviews about these details. For further information, speak with international student advisors in the Office of International Education, 301 Warner Hall or visit their website at <http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/>.

2. Research employers

This is essential for *any* job hunt. The student must understand what the company does, what they are hiring for, and what qualifications they are seeking. Ideal candidates cannot present themselves as ideal if they do not know that they meet the criteria. Research the employer's website and use the [Vault](#) guides to gain additional company insight. Attend an employer information session to gain an overview of the company and speak to company representatives. (For a list of campus presentations, log in to TartanTrak, click 'Interview & Connect with Employers', click 'Search Presentations.'

3. Develop yourself

Since international students face employment restrictions, many students may have very limited work experience by the time they graduate. As an alternative, many become actively involved in student organizations and volunteer activities. These involvements also develop skills that employers value. Any student should identify the marketable skills they can bring to an employer and highlight them in resumes, cover letters and interviews.

Steps to help this process:

- Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses
- Describe experiences that illustrate your main strengths
- Think of one experience where you have learned from your weaknesses

4. Network

Networking is one of the best ways to identify potential jobs for any student. In developing networks and resources, international students should not forget to include local ethnic communities, nationality clubs, and classmates and professors originally from the same home country.

5. Practice

Mock interviews can give any student invaluable interview practice and insight into their interview strengths and weaknesses. The [Career & Professional Development Center](#) has an employer mock interview program – this is incorporated into on-campus interviewing on TartanTRAK. Career Consultants can also conduct mock interviews with students. For more information, contact your Career Consultant.

Excellent verbal and written English skills are required to secure employment in the United States. International students may wish to practice American pronunciations. For additional help with enhancing English skills, contact the [Intercultural Communications Center](#) in 308 Warner Hall.

The Four Stages of an Interview

1. Greeting - The employer welcomes the student to the interview

- Good first impression is important
- Appearance is important
- Be a few minutes early
- Smile, make eye contact
- Stand approximately four feet apart
- Posture is relaxed, facing employer, ready to answer questions

2. Employer questions - Employer asks direct questions, the student gives direct answers

- Do not simply repeat information on resume
- Answers are simple and direct and show confidence
- Yes or no answers must be elaborated on
- Examples of past performance are necessary
- Focus on strengths
- Sell yourself, do not worry about bragging, have conviction
- Show self-awareness, willingness to learn
- Tone is clear, strong, at a medium rate

3. Applicant questions - The applicant asks questions about the organization

- Asking questions does not show you are ignorant or unprepared
- Actually shows interest, initiative
- Can bring out your knowledge about the company in insightful questions
- Topics can include job responsibilities, organizational structure of the company, etc.

4. Closing - The end of the interview

- Make one last solid impression
- Shake hands, make eye contact, smile, be positive
- Be confident

Interviewing hints

1. Be aware of employer expectations of excellent candidates:

Confidence/self promotion	Flexibility/change
Goal orientation	Competition
Self-sufficiency	Direct speech
Efficiency/time control	

2. Do not over look any aspect of appearance:

Be neat, conservative

Business suits are generally expected in an interview for both men and women

Remember to think about:

Clothes	Underclothes
Hair	Breath
Nails	Posture

3. Eye contact and smiling show you are:

Approachable	Confident
Have positive self-concept	Capable

4 See the [Career Success Guide on Interviews](#) for typical questions and more general tips.