There is no one way to find a job. Planning your job search and using a variety of different methods is likely to increase your chances of success and will help you make efficient use of your time.

However you start your job hunt, planning is important so, before you begin your research, know what you are looking for in a job and a career. Be as specific as possible too. How do employers normally recruit in the sector you are looking to work in? Where do they advertise? These are excellent questions to ask recruiters or people who work in the industry at events or careers fairs. You can also find this information through networking online in industry forums or LinkedIn.

The following tips and advice should help you in your job search:

**Start early**
It’s all too easy to procrastinate and delay looking for a job. However, if you start early, you will get a sense of where to look, what skills employers are looking for and, most importantly, when the deadlines are.

Bookmark your favourite vacancy and employer websites and keep checking them regularly for updates.

Find out how and where to look for vacancies specific to the job role you are interested in at: www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm.

**Think laterally**
Sometimes similar jobs are described differently by companies. For example, entry-level or junior roles might be described in general terms (e.g., marketing assistant) by some companies, while others might give the same jobs very different titles such as communications officer, promotion administrator, account handler, etc.

Keep this in mind when you are searching online and think laterally about job titles when it comes to your search terms.

**Think outside the box**
Remember: accountants don’t just work for finance companies, but are employed in a vast range of organisations, from engineering firms to fashion houses, so when you start thinking about what jobs interest you, don’t limit your job hunt by only looking at certain sectors. There are likely to be a huge number of roles and companies that you have never heard of before, with exciting opportunities that you are missing by having too narrow a set of search criteria.

**Be flexible**
It is rare to start your career straight away in your ideal job. Be open to other roles that will allow you to build the skills and experience you need to successfully apply to the positions you want in the future. To gain a better idea about what skills, qualifications and experience you might need, look at job descriptions for more senior roles. Often people change their minds about their job aspirations once they are working, so be prepared to take a different direction if that feels like a better route for you.

**Be proactive**
Looking at websites can be a great source of vacancies too. But remember many opportunities are never advertised so you may have to take a proactive approach and try speculative applications and networking: see page 16 for more information on this.

Equally, if you have found a company that you like and want to find similar organisations to approach, use Google to run a search. Put ‘related:’ followed by the company’s
A SPECULATIVE APPROACH

I managed to get my PR work experience placement by sending a speculative CV and letter. After long hours of browsing the internet, I discovered www.prweekjobs.co.uk and saw an interesting profile for a PR agency, so I decided to apply. A little time later, I received a call from a member of the staff asking me when I was available for an informal interview and they offered me the placement.

Irini Gora, MA English literature, Queen Mary

Finally...

Looking for work is time-consuming and you may find that you start forgetting who you’ve applied to and when. Therefore, it is sensible to make a note of everything and everyone you apply for and keep copies of all the applications you send.

Don’t give up. Be persistent. It is a competitive job market, so you are likely to face rejection. The important thing is to learn from it and use your experiences to move forward.
PROACTIVE JOB-HUNTING

How to stand out from the crowd and make your presence known.

Some of the most valuable resources for your job hunt are the people around you. Believe it or not, 25 per cent of University of London graduates got their jobs through their network of contacts in 2007, and up to 60 per cent of jobs never make it into print. However, unadvertised positions could make it onto your radar through people around you ‘in the know’. With the growth of the internet and social media, networking becomes both an online and offline experience. See page 22 – Your profile online – for more.

Here’s how you can establish your contact network and make it work for you.

Stage 1: Generating contacts

- Make a list of everyone you know: friends, family, fellow students, tutors, teachers, colleagues from societies, part-time work etc. Let them know the type of work you’re interested in; you’ll be surprised at how many useful contacts can be generated through who they know.
- College alumni may be able to help with advice and information. Your Careers Service may have contact details or you can meet old students directly at college alumni careers events.
- Stay in touch with alumni working in your area of interest.
- Professional bodies can sometimes suggest people to contact.
- Attend events such as recruitment fairs, Careers Group courses and college employer events. Some recruiters also run special events where current employees are happy to help you and answer questions.
- Use online networks such as LinkedIn to build and nurture relationships in the virtual environment. See page 22 for more information.

Stage 2: What do you want?

The next step is to work out how your contacts can help you. They will be able to assist to varying degrees, depending on your depth of relationship.

People you have met once or twice or been put in touch with
You can ask for information to help you find out more about what a job entails and for help with your applications via questions over the phone, by email or by meeting them for a brief chat. This involves minimal effort on their part, so they are usually happy to oblige.

People you have developed a relationship with
You can ask for advice, such as their opinion on your CV or application form, or whether they can put you in touch with others in the business who may have further insights.

People you have a strong relationship with
You can ask for favours, such as doing some work shadowing or work experience with them, or help out on a project they are involved in.

Stage 3: Making the most of the opportunity

Create a strong impression by asking thoughtful questions and being deliberate about weaving your strengths and relevant experience into the conversation.

Stage 4: Making a good final impression

Always send a follow-up email or letter to your contact thanking them for their assistance. Keep in touch via a Christmas card or by adding them to your contacts on a professional networking site such as LinkedIn; you never know when they may be able to assist in the future.
Job-hunting

Speculative applications
Create opportunities for yourself and take more control of your job search through speculative applications. This can be a fruitful form of creative job-hunting, especially in tougher economic climates.

Making a speculative application involves sending your CV and a covering letter to a company, even though a vacancy hasn’t been advertised, to see if they would be happy to take you on in some capacity should a need arise. To reap the rewards of this approach, research the company thoroughly and make it very clear on your covering letter what you know about them and why you are particularly interested in working for them. Where possible, send your CV to a named person in the relevant department – try ringing the organisation’s switchboard to ask for the appropriate name and job title, together with the correct spelling. This approach works best for small to medium-sized firms.

Applying to SMEs
Graduate schemes are well publicised but less than 15 per cent of students gain their first job on one of these, so what happens to everyone else? The graduate scheme can often be the holy grail of the job-hunting student but the fact that so few students start off in one suggests that it is well worth your while looking for opportunities in other places. This is where the SMEs – small to medium-sized enterprises of 250 employees or fewer – come in.

A recent report by the research and consultancy organisation CFE estimated that there are 4.8 million of these organisations in the UK, employing approximately one third of the population, and accounting for 99.9 per cent of all enterprises! They often have junior positions that a graduate could fill, and sometimes have internships and graduate schemes that include sponsorship for a professional qualification. Alternatively, they may be willing to offer work experience or an entry-level role in response to a speculative application.

With SMEs constituting such a large proportion of potential employers, they could be the answer to your job hunt.

Finding SME vacancies
As SMEs don’t have large recruitment budgets, you won’t find these listed in the vacancy publications in your Careers Service. Vacancies may be found on industry-specific websites or e-bulletins, but often the best way is to look directly on each SME’s website. Positions are advertised in the second half of the academic year and many junior or entry-level roles will be advertised throughout the year as they become available. Typically, SMEs are more interested in your technical and soft skills and your experience, rather than your degree class and subject.

Here are some places to look:
• industry professional bodies usually list member organisations on their website and a number of these will be SMEs.
• sector skills councils’ websites: www.sccalliance.org - click on ‘sector skills councils’ and search the directory.
• vacancy listings and e-bulletins, such as jobonline.thecareersgroup.co.uk and www.artsjobs.org.uk.
• The Times Top 100 SMEs: www.bestcompanies.co.uk//list_intro.aspx.
• local newspapers and industry-specific magazines and journals.
• professional groups on LinkedIn.

IT PAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH

…”I remember when I went to these events I would get contact details and email the people the next day. It paid off big time as someone I met helped me out for my PwC interview, which helped secure that graduate job offer!”

Kasim Tariq, Trainee Accountant, PwC