

# How to Help Your Child With the Job Search

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As a parent, it's natural to want to help your child succeed. However, when it comes to their career search, you need to strike a delicate balance between showing support and respecting their individual space and process. The key is to establish a productive dialogue and position yourself as a helpful resource without overstepping any boundaries.

Keep in mind that for many young adults and recent graduates, moving into the professional world can feel like a monumental transition and a critical step in establishing their independence. Therefore, it is important to empower your child and allow them the opportunity to take the lead.

Here are some best practices to help your child as they navigate the job search.



## PREPARATION IS HALF THE WORK

Without a plan of attack, your child may easily find him or herself spending hours scrolling through online job boards, applying to countless positions online, or sending carefully crafted emails to HR representatives only to get the silent treatment. A big part of the job search is timing. While this part may be hard to control, adequate preparation can help ensure that your child is ready whenever an amazing opportunity presents itself.

Here are several steps to help your child position themselves for success:

### STEP 1: Help them get basic career assets in order.

The purpose of a resume is to clearly communicate a candidate's talents and qualifications, rather than practice modesty, but it's not always easy to describe your own accolades on a piece of paper. As a parent, you may be able to provide a helpful perspective and insight into your child's strengths as well as point out examples where they've exhibited particular characteristics. Help them spruce up their resume by discussing some of the skills and experience they bring to the table and how those qualities demonstrate the value they could bring to a particular role.

### STEP 2: Remind them about the importance of online presence.

With 60% of employers using social media to research job candidates, it's crucial that your child avoid any unintended consequences resulting from their online activity when looking for employment.

Here are a few tips to help him or her portray the most employable version of themselves to the public:

1. Review all social media accounts and what public information can be viewed on each profile. Google yourself.
2. Check privacy settings to see what information is freely available online. This is particularly important for Facebook.
3. Clean up any public photos, posts, and comments that may be seen as inappropriate for the workplace or could be misconstrued out of context. Never share anything negative about previous employers online.
4. Establish a presence on professional sites such as LinkedIn. If your child does not have a job-appropriate profile picture available, offer to help them with headshots.

## STEP 3: Share your network

Between people your child already knows, family contacts, friends of friends, and alumni circles, he or she has an ever-growing list of contacts that may be appropriate to reach out to. Help your child determine who might be valuable to connect with and why. For young professionals, it is often difficult to access individuals in higher leadership roles; so consider sharing your own personal and professional rolodex to help connect your child with potential advocates. Depending on the situation, your child may be nervous reaching out to your closest friends so sometimes it may be easier to focus on further removed connections.

Remember, relationship-building is essential to career development at any level, so encourage them to keep growing and maintaining their networks. Some suggestions for staying in touch with people could include sharing interesting articles or sending a congratulatory note on a new job or milestone. Investing in professional relationships may help them land a job in the near term, but the process can also result in mentorship opportunities, potential partnerships, client work, or interesting career moves down the road.

## STEP 4: Help them get interview-ready

### RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT.

Before meeting with someone, remind your child to make sure they have an understanding of the person's career experience to avoid wasting his or her time discussing general information that is available online. If the individual works at a company that your child is interested in joining, it may be beneficial for them to review any job listings on the website beforehand to ask about specific opportunities if appropriate.

### PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.

Interviews can be intimidating, which is why it can be so valuable to practice beforehand to get comfortable with a professional conversation. Offering to role play with your child can help settle their nerves and refine some of the key points he or she hopes to make during the interview. Your child should feel comfortable answering common questions like giving a clear personal introduction that shares professional strengths and aspirations, or where he or she sees themselves in 5 or 10 years.

“‘Tell me about yourself’ is the first question you’re likely to get in an interview and it’s the one that people most often struggle with. This isn’t an invitation to recite your life story or go through your resume. The interviewer is trying to find out if you’re a good fit for the job, so talk about experience that’s relevant to it. It’s important to show you understand the key success factors for the job, so tell your story with those descriptors in mind.”

CARLA HARRIS,  
MORGAN STANLEY VICE CHAIRWOMAN

With informal networking meetings, it may be up to your child to guide the conversation. To ensure the conversation is a productive use of everyone's time, your child can help the person he or she is meeting with by being as detailed as possible about how they may be able to help, whether it is connecting him or her to someone at a certain company/team, or sharing advice about entering a particular industry. If the purpose of the meeting is to learn more about a company, understand a particular industry, or navigate a specific challenge, it's important for your child to prepare questions in advance to make sure they get the most out of the opportunity.

### **DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW UP**

Your child met with someone about the job search. Now what? Whether it was an official interview or an informal conversation, following up is critical—and not just because it's polite. A well-crafted note can help to ensure that a candidate remains at the top of their lists, while also providing another opportunity for your child to demonstrate professionalism, values, and skills. A handwritten thank-you note can be a thoughtful gesture, but nowadays a sincere thank you email can work just as well—especially given the fast pace at which businesses and people move.

Beyond showing appreciation for someone's time and advice, here are three additional tips for any candidate to make the most of their follow up:

- Mention an actionable takeaway to show they are taking proactive steps: "After our conversation, ... (e.g., looked up the company you had mentioned, reached out to a particular person, reviewed available positions on the team, etc.)."
- If your child was able to talk about a relevant project, article, or program he or she worked on, provide some additional detail and reiterate how the situation showcases relevant skills and experience: "I have attached [insert example] that I mentioned during our conversation..."
- Make an ask. If looking for an introduction or a follow-up meeting, now is the time to muster up the courage and make the request. The worst someone can say is no.

### **HELPING FROM THE SIDELINES**

The job search can be stressful for anyone, particularly when you are first starting out your career. To help avoid any unnecessary strain on your relationship, set expectations from the get-go. Talk to your child about your willingness and desire to support them throughout the process, while allowing them to communicate how and when they'd like you to be involved. Position yourself as a loyal cheerleader, source of guidance, and sounding board, but also allow them the space to only ask for your participation when (and if) they want it. Remember that many elements of the career search and job marketplace today may be different from your own experience, so try not to let any preconceived notions cloud your ability to support your child's individual process. Self-confidence can be one of the greatest tools at your child's disposal, and as a parent, you can help them thrive by giving them the reassurance to recognize how capable they are in their own right.

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