

Getting experience

To start gaining experience, you need to identify the skills necessary to reach your career goals. To build a successful plan, you have to be conscious of the skills you already have, and aware of the additional experience required. This tipsheet is designed to help you build experience in an organized and effective way.

How skills are built

The first step is to figure out your goal. Establish what kind of job or industry you would like to work in, and the skills you will need to succeed. Find your major in the *Careers by Degree* series in the Career Resource Library and visit some of the weblink resources on the reverse side to help you with this process.

Once you have figured out what skills you need, it's important to understand how to build and include them in your experience portfolio. It is like building a pyramid; each skill you have developed is a stepping stone to your next opportunity to acquire a new skill. Start by listing the skills you already have. If you need help, attend the Discovering your Skills and Options workshop.

The diagram below illustrates how skills can be developed to reach your career goal. Let's examine how a U of T student gathered the experience necessary to attain a career goal.

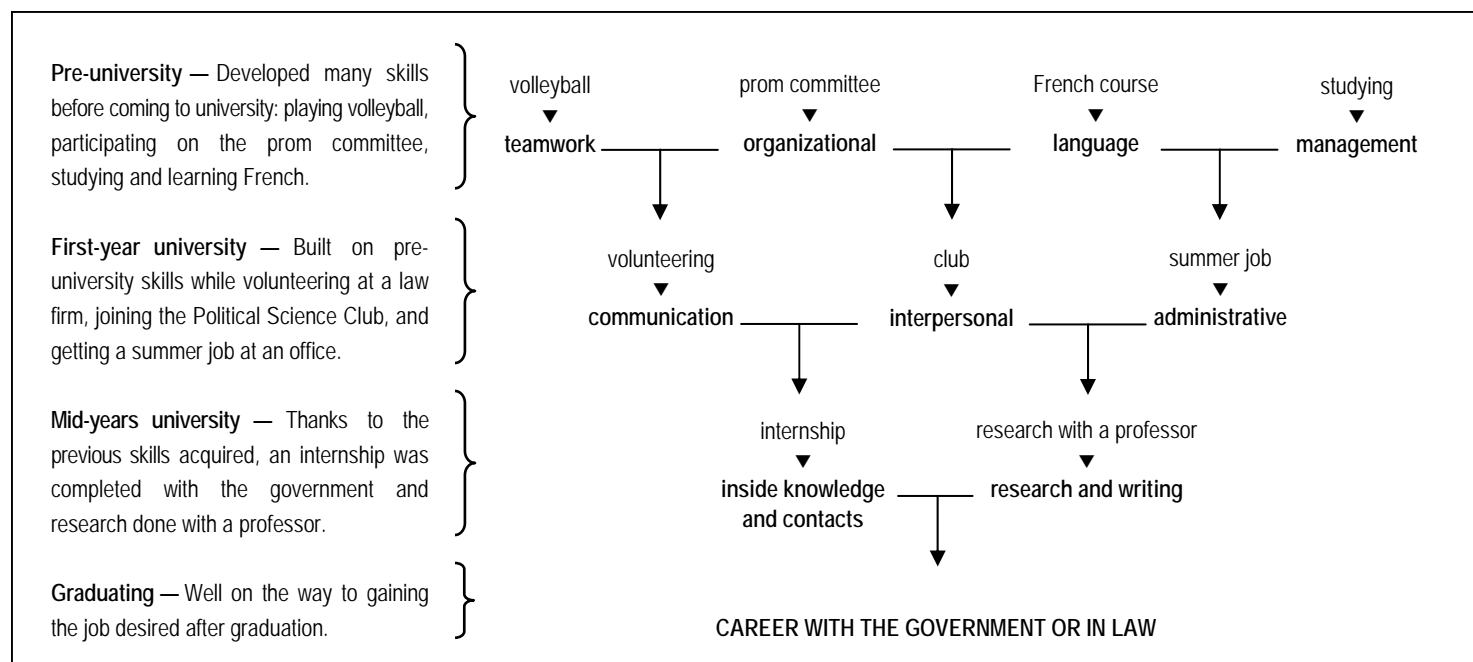
Where to gain work experience

Many people think that the only way to get work experience is a 9-to-5 paid job. In fact, there are other approaches you can use.

Positions in your field of interest though internships; volunteering; summer, temporary, or part-time jobs allow you to build skills such as communication, time management, organizational, and networking. Pick up career tipsheets on these topics at the Career Resource Library.

Extra-curricular activities allow you to build skills, explore areas of interest, and add to your network. There are many clubs, committees, and societies that you can join. Start by using the ULife website listed in the resources section below. You can also join an association in your field — use the *Associations Canada* directory in the Career Resource Library to explore this option.

Academic activities including classes, papers, projects, presentations, and labs have helped you to build many technical and transferable skills in your field. Look for your major in the *Careers by Degree* series in the Career Resource Library to help you identify skills you have developed.



Co-op or a practicum as part of your coursework allows you to build technical skills. Not all specialties or majors offer these, so consult your faculty or department to find out if you have this option.

Making the most of your experiences

Each opportunity to build experience should be approached properly to be an effective use of time. Be sure to:

- be professional;
- arrive on time;
- dress appropriately;
- work hard to complete your tasks;
- network with the people you meet — they will become part of your professional network that can provide great references or help you find hidden job opportunities;
- pitch in whenever and wherever you can — the more skills you can develop in your chosen role, the better for your résumé;
- keep a journal of the activities you undertake in your role, in order to better market your newly acquired skills on your résumé;
- try to have many types of experiences to show potential employers that you are continually active in your field and that you have a broad skill-set.

Resources for getting experience

Get Experience Program

Designed to assist you in your search for experience, the program offers one-on-one coaching on researching and identifying opportunities to build your skills. Pick up an application at the Career Centre.

Workshops

The Career Centre offers three workshops to assist you: Successful Strategies for Finding Work, How to Find Summer Work, and How to Find Part-time Work.

Career Resource Library materials

Books

- *Getting from College to Career*
- *So... You Want a Great Job When You Graduate?*
- *Jump Start Your Career in College.*

Alumni profiles

They are a great way to read about what other U of T students have done to gain experience.

Networking Contacts

The *Networking Contacts* binder lists professionals willing to talk about their careers and give you advice about the kinds of experience you might want to develop as well as general career information.

Weblinks

Career Centre website ► www.careers.utoronto.ca
Search for posted jobs, volunteer positions, and internships. You can also search the internship database for annually recurring programs.

ULife ► www.ulife.utoronto.ca

Browse hundreds of opportunities to get involved on all three campuses to gain experience, and explore the Skills Development section.

Human Resources & Skills Development Canada

► http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/home_e.shtml
Use this site to search over 200 occupational profiles and what skills are required to succeed, and access the Essential Skills tool.

Service Canada, Job Futures ► www.jobfutures.ca/

Learn about various occupations and find out what skills and experience are required to succeed in your chosen field.

Here for you at the...

Career Resource Library

- **Career tipsheets** — over 40 topics available in the library and online.
- **Career research tools** — over 1,000 occupational books, *Careers by Degree* series, Career Cruising database access, and graduate school resources.
- **Job search resources** — Résumé, cover letter, and interview guides; *Informational Interview Contacts*; and employer directories.
- **Additional services** — word processing, Internet access, free local faxing, photocopier, and video terminals.

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