

I graduate in May 2021 and I am trying to figure out what to do after graduation. What should I be doing right now to start navigating my next steps?

The *Center for Personal and Professional Development* has created a “[Next Steps Toolkit](#)” to provide Berry soon-to-be and recent graduates with timely tips, tools, and resources to enable them to successfully navigate their next steps during this challenging economic time. Remember, your personal and professional attitude and resilience will show employers that you are the type of employee they want to hire!

- **Create a new routine and a plan.** Focus on what you can control. Get comfortable with hybrid and/or remote learning and interviewing; you may even choose to work remotely in the future.
- **Be proactive.** Take this opportunity to develop new professional skills which will make you more marketable and competitive. Your goal should be to emerge from this pandemic more prepared than you were beforehand.
- **Get clear on what you are looking for.** Be self-reflective, reconsider your sense of purpose, re-evaluate your current plans, and re-imagine some of your personal and professional goals. Take a look at [PathwayU](#), Berry’s career resource, to take self-assessments, explore career paths and connect to real time openings that provide good fit matches.
- **(re)Connect with key people.** Consider creating your own ‘personal advisory board’ or mentoring team. And remember, you can always schedule an appointment with us through [Handshake](#), our career management hub, even as a Berry alum!

How should I be working on my personal and professional development right now?

Check out videos, graphics, and advice from the online virtual support series, [Ready...Steady...Launch!](#), sponsored by the Center for Personal and Professional Development in May 2020. This information is still relevant! Berry alumni and employer partners shared information on how to navigate difficult economic times and provided insights into the fields of healthcare and information technology. There are also tips on remote working, first days on the job, graduate school considerations, budgeting and apartment renting to help soon-to-be graduates successfully navigate this time of transition.

You can also take this opportunity to ‘up-skill’ and develop new abilities that will make you more marketable right now and in the future. Below are the top 5 personal and professional development strategies we recommend to all recent Berry seniors and recent grads:

1. **Refresh your resume (and other professional documents).** If you need help, make an appointment with your Career Consultant or you can [submit your resume](#) and our CPPD staff will review it and send you some suggestions for improvement.
2. **Update your professional online presence via LinkedIn.** If you already have a LinkedIn account, make sure it is up-to-date and optimized for the career you want. If you don’t, create one now. Organizations will be relying heavily on social platforms for hiring right now *and* in the future.
3. **Develop new professional skills.** This is a great time to ‘up-skill’ (e.g., practice / learn more about video interviewing). Visit our “[Next Steps Toolkit](#)” to learn how to activate your free Berry LinkedIn Learning account to access thousands of professional development courses, including some curated specifically for Berry students.
4. **Cultivate your professional network.** Many alumni and employers are working remotely so they may be more available to share career information and advice. Don’t know where to start? We can help you make some helpful connections (see below).

5. **Use some of the resources from Berry's Center for Personal and Professional Development.** [Handshake](#), Berry's career hub, and the #1 college job and internship board, will provide thousands of current entry level job opportunities. You are also able to make appointments with our career consultants using Handshake. In the meantime, click here to access our new "[Next Steps Toolkit](#)" to check out a variety of additional resources. We welcome Berry students and alumni to make appointments (through Handshake) with our Career Consultants to talk about their career plans.

We featured the following article in Spring 2020 and the advice remains true for 2021. "[Dear Graduates, It's Not Going To Feel OK, But it Will Be](#)" (Forbes, 4/18/2020) provides solid actionable advice for the graduating class of 2020.

Are employers hiring right now?

The short answer is yes! Many employers are hiring, particularly in sectors related to helping manage COVID-19. The news and national responses to COVID-19 continue to evolve. Some companies have had a significant slow down (think hospitality, travel, tourism) and continue to monitor and evaluate so they make informed decisions for the long-term success of their businesses and employees (see websites below).

Who is hiring?

Some industries are in 'growth mode' and are [hiring right now](#). Also, [Handshake](#), Berry's career management hub for current students and alumni, lists thousands of entry level jobs. Register today and get started with your search or make an appointment with your Career Consultant to help you develop your strategy!

Where else should I look for current job and/or internship opportunities?

- **Look at your own network.** As always, your best bet for finding a job or internship is to start with your own personal and professional connections. Ask your friends and family, as well as Berry faculty, supervisors, and alumni about potential opportunities they know of. If you need help getting started, Berry Career Consultants are here to help you (use [Handshake](#) to make an appointment).
- Go to the "Next Steps Toolkit" [Articles and Resources](#) to get information about company hiring plans. You can also explore another new career resource at Berry, [PathwayU](#). It can connect you with current "good fit" job postings by completing four short assessments and then connecting to the online job boards.
- As you network, you can also **search these popular [job and internship boards](#).**

How can I be more competitive when lots of people are applying for the same jobs?

- Target your resume, tailor your descriptions to align with the job description for every application (Ask yourself: *how am I a good fit for this position?*).
- Expand your bullets to share *how* you accomplished a task and what the *outcomes* were.

- Quantify your experience (provide #s to define the scope, scale, & impact of your experience).
- Articulate the value-add from your student work experience (supervision, project management, event planning, etc.) and expand on the relevant outcomes. LifeWorks is not a typical work study program, so describe the extent of your professional experience to employers who may not be familiar with Berry's work program.
- LinkedIn currently has over 2.4 million U. S. entry-level jobs posted. [Here are the six skills](#) college grads need to have to compete in the post-Covid job market according to LinkedIn.
- Read advice from experts about job searching: [5 Ways for recent grads to job search in the coronavirus economy](#) and [Wall Street Journal Job Search Tips](#).

I know I need to network, but how can I effectively network online?

The best online networking is through LinkedIn. If you have a profile, make sure it is up to date and as robust as possible (learn how to [optimize your LinkedIn account here](#)). If you don't have a LinkedIn profile, now is the time to create one. Watch these very short videos to learn more about the [importance and fundamentals of networking](#) (and the [two types of networking](#)).

- Remember, networking is NOT asking for a job! Networking is asking for directions from people who are connected to/familiar with a professional area you want to learn more about.
- When you ask to connect with someone, add a note that explains who you are and why you are interested in connecting (e.g., Berry connection, similar major, interesting career path).
- Know how this person can help you and clearly explain what you hope to get out of a meeting. Attach your resume and articulate a couple of specific questions you have, so they can prepare the information that will be most useful to you.
- Be brief - set a time frame and stick to it. Research the person, their company, etc. in advance and prepare list of specific questions to ask. Watch a short video on [how to prepare informational interview questions](#) (e.g., Tell me about your career journey, your favorite part of your job, advice for someone looking to move into this career field, etc.).
- Thank them for their time / information and send an email to them within at least 24 hours.

Where can I find practical information regarding salary, cost of living, etc.

- CNN Money: [Cost of Living Calculator](#)
- Salary.com: [Salary Calculator](#), [Salary Comparison](#), [Compensation Data](#)

Is now a good time for graduate school?

It depends. Having a plan, researching schools and establishing goals for learning/outcomes should be established before you decide. Visit the [Ready....Steady...Launch!](#) Webpage to access a graduate school decision-making tool called - "To Grad or Not to Grad?". We worked with Berry faculty to create this short checklist and highlight pros and cons on continuing your education right now. You can also check out these additional websites to help you research best next steps regarding graduate school consideration, [Peterson's Guide to Colleges](#); [Graduate School Directory](#); [Personal Statement advice](#)

And remember....

The resources and services of the Center for Personal and Professional Development are ALWAYS available to all Berry alumni! [Handshake](#) is your go-to location for all things related to career, jobs and connecting with your Career Consultant! Get started now!

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