

GRADUATE COACH GUIDE : HOW  
TO ENSURE YOUR SON OR  
DAUGHTER LANDS A GRADUATE  
LEVEL JOB



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*"I should have read this 5 years ago.  
Thankfully with your input Harry did not miss the boat!"*  
**Laura, parent**

How hard can it be for a graduate with a good degree to land a good job? Not hard at all, is the assumption most parents and graduates blithely make. However, that assumption soon proves false, when graduates find themselves amongst the 48 per cent of those who never land a graduate level job. Instead of enjoying good pay and prospects they are languishing in a career cul-de-sac, working in a job that makes no use of their degree, that pays a paltry salary and offers no hope of repaying their student debt.

The problem is, unlike when their parents were at university, a first or 2:1 degree no longer guarantees today's graduates a graduate level job. On top of that, recruiters expect new graduates to have had work experience, even though they've only just left university. Otherwise, recruiters aren't interested.

## **A Guiding Hand**

Not exactly ideal, is it? All those years spent toiling away at university to end up doing a job that calls for little in the way of qualifications. If you're a parent of such a graduate, you will no doubt be worried, and most probably wondering if there's anything you can do to help. Well, the good news is, there is. Which is why we've written this guide: to give parents and graduates what we believe to be the most crucial information of a graduate's career. The knowledge that it would have been useful to know. Information that will make the difference between a job that offers your offspring good prospects, a better salary and a brighter future, and one that does not.

So, the question is: how can you help your son or daughter get a good job after university? How can you make sure your son or daughter gets ahead of the competition? In the following ways.

## **Part One: Work Experience**

Whether you are a parent with a child at university, about to go to university or who has recently left, take heart. There is much you can do to help your son or daughter to increase their chances of finding a graduate level job.

The first step is to encourage your child to get relevant work experience while they are still at university, or within six months after leaving.

### **Work Experience is Vital for Two Reasons**

1. It teaches graduates Hard and Soft skills (employability skills).
2. It helps graduates understand what they WANT to do as a career.

*Around 85 per cent of all graduate employers will reject candidates without this.*

#### **1. The Skills your child acquires from work experience are divided into Hard and Soft.**

Hard skills you acquire by working in a position similar to the one you are applying for, such as design, accountancy or marketing skills. This type of skill is harder to come by for a young person just starting out, as they must learn them on the job.

Soft skills, or employability skills, can be acquired in any job or industry, but the more relevant they are to the job and industry you are applying to, the better off you are.

Around 90 per cent of employers believe that employees with soft skills make better commercial investment than those without. Possession of these skills will therefore equip you to settle into a role and advance in it more quickly. When two candidates have the same hard skills, say marketing or design, then soft skills become the deciding factor, so soft skills will also help you to land the role in the first place. They mark the difference between the good designer with good people skills versus the good designer without.

### **Types Of Soft Skills**

There are many different types of soft skills, but the Confederation of British Industry has summarised them into nine key ones. These are:

1. Business awareness - you have strong awareness of how the company makes money, how they compete with other brands and the key challenges they face in the industry.
2. Communication - you listen well, and can get your point across clearly, verbally and in writing.
3. Analytical - you can interpret data into practical, easy-to-use information.
4. Resilience - you keep going in the face of what may seem like failure or lack of result.
5. Problem-solving - you automatically look for the best solution to overcome an obstacle.
6. Self-management - you know how to use your own initiative and manage your own behaviour and well-being.
7. Organisation - you can organise your own workload, time and priorities.

8. Teamwork - you can work well with others to achieve a shared objective.

9. Entrepreneurial - you have good innovative ideas and leadership skills, and a sense of practical judgement.

Your child must develop most, if not all, of these nine employability skills if they hope to land a graduate level



job.

### **Sources Of Work Experience**

Okay, so how can your child develop these skills without first getting a job?

As said earlier, the closer the work experience is to the environment and job type your son or daughter is applying for the better off they are, but, crucially, work experience also can be gained from a number of other sources too. Although your son or daughter should seek work experience in their area of career interest, they should not rule out any opportunity that will give them at least some experience, even if it's not quite the type of work they want to do. What's most important at this stage is to know which skills and attributes you need to work on developing, and which will help you to work towards the career you eventually want. Here's an example, Alice, whose mother came to see us recently.

Alice's ambition was to work in publishing. She tried to get an internship while still at university but without success. Large numbers of Oxbridge graduates appeared willing to work in publishing without pay, seemingly for years on end. Poor Alice didn't stand a chance. Undeterred, she sought advice from her university. They suggested that a masters in English would make all the difference. She took their advice but still couldn't land the job she wanted.

Had she focused on developing her soft skills first, she would have been a stronger competitor for that prized internship in publishing. What we are saying here is that most employers want to see the experience of soft skills acquired in a work-related environment – but will give you the opportunity to develop the actual technical skills later. So, your son or daughter must find opportunities where they can develop these first. To land a graduate level job, they must begin doing

this while still at university or as soon as possible afterwards.

## Employability Skills Can Be Developed

You develop them through the activities you choose to get involved with :



### Where To Find Work Experience

We have identified six sources of work experience, which are as follows:

1. Internships - especially if in a job or industry related to the one you want. Be observant so that you can pick up what you need to learn.



2. Voluntary work - develop leadership, communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills by volunteering for a local or international charity.
3. Paid work - even if it's not the job you want, you can still develop vital skills in customer service, commercial or industry awareness, professionalism, resilience, job-related numeracy and many others.
4. University - via clubs, societies, the student union, group projects, and other extra-curricular activities.
5. Hobbies and interests - frequently overlooked but can offer the chance to grow skills in teamwork, leadership, resilience and strategic thinking.
6. Travel - understand diversity, expose yourself to different cultures, their viewpoints and etiquettes.

If your son or daughter is intentional, focused and prepared, they will pick up the vital work experience skills they need to make themselves more attractive to prospective graduate employers. Now let's look at the second reason why work experience is so important.

## **2. Work Experience Helps Graduates Understand What They WANT To Do As A Career**

The second reason why work experience is important is because it helps your son or daughter know what they want to do and what type of job suits them. Graduate employers' biggest frustration is that most graduates do not know what they want. The more work experience a student or graduate has, the better they understand themselves, their preferences, values and ideal career.

A graduate with a lot of work experience can convey clarity with employers about their wants and desires for their career. Think how much more relevant they will come across on their

CV. And imagine how much stronger and more convincing they will come across in an interview. The employer can have every confidence that the graduate will put 100% into the role, the match is good and they are likely to commit to the job and stay for a number of years.

The bottom-line is that your child needs to have work experience upon leaving university or to acquire it as soon as possible after. That way they will be in a stronger position to land a good job after they graduate.

## **Part Two: How Else Can You Help**

Other than to encourage your son or daughter to find work experience that is related to their areas of interest and passions, what else can you do?

- Consider your network, who could help them in these areas?
- Encourage your son or daughter to activate and build their own network: speaking to former teachers and lecturers, and re-contacting old acquaintances could help.
- Encourage them to be proactive, for example, by contacting companies with a carefully prepared cover letter which highlights the skills they will bring to the company.
- Encourage them to start early. Government research shows that graduates who focus exclusively on graduate level jobs and make most applications while still studying stand a better chance of landing one.
- Encourage your child to be open-minded: they should not rule out any work experience that will help them build up to the job they eventually want to get.
- Know when to offer advice and when to back off. Young people grow quicker when they make and learn from their own mistakes.
- Two excellent books that can help are, [The Student Book](#), which shows students how to prepare to find a graduate level job after leaving university; and [The Graduate](#)

[Book](#), which shows them how to excel once they get there. Both books are written by [Chris Davies](#), founder of [Graduate Coach](#).

## Part Three: You Can Also Hire A Graduate Coach

*"Everyone needs a coach. It doesn't matter whether you're a singer, a tennis player, a dancer or a graduate."*

**Bill Gates**

Watch Parent Testimonials



More and more parents and graduates are turning to a career or graduate coach to help them find a job. It makes absolute sense but is a principle many overlook. Think about it. More than likely, as your son or daughter grew up, you will have invested in a tutor to help them learn to play a musical instrument or excel at a sport like swimming, tennis or football. You may have invested in a tutor to help your child get better grades. Graduate career coaching is no different.

In fact, and we think you will agree, graduate coaching offers a longer-term benefit by helping your child get ahead in a phase of life that will last them at least fifty years: their

career. It will benefit your son or daughter for their entire working life.

## How Can Graduate Coaching Help Your Child?

It works in much the same way that you would use a business or performance coach to get you from point A to B. Graduate career coaching takes into consideration where your son or daughter's strengths, weaknesses and interests lie, and then coaches them to know the exact steps to take to land their dream graduate job. This includes help to audit their skills, write excellent CVs, perform well in interviews, navigate their early career and much more. Because the graduate coach knows the graduate recruitment territory inside out they can offer wise insights to steer your child from the pitfalls that can derail a person's career.

At Graduate Coach, we offer [a six-stage 1-2-1 coaching programme](#) that can help. To find out more, call our Head Coach and founder, Chris Davies.

Watch Graduate Testimonials



## Part Four: What Other Ways Can You Help?

We also have many excellent resources that can help your son or daughter navigate their way through the graduate recruitment market.

- Check out and share [our blog](#) with your son or daughter. We share career advice specifically tailored to students and graduates.
- Encourage your son or daughter to subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) for more tips on interviews and other career advice.
- Check out Chris' two excellent books mentioned earlier. [The Student Book](#) is designed to tell your son or daughter everything they need to know to get a job. It provides a more in-depth understanding of the information contained in this guide. [The Graduate Book](#) helps graduates to thrive in their career, showing them the do's and don'ts to getting ahead.
- Finally, as part of our core services, we offer a range of [Online courses](#) aside from our [1-2-1 coaching](#).

[Contact us via email](#) or call [0207 014 9547](#) to find out more.

## Part Five: Success Stories – how we've helped other graduates just like your son or daughter to get jobs

Please take a look at the examples below to see how other graduates have used our graduate coaching services to get ahead in their careers.

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### Alex T

#### Situation

Alex did a degree in finance and accounting and then realised he didn't want a career as an accountant.

He'd done a summer internship in accounting and did not enjoy it, as it didn't appeal to his interests and values. After five months of applying to various different jobs and getting nowhere, he lost confidence and had no idea where to go next.

#### What Graduate Coach did:

We helped Alex to analyse his hard and soft skills, values and interests.

We helped Alex to get these clear in his head and on the page. This enabled him to understand himself better. He discovered that he

- Likes using numbers to solve problems
- Has an analytical mindset

Established suitable job types.

Based on our knowledge of the industry, we proposed several job types to Alex. Of those that he liked the sound of, digital marketing at the more analytical end was the most appealing. As a growing industry, it offered the best career prospects.

Coached Alex through his CV writing, job search and interview techniques.

This helped him regain his confidence. By employing our knowledge and services in these areas, Alex landed a job at a small marketing agency.

Career Guidance.

After 6 months working in a small agency, Alex was ready to find a better company to work for.

We coached him through the job search and interview process again, which helped him to land a job with a market leading company in the industry.

Career Development Support.

Six months down the line, we then helped Alex to negotiate a pay rise in his current role.

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## Alexandra A

### Situation

Alexandra graduated with a BSc and Masters in Biological Sciences and landed a job working for a scientific, academic publication. However, the role was quiet and slow, and she couldn't see any long-term progression. She came to us because she was looking for new jobs but getting nowhere. Alexandra was frustrated and felt stuck where she was.

### What Graduate Coach did:

We helped Alexandra to analyse her hard and soft skills, values and interests.

We helped Alexandra to unearth skills she'd forgotten about or didn't know she had. She realised



- She had unused skills gained while working for a magazine at university, for which she'd reviewed live music.
- She wasn't only academic but also had terrific people, rapport building, and emotional intelligence skills.

Established suitable job types.

Based on our knowledge of the industry, we proposed several job types to Alexandra where she could make use of her full set of skills, and a career in advertising appealed to her the most.

Coached Alexandra through her CV writing, job search and interview techniques.

Now feeling brighter about her future, Alexandra took two internships to build her experience. This gave her the experience, skills and advantage she needed to apply for the job she actually wanted. She then landed a job at a top London agency as an account manager.

Career Development Support.

Alexandra used tips and advice such as that contained in the Graduate Book to learn how to develop herself in her role. Now, years later, she is an Account Director.

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## Jennifer B

### Situation

Jennifer had come to London to study criminal law but did not realise that there are limited opportunities in this field. She completed her undergraduate studies to find no jobs available.

She was frustrated and disappointed with her situation and came to us for help.

## What Graduate Coach did:

We helped Jennifer to analyse her hard and soft skills, values and interests.

Jennifer grew in the self-awareness she needed to begin working out what she might do. She discovered that she had

- The determined to succeed.
- Good interpersonal skills so worked well with others.
- Very high standards and attention to detail
- Great presentation skills
- Interest in luxury products

Established suitable job types.

We considered many job types for Jennifer, including marketing. We helped her to see which industries offered the best career prospects for making use of her skills. She expressed a large interest in working in high-end property.

Coached Jennifer through her CV writing, job search and interview techniques.

We then helped Jennifer to develop her interview confidence by going on interviews. Sometimes graduates overlook that the best way to get good at interviewing is to be interviewed. Through this Jennifer also found the significant work experience she needed to develop the key skills that would help her land the career she wanted.

Jennifer eventually landed a position with Savills and today is thriving in a job she loves.

## About Graduate Coach

We are the UK's leading Graduate Coaching company working with graduates who struggle to secure a graduate-level job.

Over the past 9 years, the team here at Graduate Coach have helped students and graduates to transform their degrees into careers. We've helped 400+ people to land opportunities at great companies such as JP Morgan, Goldman Sachs, Google, Facebook, Walt Disney, Amazon The NHS, and many more.



Our mission is to help graduates find jobs that offer them good prospects, the opportunity for development and brighter futures.

We help graduates to understand their unique strengths, skills and values and to select graduate job types that suit them best.

We also help guide students who are currently at university to build a career plan to increase their chances of securing a graduate level job after graduation.

We offer a wide range of services to suit every budget, from ebooks to 1-2-1 career coaching sessions. We invite you to check out our website for [more information](#).

## Sources:

- *The Graduate Recruitment Market 2018*, Highfliers report
- "Too many graduates are mismatched to their jobs. What's going wrong?", Guardian article, January 2018
- *Planning for Success: Graduates' career planning and its effect on graduate outcomes*, Government research report, March 2017
- *Worth their Weight in Gold*, Haymarket 2014