

Welcome To The Real World



What They Don't Teach You At University &
College To Prepare You For The Job Market & Life

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Experiencing The End – Graduation

So the end is either near, or it's here. Either way, the reason you have picked this report up is because graduation has suddenly become a stark reality for you. University is a different experience for different people; everyone benefits from it in one way or another. It is crucial to remember that whether you liked it or not, your university introduced you to the new. Be it new information about world events, or new ways to fold your socks!

University or college was an experience that brought out different shades of your persona and it is now coming to an end. Very frequently, college graduates and seniors are introduced to the concept of the 'real world'. You hear this term being thrown about by family, professors, friends and even course textbooks. High school was simpler because there was a clear path leading to university or college or maybe a gap year. University was a different ballgame altogether.

Humans are better equipped to deal with realities that they can foresee in some capacity or another. That is not the case after graduation. The 'real world' as we know it, is a vague possibility that we know exists but don't know how to access. Some of you may suppose you know exactly what lies outside the campus. Some of you may have travel plans, jobs, weddings and so much more in the future. But for most of you, the real world holds as much intimidation as it does promise.

A piece of paper that declares you officially 'educated' may be a great source of comfort for so many of you out there, but it does not make you immune to the trepidations of the real world. In so many ways, it has become essential that you grow up and get ready for what lies ahead. Many university graduates are lucky. They have families ready to support them. They may come from wealthy backgrounds and have few reservations about future possibilities.

Others have a different experience. Student loans and taxes today loom over more than 60% of university students around the world. For so many degree holders out there, a university diploma means the beginning of loan payback season. The tension that comes after graduation has the power to adversely affect hundreds of thousands of bright individuals worldwide. Suddenly, many of you may feel burdened with the responsibilities of adulthood while others look forward to some years of luxury at home.

It is, therefore, safe to say that everybody has a different path laid out for them. Not everyone gets a fair trial and not everyone begins on the same footing. Like every other endeavour in life, University will be kinder to some than others. The universal truth, though, is that you all have your work cut out for you. Graduation is not just the end of university. It's the end of unawareness; the time has come to go to the next chapter with your eyes open.

Why This Report?

As we have established, this is the beginning of a new era for most university graduates and soon to be graduates. However, many, if not all of you, will feel unprepared for the future in one way or another. With this in mind, the purpose of this report is to introduce recent and future graduates to some failsafe techniques and methods they can incorporate into their lives to be better prepared for what we call the 'real world'.

Many of you will have acquired skills and perfected existing strengths in your time at university/college. Then again, there may be a lot of you who might not be able to perceive these as important. This report will be divided into two main components:

- 1) Life in University
- 2) Life in the Real World

The fundamental aim of this report is to reacquaint students with the lifestyle changes they need to make in order to be better prepared for life after graduation. The majority of these changes are best made while in university. After all, a university is the perfect place in which to learn more about one's self. Still, there are a variety of lessons to learn once you have graduated and are trying to find your footing in this large world.

At no point does this report assume that all graduates have similar experiences, but the central message behind this narrative is that there are certain approaches to life that are essential for everyone. From critical financial planning to maintaining healthy friendships, this report will cover the basics of individual development in life during and after University.

Why College Was A Good Idea



Regardless of the disillusionment that many graduates feel today, a university education is still a worthwhile investment. Since 1995, university graduates in the Western Hemisphere are twice as likely to be gainfully employed by the age of 25 as individuals without a recognised education.

The onset of technology, increased productivity and multi-nationalism require even blue collar employees to have basic technical diplomas. Jobs that once asked for a high school diploma now consider only undergraduate degree holders. The economic gap between individuals with and without a university degree is higher than ever. Furthering the divide, college graduates are guaranteed better benefits and job security than the mal-employed and unemployed.

A university degree is a form of social mobility; university graduates are equipped with the tools to assist them in dealing with the different aspects of industry. It is never entirely about the income, though money is the ultimate form of social security, it is about the self-assurance that a formal education instils within an individual. Being able to survive in this cutthroat world is about confidence, and nothing provides that sort of belief the way a university degree does. It is easy to dismiss university as an unfulfilling experience, easy to assume that the 'real world' would be the same without a degree. But without that piece of paper, the way you tackle the future may be drastically different.

Part 1 – IN COLLEGE

Learn About Yourself

It is very easy to succumb to social pressures, to pick a major and get a degree in a field that doesn't interest you. Statistically, male students face such issues most frequently because they have the stereotypical living to earn. Parents and society may force you to choose a university or a degree that they think is correct for you, but they may very easily be wrong. Studying in a university is a big and an expensive decision, which is why it is essential that you think very carefully about the courses you chose.

Clichéd though it may be, it really is about doing what you love. Do not embark upon an engineering degree unless you know you will be satisfied investing your time and energy in a career in engineering. If you want to do social work and transform small communities, do not waste your years on a business degree that offers the exact opposite.

Career hierarchies are difficult to climb; even with the right degree in a flourishing industry, it is difficult to establish yourself. Success requires drive and passion, but if you cannot conjure the ambition required to make it in a particular industry, it is time to reconsider your choices. If you find your coursework and your degree requirement tedious, boring or difficult, you are not studying what is right for you.

If you are near the end of your education and are regretting the decision you made about your major, now is the time to rethink some of the co and extra-curricular activities you involve yourself in. It's never too late to branch out and re-examine possibilities, if you have a degree in a field that you aren't interested in pursuing. Start considering further education in another industry, or consider [applying for internships](#) and entry level opportunities in a new professional capacity.

Strengths are always more prevalent than weaknesses; the best opportunity you have as a university student is to recognise your skill set and exploit that potential. Think about what you have enjoyed most in university. Was it writing? Taking part in charity work? Acting in the dramatics club? The answers may help you look into your own accomplishments. Think about what you are good at, and simultaneously analyse your limitations. If you have trouble keeping track of your finances and are constantly struggling with money, this is the time to think about attending workshops or seminars on money management. If you are not a skilled writer but are in a writing-intensive major, visit writing workshops and read more on your topics of choice.

Remember that what you may not be naturally skilled at might still be an acquired quality. Focusing on the bigger picture is absolutely essential in college. What you want to be doing in ten years' time is the question to ask yourself constantly. Be introspective and think about

yourself all the time. Only then will you get to know yourself better and be able to set achievable and satisfying goals for the future.

Take Care Of Yourself

Self-help and self-health go hand in hand in a university environment where pressures of all sorts are high and there are plenty of people to make comparisons with; it is necessary to give yourself time. Academic deadlines, grades, work and other commitments may very possibly side track you from spending time on yourself.

The American Psychological Association remarks that over 50% of university students feel overwhelmed by their surroundings and their mental and physical health suffer the most. In order to succeed in college, and to set a similar path of success throughout your life, it is essential that you take care of yourself as best you can.

Physical Health

Find activities that energise you and take your mind off your anxieties and worries. Exercise is a frequently recommended self-help tool for university students. The 'freshmen fifteen' is known as the 15 pound weight gain that many university students experience at some point in their university life. It is not about food and body weight, it's about the amount of attention you give to your diet and exercise. Remember to be healthy and to give your body the attention it deserves.

Sleep is another important aspect of physical health; lack of sleep may cause common illnesses, stress and may affect your ability to concentrate and pay attention to the task at hand. University students are among the most chronically sleep deprived of the young population. However, missing out on sleep will never positively affect your future. Remember that the world is demanding and fast paced; in order to keep up with the requirements of your life, you need to be able to depend on your body to support you.

Mental Health

Take time to indulge in activities that distress you and regain your self-confidence. Whether it's exercise, cooking, reading or spending time with friends, make sure to take a break from the professional aspect of your life. This habit will be particularly handy out in the real world, where there is less time for self-indulgence.

Don't dwell on the negatives in your life; instead, go out and forget about your worries. Be spontaneous and pay attention to friendships and the seemingly trivial things you enjoy most. Mental health is not about reading a psychology journal and diagnosing one's self, it is about recognising that you can only get through the difficult phases of your life by making the most of

the easy ones. Successful people always pay attention to themselves; your mind must be a safe place for you.

Learn to do your own chores and depend on yourself. Minor errands like doing laundry, cleaning, hygiene and regular doctor's appointments are all responsibilities we have to ourselves. It is important to not neglect personal needs in favour of ambition, degree requirements or social stigmas. Set your own affairs in order while you are at university; it will build an excellent foundation for the rest of your life out in the 'real world'.

Leave Your Comfort Zone

Familiarity breeds contempt, they say. Familiarity also breeds ignorance and procrastination. University is an experience during which you will have to set out to challenge yourself. The most effective way to do that is to face difficulties in a unique way and to put yourself in a position that may require more of you than ordinary.

Leaving your comfort zone is not about encountering your fears, but about learning more. Attend parties and join clubs that you may otherwise be disinclined to join. If you suffer from stage fright, try your hand at amateur drama in small groups or singing at a low-key karaoke event. If you want to learn more about politics but are afraid your opinion is irrelevant, take an introductory political science class and learn at your own pace. If you want to improve your public speaking skills or meet likeminded individuals, join a debating society.

Many students take the ultimate step and seek employment at their university. They may look for jobs at a cafeteria, or at a debate club or even in the student council. Broadening your horizons will allow you to face your insecurities and conquer them. You will earn money and introduce yourself to a professional environment; you will also make money. Most importantly, you will meet interesting people, possibly your best friends, in unexpected places.

If you have never had a friend from a different country, go out of your way to speak to a foreign person. Ask them to tell you about their culture and their language. Keep in mind that everyone has inhibitions and that most people are glad to make new friends. The variety amongst your circle of friends will say more about you than anything else. If you find yourself limited to people that think like you and come from similar backgrounds, you may never learn anything about the vast world outside.

The skills you pick up outside your comfort zone are unlike anything you can learn when keeping your feet on familiar ground. A university is intimidating, but it is a small stage in comparison to the society outside. Most respectable employers ask for candidates experienced with different types of people and situations. In the professional world, you will be forced to deal with unusual scenarios on a regular basis. If you train yourself to be flexible in alien surroundings, your chances of success beyond university will be greater than ever.

Develop Your Communication Skills

Effective communication is chapter 1 of self-actualisation and personal growth. Whereas in high school and at home we grow accustomed to the people around us and develop communication techniques with everyone, it is greatly different in university and beyond.

In the information age, we send, receive and process thousands of verbal and non verbal messages on a daily basis. [Effective communication](#) allows us to build trust with others and helps us resolve issues and brainstorm solutions. It is an absolutely essential, nonnegotiable asset to have out in the real world. Through your experiences in the classroom as well as outside, with friends, colleagues and acquaintances, you have the perfect platform to develop communication skills at university.

Aspects of Effective Communication

1) Effective Listening

Conversation is only as productive as the listening skills of the persons involved. In order to communicate effectively, learn to really listen to the speaker rather than simply hearing them.

- Avoid interrupting and learn to direct the conversation in their favour so that they are encouraged to get their point across succinctly. Becoming aggressive and not allowing the other person to speak is detrimental to everybody in the conversation
- Show your interest in what is being said. In study groups, debates, club meetings and even amongst friends, learn to make the speakers feel that what they are saying is important. Remember this goes a very long way because it allows others to respect you when you are speaking. Also, it is only when you listen with interest that you retain information. It is helpful in professional environments to listen attentively to a speaker because you can later recall information with greater accuracy.
- Don't listen to reply, listen to understand. If you are formulating a response the entire time somebody is speaking, you will miss the point of the conversation. Learn to think about what others say before you reply.

2) Non-Verbal Communication

Actions speak louder than words and your body language does most of the talking. Stay conscious of the way you receive and deliver information. Do you seem unapproachable? Do you have trouble maintaining eye contact? Do you unknowingly point fingers too much? These are all signs of negative non-verbal communication. Observe interviews on television with the sound off. Watch the way people encourage or discourage speakers with their hand gestures and facial expressions.

Be honest about the way you look and act when others are speaking. Make sure that your actions match your words, if you seem upset even while complimenting others, your words may be unconvincing to others and vice versa. Non verbal communication is an essential leadership quality, people watch more than listen so make sure your features carry the same message as your words.

3) Emotional Awareness

Never come across as judgmental. In a university environment, there are often individuals from different cultures and religions present. Effective communication makes all participants feel safe and it is important to ensure others that you are trying to understand their point of view. Expect the same consideration from others, and be clear if you feel you are not receiving it.

4) Feedback

Feedback, both negative and positive, is important to steer a conversation in the right direction. Learn to take feedback from people; if someone disagrees with you, ask them why and how they think your opinions or idea may be improved upon. If you take the time out to communicate with someone, then give their opinions the respect they deserve.

It is best to avoid passive aggressive situations, and as long as you are not interrupting someone, immediate feedback is a good idea.

When speaking with anyone – in person or through another medium- let them know if you have an issue with what they are saying. Do so after hearing them out and without becoming stressed. Give feedback priority, and ask for it regularly. When working with groups, make sure to ask for everyone's feedback equally. You will learn a great deal about yourself and other people by giving and receive feedback.

5) Compromise Based Solution Seeking

Agree to disagree with your peers and superiors. Effective communication allows for alternative views being presented and compromises being made. At work, in relationships and in the 'real world' you will meet people with worldviews radically different from your own. Even if they offend you on a deep, personal level, you will often find yourself working with people of this persuasion.

The only way to adapt to such environments is to learn to compromise. University is a tentative setting for such places. You may have roommates that don't have the same cleaning standards as yours; you may be assigned a project with someone who wants to work on a different timeline than you. These situations are elevated outside of university. Learn to present alternatives when you disagree, and accept them when others do.

6) Assertiveness

In a daunting environment, it may be tricky to stand your ground. But assertiveness without belligerence is undeniably an important life skill. You will have countless opportunities to be assertive during your time in university. You will talk to, listen to and maybe fight with many people who will voluntarily or involuntarily undermine your integrity.

Effective communication requires that each participant be true to their opinions, and commands respect without asking for it. If you are going to listen to others, make sure others extend you the same courtesy. When starting your career you will be at the bottom of the employment food chain and it will be necessary that you are able to make your place at every level. Start when you're in college, and carry it through afterwards.

Conflict resolution and relationship building both require effective communication to take place. Growing up means learning how to conduct yourself around other people. If you live in a college dorm, start by learning to correspond with your roommates. In your friends and family, begin to listen more to what people have to say and how you may contribute to each other's thought process. Not only will you develop your communication skills for the rest of your life, but you will be able to pick up on other peoples' weaknesses and strengths.

Develop Your Time Management Skills

How often do you find yourself running late? Or running out of time? Have you had trouble sticking to deadlines and making it to class on time? These may seem like slight issues now; you may joke about being careless or unorganised. However, efficient [time management skills](#) are of tremendous importance out in the 'real world', and even in a university. Balancing work with a social life and extra-curricular activities can be tricky and exhausting. These demands are amplified in life after university. Take your time at college to improve upon your time management habits:

1) Set Goals

Realise your long term goals by focusing on your short term goals. If you need to finish an assignment within a week, create a schedule that allows you to work on it every day for a few hours without keeping you from other commitments. If you have long term goals, such as a thesis or a conference to plan, divide your responsibilities into short time periods and go about them slowly. Avoid becoming overwhelmed by making a mental or actual list of the things you need to get done within a week, and think about those only.

2) Analyse Current Habits

Think about what you do now that may not be working for you. Do you forego sleep to finish work? Do you constantly do things last minute and stress yourself out? In order to identify a solution, you must first recognise the problem. Chances are that the habits that have caused trouble during your college life will also be an issue for you once you graduate. Before bad habits snowball into uncontrollable lifestyle choices, decide what changes you need to make and set your goals accordingly.

3) Prioritise

What is important to you? If you decided to come to university, you probably put some value in your education. This is the time to prioritise it over everything else. The chances you have in university may never come again, so give them the utmost importance. If you are a science major, prioritise your science courses over others and work to excel in them. If you are a liberal arts degree holder, prioritise your events and thesis courses over other commitments. Remember, what you prioritise most is what you believe will help you in the future. The things that require the greatest attention should be on the top of your to-do list.

4) Recognise & Avoid Interruptions

You know yourself best, and you know what distracts you the most. Do you procrastinate because of television or report or friends? You cannot completely eliminate your distracters, but you can reduce their prevalence by making a conscious effort to do so.

5) Bar Graph

An excellent time management technique is bar-graphing. Spend a few weeks of your life keeping track of everything you do in a day and how much time you spend doing it. Note down your sleeping habits, eating habits, social habits and study habits. At the end of each week, compile the results into bar graphs and analyse them as time passes. This way, you can stay aware of whether your time management skills are improving or not.

Time management will become increasingly important as time goes by, so the earlier you develop these skills, the more prudent it will be for your future.

Do Not Neglect What's Outside The Classroom

An undergraduate degree, no matter what discipline it is in, never provides a student with extensive knowledge on any subject. By definition alone, the undergraduate experience is more generalised and caters to several different academic needs and demands. Therefore, your university experience will be somewhat wasted if you do not seek knowledge beyond the classroom.

Involve yourself in student run societies, clubs and committees that do not offer grades and are not supervised by professionals. You will find that you will do most of your learning away from the course curriculum. This is not to undermine the academics, but to supplement them. Most institutes of higher education offer students the chance to venture out of courses and indulge in activities. You do not need to neglect your studies. In fact, students often feel that their grades are better when they remain involved.

The main 'real world' benefits of extra-curricular activities are:

1) You Can Meet New People

Possibly the best way to make new friends and to learn to adapt to new environments; participating in clubs and societies may greatly help a student feel more comfortable at university. As discussed in previous sections, effective communication and the development of life skills all take place through interactions with other people. You will be faced with challenges involving strangers throughout your life after college, and getting involved at university is a small scale practice session for the obstacles of real life communication and relationship building.

Moreover, it can be a unique learning experience. Through working together and conversation, student clubs and unions at university tackle projects and issues together and provide each other with support. You will learn about world issues, countries, cultures and people in general during the time you spend being productive outside the classroom.

Also, keep in mind that meeting people means making contacts. Nowadays, employers are more interested in who you know rather than what you know. The people you meet and form connections with may be essential in your journey to achieve success and realise your ambitions.

2) Provide A Change

Oftentimes, it can be downright cathartic to have an outlet away for the strain of academic work. When managing your time, make sure to schedule in your activities not only for reasons of productivity, but for some time off. The activities you take part in can be a great break from

other sources of stress in your life. By becoming involved outside the classroom, you will develop a way of channeling your energy into constructive tasks even when you are 'on a break'.

Over the course of your time at university, you will look over your past and remember all the times you did well on an exam because instead of stressing about work all the time, you made sure to pursue other interests as well. Being an involved student outside of academics will develop lifelong time management skills as well as teach you how to get several things done in a day without feeling exhausted and inundated by the demands of your schedule.

3) Different Approaches To Your Degree

If you are a conscientious student, or particularly passionate about the discipline you are studying, then don't be afraid to venture outside the classroom into activities related to your field.

If you are an English Literature student, get involved in a book club or literary society. If you are an environmental scientist, join a lab group or field trip study group for a more hands-on approach to your education. The global system of higher education ensures that most fields be represented in activities outside the classroom.

The greatest advantage of such activities is that they supplement the work inside the classroom; you can take a break from your studies while actually studying. By discussing things with other students or by hosting events and club meetings, you can keep your attention on what matters without becoming stuck in a cycle of unfulfilling habits.

4) Explore Different Disciplines

University is about togetherness and appreciation for all approaches to academia. It is also a great place to reacquaint yourself with what else is out there. Sometimes, you will learn most from students in completely separate fields of study. Your best friends may belong to departments different from yours, but these are the opportunities to dispel your limitations and learn more.

Knowledge will always come in handy in the real world; no job or life situation asks for the same thing over and over again. In a professional setting, you will find that the more you know about other fields, the better you may be at your job. If you want to study marketing, consider joining activities and clubs related to other areas of business, or media and communications.

Break the stereotypes of formal education and aim instead to seek knowledge about different industries and vocations. Your knowledge will prove to be priceless later on. Remember, the world is not a classroom. The world is a conglomeration of personalities, services and challenges. By spending time on meaningful activities outside the classroom, you will develop

your own special way of tackling these demands at your own pace on your own terms. It's an invaluable life skill to have.

It will also become an opportunity for you to try something new. Isn't that what this is all about?

Build Your Resume

Are you aiming to build a career? Or break into a popular industry? Start by [building your resume](#) before you graduate. The field you want to get into will not welcome anyone without some basic experience outside the classroom. The demands of a professional society today are greater than ever before. Graduates spend years working on their skills and trying to create a place for themselves even before they are awarded their degrees.

In order to keep up with the competition, gain relevant work experience so that you have something to show for yourself when you begin applying for jobs or internship positions. Work experience in university doesn't necessarily have to be paid; it may simply be volunteer work. The essential point is to learn about your field of study outside of a class curriculum.

How To Build Your Resume In University

- **Volunteer**

Volunteer at students clubs and organisations around your area to gain a deeper understanding of the way your field works. Apply for internships and volunteer positions at companies and organisations that you aim to be employed at some day. If you want to break into a multinational, contact them for a learning opportunity.

Your university may have several clubs and societies modeled after organisations, countries and companies worldwide. For example, if you wish to work at the U.N or a similar development organisation, get involved with the Model United Nations in your city/university. If you want to pursue law, look for a volunteer position at a local city council office or even at the student council in your college.

Volunteer opportunities will always present themselves if you look for them, and volunteer work on your resume will show that you are truly passionate about your work regardless of whether or not you get paid for it.

- **Acquire Important Skills**

What are the skills necessary for you to succeed in the life you want to live? If you want to eventually become an entrepreneur, take a leadership class or attend a seminar about small business ownership. If you want to assume an administrative position someday, focus on improving your skills with computer programs. If you intend to become a freelance writer, then find outlets to help you learn about home-based employment. Every vocation and field of life requires a certain skill set, figure out what you want to do and acquire the skills necessary to do it.

- **Connect With Future Contacts**

As we discussed earlier, it's not what you know but who you know. Contacts are important no matter what your job is. So, outside of the friendships you may already have, go out of your way to make connections with people who may benefit your career in the long run. If you are a student of business, then make friends in your discipline and find out what they do to eventually find their way into an industry.

This is the perfect way to build references for your resume. Without professional work experience, all your references may be peers and fellow students. So, make sure that you know people in the field who can vouch for your skills and convince a potential employer that you are worth the effort.

- **Get To Know Your Professors**

Look for student positions as a research associate on a course with a professor. Build relationships with your professors so that they may help you find work and learning opportunities while at university.

Your professors will have a wealth of experience in your chosen field, they will have contacts and they will have dispensable knowledge. No matter how intimidating they may seem, go to your professors' offices and build relationships with them. They may introduce you to the right job or the right people. If nothing else, they can also become highly respected references on your resume and may even provide referrals for you when applying for positions.

- **Try To Publish Work**

Your knowledge will be represented by your grades and your basic degree, but a better way to prove to the world that you have a deep understanding of something is by writing about it. Universities today require their students to write a thesis upon graduating, but even the degrees that don't require a final thesis will ask their students to write material on their discipline.

Spend some time at college writing papers and articles about your opinions and ideas about your field. Use your relationships with professors and contacts to try and publish your work in university journals or newspapers. These may be cited on your resume and will prove to employers or graduate schools that you are serious and dedicated to your field and that you have enough expertise to write about it.

- **Develop Your Leadership Skills**

Not everyone is capable of being a leader, not everyone even wants to be a leader. But everyone is able to adopt certain leadership abilities that add to their credibility. Leadership is

not always about assertiveness and power; it is about setting an example and being credited for it.

Employers, universities and even the society at large want to see that you have something unique to offer that people may learn from. Spend your time with people and student organisations that cater to your skills and appreciate them. Write about them in your cover letters and your resume.

Learn How To Give An Interview



No matter how brilliant or skilled you are, no matter how much you know about your respective field, if you cannot present yourself well, your qualities cannot reach their full potential. When at university, you may decide that you don't want to work at all. You may want to become a philanthropist or a volunteer worker or a house wife, or you may covet a high powered career. Either way, at some point in your life, you will need to be able to sell yourself to other people.

Presenting yourself may not always take place in an interview setting, but knowing how to [impress at an interview](#) is an essential life skill and one best perfected during university. You will sit interviews for student clubs and jobs even when in university. Most colleges offer interview workshops and seminars to better prepare graduating students for the professional world.

Take this opportunity, and keep in mind the 5 most important aspects of giving a great interview:

1) Be Honest

The person interviewing or questioning you will likely have interviewed several other candidates. Interviewers always know when you are putting up a facade and feigning knowledge you don't have. Tread lightly around tricky questions and don't be afraid to present your true self.

Display your confidence by speaking honestly and openly, thinking about your answers and responding with as much truth as you can. If you don't understand a question or do not know the answer, let them know. If you want to speak a little more about a subject, do so. Be forthcoming about your flaws and vocal about your strengths. Make sure they know that they are interacting with a real, passionate person rather than a pretentious checklist.

2) Do Your Homework

Thoroughly research the position you are applying for and the institution you are applying to. It is a direct reflection of how interested you are in the position. If you are knowledgeable about what the position requires, you will be better prepared to answer questions about it. If you

show that you have research about the company/organisation you are applying to, your interviewers will be convinced that you take the work seriously. And anyway, if you don't bother to research the position you're applying for, you may not want the work much anyway.

3) Dress To Impress

Dress appropriately and well. Your attire speaks as much about you as your words do. Don't go into an interview with a coffee stain on your shirt, and be true to the culture of the organisation and country it operates in.

4) Show Your Enthusiasm

Employers appreciate dedicated, passionate individuals. Don't be afraid to get animated about your discussion; show them that you want the job as much as you do.

5) Ask Questions

At the end of your interview, or maybe even in the middle, your interviewer will ask you if you have questions of your own. It's important to come prepared with some queries of your own. It ensures the interviewer that you have done your research and that you have been paying attention to what they have to say.

In addition, the questions you ask reflect your keenness; they will remember you based on the things you showed most interest in. So make sure to ask some questions in the moment but also have some prepared beforehand.

6) Timing Is Critical

Be punctual. Be punctual. Be punctual.

Learn About Your Industry



When thinking about pursuing a career in a particular field, it is necessary to go beyond the confines of a degree. You need to know what your field is like, how it operates and what you need to know to gain an entry level or freshman position in a field you are interested in.

Given the dwindling global economy and the augmented unemployment rates in the last decade, it has become increasingly difficult for even university graduates to have a breakthrough in their industry of choice. You may find that getting a job is not as easy as getting good grades and building a respectable resume. More and more university degree holders find jobs difficult to find despite having relevant degrees.

Some fields are too advanced to hire professionals without higher education; more than 30% of psychology students today have difficulty finding employment without graduate degrees and extensive published work. Environmental science majors in North America report that job opportunities are increasingly being located in remote locations. As some nations' economies develop faster than others, and labour forces become outsourced, jobs are being relocated around the world and graduates have trouble finding employment in their city of choice.

In order to avoid disappointment beyond the university, focus on the following things while you are still a student.

- Speak to professors and professionals about jobs in your field
- Do research on employment statistics in your field in your country
- Find out how much outsourcing and offshore work your industry of choice employs
- Research the higher education requirements of your field
- Focus on gaining the appropriate amount of pre-graduate work experience
- Broaden your job parameters outside of your city or country
- Do your research on the benefits provided by jobs in your industry
- Consider alternate positions in similar fields
- Learn the pay grade ratios within your field
- Find a career advisor in or outside your university and discuss options with them
- Apply for jobs before you graduate to assess the market better
- Speak to HR professionals in your industry of choice
- Get in touch with potential head hunters

The 'real world' will never be exactly as you imagined, and your chosen vocation will always be slightly – or maybe drastically- different than you imagine. The only way to be as well prepared for it is to do as much research as you can about the world you are deciding to step in to. Maximise your research and reduce the unpleasant surprise factor of moving in to the real world by being knowledgeable about your discipline.

Speak to your contacts, teachers and career advisors. Be realistic about the goals you set and if you begin to worry that there may not be jobs in your field, develop a contingency plan that doesn't require you to stray too far off your path. Remember that circumstances change and that what may not be plausible today may be achievable tomorrow. The key to success is always having a plan B while doing everything you can to make plan A work out well.

Get Your Finances In Order

Managing money is a crucial part of life, regardless of whether you earn it or not. From high profile investment bankers to stay at home parents, everyone deals with monetary limitations at some point. Once you are outside a university environment, you may have a source of income to manage. With those come bills, responsibilities, taxes and so much more.

During your time in university, you will have some source of income be it government welfare, minimum wage or pocket money from parents. It is therefore best that you learn how to organise your finances in college.

Here are some money management tips you can establish in college and take forth into your professional life. These are not generic tips; everyone knows it is important to live on a budget. These tips are not about saving money; they are about helping you spend your money more efficiently.

1) Prioritise Your Costs

Make a monthly list of your expected expenditures. Then list them all according to importance. Things like rent, phone bills and food are most important. Then come luxuries and other life requirements. This will help you be decisive in the long run; instead of debating what to do with your extra money, you can refer to a list and spend money according to what is most important.

2) Know Your Balance

The most detrimental habit university students have is they throw away their ATM receipts and don't focus on their final balance after transactions. Change this. Every time you use an ATM or bank, look at the final balance. Does it meet expectations? Do you think you're spending too much money? Those numbers are real and they represent your expenditure accurately. Keeping track of your balance can often be a reality check and can encourage you to become more careful about your money.

3) Resist Peer Pressure

In university and outside, you will find yourself in situations where you have to spend money without wanting to. Do you have friends that like going out to expensive restaurants all the time? Do you constantly find yourself chipping in for expensive presents? It's time to say no. There will be people who have more money than you and those with less. In the real world and in college, you will have to take a stand at times and decide that certain expenditure is not in your best interest. Like other situations in life, learn to say "no" where money is concerned. Spend it according to your priorities; if you take care of your basics, you have the right to spend money where you want only.

4) Learn About Future Options

Bank according to your current situation; if you are a student then focus on getting a student account that helps you save the optimum amount and provides benefits as well. Once you graduate and look for a fixed income, consider your options in saving accounts. You may even want to relocate to a different bank. Think about what you want to do with your money and do your research on the different banks, savings and investment options available to someone of your income profile.

5) Always Be On Time With Payments

In most countries, your credit score is the most accurate representation of your lifestyle. Much like making a priority list of your costs, make sure that the highest priority is given to payments that affect your credit rating. Strive to be on time with credit card payments, bank loans and anything that collects interest. Paying the bank back is always more important than paying back a friend.

6) Know Yourself

Are you slightly shopaholic? Is there one particular item you spend too much money on? No budget in the world will be perfect for you until you understand your own spending habits. If you are frugal by nature, you can afford a higher credit limit. Ask yourself what your needs are. If you know you don't need a high overdraft on your account, don't be tricked into it. Money is always a temptation, but try to stay away from being tempted by money that you don't have.

7) Use Cash Where You Can

Money is psychological. When we see a number on a bank statement, we have trouble relating to that. But when we see a wad of cash in our hands, it holds more significance to us. Use cash where you can and avoid credit or debit cards. When you watch your wallet become empty of money, it will mean more to you than watching a number go down on your bank E-statement.

Live It Up All The Time

There is one thing you need to keep in mind about university. It never comes back. It is a unique, enjoyable experience that passes by before you know it and leaves you with a life's worth of memories and mementos. So while it is definitely crucial to focus on your future, you need to enjoy your time there to your complete ability.

Your career and your life are waiting for you beyond that graduation day, but these 3/4/5 years of your life will never be replicated, never again will you have the freedom to make all your decisions and fulfill your intellectual and social thirst to your heart's content.

Work hard, drive yourself to succeed and do everything in your power to watch your dreams become a reality. But don't let your ambitions overwhelm you, the 'real world' can be an overwhelming and demanding place and there will be challenges at every turn. University is fun and predictable in its own way, you may have tough times but you know what you are dealing with after a while.

Today, writing exams may seem like the toughest thing you have ever had to do, but tomorrow these exams and these courses will be looked upon with the fondest memories by you. The connections you make and the relationships you build in this phase of your life will carry you into the next chapter and they will be worth your while if you let them.

So before we go on to the 'After College' part of this report, let's remind ourselves that we are preparing for the 'real world'. In order to be able to appreciate the real world in its entirety, we should be able to do the same for what comes before.

Take your university experience at face value, allow it to be the greatest learning experience you have ever had and discover who you are away from the pressures of society and other people. Interact with who you like and do what you like. Nothing will prepare you better for the next phase.

Part 2 – AFTER COLLEGE

Control Your Expectations

Now that you have spent your years in university introspecting and learning who you are; don't expect the same courtesy from others. It is important to remember that regardless of how much help you may have or how much support you may need, your climb towards success and contentment is yours alone. Learn to be realistic with your expectations and do not wait for anybody to give you anything.

Accept Failure

You may be disappointed by the time immediately after graduation. You may be unemployed or mal-employed for months upon graduation. Keep in mind that short term failure, or rather a lack of immediate success, does not take away from your qualities and that your potential will eventually be realised if you continue to work at it.

Keep Up The Hard Work

Very few things in life come easy, and if you have been a hard worker during your time in university, multiply your efforts tenfold once you leave college. The real world will expect a great deal more of you than university ever did. There will always be someone more qualified, more impressive, more confident. Play up your strengths and learn to work hard to compensate for your limitations. Hard work always pays off.

Be Open To Change

If you did your research in college, if you kept your mind open and took the time out to learn about different disciplines, then you will be open to change. Always consider the opportunity cost of your decisions and stay adaptable to future opportunities. If you find a decent job in an industry you like, enjoy yourself but stay on the lookout for something better. Make the most of what you have but strive to do better where you can.

Be Realistic, But Don't Settle



Were you a student leader during your time in university? Were you the head of a club? After graduation, you may feel like a very small fish in a very big pond. Do not let anonymity force you to settle for less than what you think you deserve.

Analyse your performance as a student and think about how that reflects your achievements outside the classroom. If you were a dynamic and popular student in university, don't let yourself adapt to a menial position. Similarly, don't expect senior level positions to fall into your lap

upon graduation. You have spent some years learning more about your own abilities, now is the time to see them through.

Stay In Touch

Remember, contacts are for life. The friends and acquaintances you made during your time in university may not become regular fixtures at your Christmas party, but they can be useful sources of information when you need them. Keep a frequent presence on social media sites and have an online profile. Gone is the day when privacy was always an asset, today, it can be very helpful to be a member of popular media websites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Stay in touch with old classmates and professors. If you ever need somebody to do you a favour or give you some information, it will be embarrassing for you to message a friend you haven't spoken to in over 10 years. It can be very beneficial in the long run if you maintain some form of communication with likeminded people through the years. That link may come in handy later on.

Outside of professional contacts, give importance to your friends. Your job and your bank balance cannot provide the emotional support that you require to grow as a person. The friends that got you through university may be more than capable of standing by you through the rest of your life.

In fact, the biggest asset you have out in the real world is the support and assurance of trustworthy people. And university is the place where you will have the greatest variety of friends to choose from; don't let the opportunity pass you by.

Present Yourself Further

You learned how to [present yourself](#) well in university; you learned how to give interviews and how to talk to professors and peers. Those skills are transferable and should not be forgotten. Do not let yourself forget the importance of self-confidence and high self esteem. Your natural potential and the skills you picked up along the way were all meant to help you in this phase of your life.

Focus on the future

- It can be easy to fall into self destructive patterns of regret. The mistakes you may have made during university should not have the power to rule the rest of your life.
- Did you graduate with low grades?
- Did you not get enough work experience?
- Did you study too much and miss out on other experiences?
- Did you pick the wrong minor?
- Did you miss your chance to travel around the world?
- Did you accumulate higher loans than you anticipated?

These may be lamentations that you can relate to. In fact, every university graduate leaves with some regrets. However, the fact for you to remember is that such issues can all be compensated for.

The real world is not exactly a clean slate, but it is an opportunity to bring your successes with you and leave your failures behind. If you believe you have not achieved the best grades you could, be honest about it with potential employers and make up for it by focusing on building an impressive resume.

You may have missed out on a chance to go to graduate school because of a low GPA; use this weakness to your advantage and aim at getting higher graduate test scores. If your student loans are too high, be proactive about designing a payment plan that you can keep up with.

A problem may always be solved as long as a realistic and prudent approach is taken towards rectifying the situation. Allow your past to positively inspire you in the future, but don't let it control the days to come.

Know What Matters

If you are no longer a student, it's time you were able to differentiate between the important and the trivial. When you were in university, it was clear that academics were of the highest importance. Out in the real world, it is up to you to decide what you want to place value in and what you consider less significant.

Prioritise your life according to your ambitions.

Do you want to spend your energy pursuing the career you always wanted? Focus on that. Start small, assess the market and find the best option for you to break into the industry. Work as hard as you see fit to [achieve your goals](#) and prioritise success in your career over other goals.

Do you care less about money and more about experiences? Don't trap yourself in anything too demanding. Be spontaneous where you have to. College required hard work and concentration. So if you want to continue concentrating on something and channeling your focus into a particular ambition, pursue it full throttle. If you need a break from a busy life and want to relax, then disengage yourself from other demands and temptations.

Don't let yourself fall into anything you are not prepared to work for. An income is a necessity, but more important is personal satisfaction and self esteem. You know yourself best; if you believe you value money over freedom then you will be happy in a time consuming career. But if you enjoy your luxury, then don't let the possibility of more money trap you into a lifestyle you cannot maintain.

Reduce Your Sensitivity

Employers and society in the real world are tactless and thick skinned. You will be provided with some of the bluntest feedback of your life. As a woman, you may face discrimination and prejudice from other members of society. As a man, you may have to face the constant stereotypes built up about you.

Whoever you are, there will be no counsellors and professors out in the real world. There will be no support group or center you can visit to discuss your options. You are on your own for the most part – at least in a professional capacity. So learn to reciprocate opinions and reduce your sensitivity and defensiveness about yourself. Where in a university environment, you may have been lauded for a particular skill; here you may find several other people with similar qualities.

Do not fixate on [criticism](#) and do not become arrogant about praise, the social ladder is a high one and it takes time, effort and sacrifice to continue climbing up. Remember that what you display to the world is of incredible consequence, do not let the opinions of others deter you, take criticism well and incorporate it into your growth as an individual.

Don't Take Life Too Seriously

As gratifying an experience as university may be, it can also be a misleading one. Your time as a student may convince you that the 'real world' is a huge challenge to take on and that it will require you to achieve beyond all expectation. This is not the case. The 'real world' is your own creation. What you want out of life is what you will get as long as you take the necessary steps to achieve it.

Much like in college, where the perfect grades do not necessarily mean the perfect life, the real world is a similar conundrum. You may find the perfect job in the perfect field and make more money than you can ever spend, but it may not fulfill you. So think about the things you learned in college.

- What kind of people did you most admire?
- Who did you want to be when you were a student?
- Do you value the same things today as you did 4 years ago?

These questions are vital to ask yourself, and they hold the key to your success in the real world. Don't let any arbitrary experience in university dictate the trajectory of your life. Your time beyond university is meant to be enjoyed too. Graduating from university and becoming an adult does not necessarily mean that you stop having fun and become obsessively serious about every minute thing. On the contrary, you are now officially an adult and the responsibilities you have should motivate you to make the most of your life beyond college as well.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to provide you with some useful tips on preparing yourself for life after university. University was an uncomplicated experience because you knew what you were moving towards. There was one main goal: to graduate and gain a degree. Everything else, work, grades, friends and other experiences were the sidelines along which you spent your time. But life has no particular goal; there is no fixed trajectory and you cannot set your goals according to course outlines and meetings.

Out in the real world, all the decisions you make will be your own. This is why the most important message in this report is that there is only so much preparation you can do for the real world.

- Set your finances in order.
- Develop effective communication skills.
- Learn to manage your time
- Build meaningful relationships.

These are just some of the life skills this report suggests you develop, but the other life skills you develop will be yours to formulate. Remember that no matter how good your credit score is, how good a listener you are or how impressive your resume is, ultimately the 'real world' is an experience as pleasurable as you allow it to be.

So use your time in university to set the stage for the years to come, spend your life getting to know yourself and analysing your habits. Use your knowledge about the world around you to set your goals and exhaust your energy and resources on endeavours meaningful to you. What's important to you is worth chasing. That is the greatest lesson you learn during your time in university, and the lesson that helps you most out in the 'real world'.