

nerdwallet

# NerdWallet's Guide to Life and Money in Your 20s

# #winning at life after college

For some people, the transition from college to the working world is fairly seamless, but for most new grads the struggle is very real.

To help get you over the hump, your friends at NerdWallet — a consumer finance website helping people make better financial decisions — have put together this *Guide to Life and Money in Your 20s*.

Questions about life and money in your 20s — or at any age? [Ask us at nerdwallet.com](https://nerdwallet.com).

## What's Inside

|                                                   |   |
|---------------------------------------------------|---|
| Ten Things You Didn't Realize About Your 20s..... | 2 |
| Job Search Advice.....                            | 3 |
| Making Money Right Now.....                       | 6 |
| Interning After College.....                      | 7 |
| How to Spend + How to Save.....                   | 8 |
| Your 20-Something Career and Money Checklist..... | 9 |

1. For the first time in your life, you won't have to do anything when you get home at the end of the day. (No homework?!)

2. It's no Frisbee game on the quad, but work can actually be fun, too.

3. People respect professionalism, particularly before you get to know them on a more personal level. So go easy on the smiley-faces in your work emails. 😊

# Ten Things You Didn't Realize About Your 20s

by the National Panhellenic Conference

4. Your friends are going to move away. It will get lonely. Use connections from all your circles to make new friends.

5. Everything in life is negotiable, even your first salary.

6. Enjoy romantic and platonic relationships for what they're worth during the time you have them. They will come and go.

7. "Dress for success" isn't just a catchy saying. It works.

8. Your job is a huge part of your life, so how happy you are there can have a big effect on your happiness everywhere else.

9. There's work and then there's life. Spend some of that hard-earned money on the things you like to do. Vacay, anyone?

10. It's your time to explore new relationships, career paths, hobbies and future goals. Mistakes will happen, but you'll make it to your 30s in one piece.

## Three more tips from the NPC on Greek life

1. Be respectful of those who came before you. Similar to the sorority experience, learn from what others have already done and build from there.
2. Your reputation has worth. Sorority members learn that they not only represent themselves but also their sorority organization. This is true in the working world as well.
3. Going from college to the working world can be a tough transition. If you find yourself struggling, think back to the time management skills you learned as a sorority member.

### About the NPC

The National Panhellenic Conference is the premier advocacy and support organization for the advancement of the sorority experience.

Step 1:  
Research and  
networking



Step 2:  
Craft a  
winning  
resume  
and cover  
letters



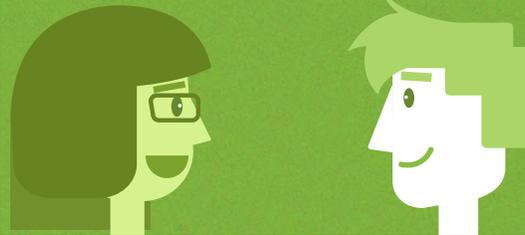
03

JOBS  
APPLY

Step 3: Apply,  
and apply some more

Step 4:

Nail the  
interview



Step 5: Follow up and negotiate



## Let's Dive Into the Job Search

### Step 1: Learn what you want to do and meet the people who can help you do it

Did you know you can use LinkedIn to get a job? Aside from being a place to store your resume online, it's a great resource for connecting and reconnecting with friends and acquaintances who can help you get a foot in the door.

If you prefer meeting face-to-face, try local alumni events, career fairs and meet-up groups, as well as less formal places like coffee shops, the gym or even the airport.

[Tips for networking and building your personal brand.](#)

### Step 2: Treat your resume and cover letter like a first date

Think about how much care and time you put into asking someone out, talking about the date with friends, then actually getting ready for the date. Now apply that energy to your job search.

Spend time perfecting your resume early on in the process, so it's ready to go when you need it. Cover letters — much like significant others — require a good bit of attention. So make sure to not cut corners.

[Tips for crafting the perfect resume and cover letter.](#)

### Step 3: Apply your heart out

Unfortunately, sending out one application probably isn't going to land you a job these days. But one application per day might.

Experts recommend creating a schedule, keeping all of your information in one place and using apps to stay organized in your search. Take it step by step to avoid getting overwhelmed, and keep in mind that your persistence will pay off in the long run.

[More advice on entry-level jobs.](#)

#### Step 4: Know what the interviewer is going to ask before it's asked

Congratulations! You got your foot in the door with your connections, killer resume and knockout cover letter. Now it's time to seal the deal. Draft talking points for the most common interview questions to be sure to impress the hiring manager.

[Tips for interviewing in person or over the phone.](#)

#### Step 5: Make your parents proud and say thank you

When it comes to getting a job, every little thing counts. Often even seemingly insignificant steps — like sending a thank you email — can be what set you apart. Being prepared and knowing what to do when will help to give you a leg up over everyone else.

[Learn how to follow up after an interview and negotiate your salary.](#)



“Jobs are cool.  
But I need  
money now.”



## I Need a Dollar...

With more than 30% of 18- to 34-year-olds living with their parents in 2014, we recognize that making money — and quickly — is probably pretty high on your list.

So while you wait to hear on that full-time position, here are some opportunities to help you pad your bank account.

Check out even more ways to make money on the side while job searching.

IF YOU LIVE  
IN A CITY



Drive for a  
ridesharing  
service

Become a  
personal  
shopper

IF YOU'RE  
GOOD AT



Writing?  
Be a  
freelance  
blogger

Math?  
Be a  
tutor

IF YOU'RE  
WORKING AT HOME



Join a  
focus  
group

Complete  
projects on  
oDesk

# I Graduated College, Moved Home and Got an Internship

by Ashley LoBue for Looksharp



I graduated college, moved home and got an internship. And it was the best thing I could have done.

For many recent graduates, the thought of being unemployed after graduation can evoke feelings of hopelessness and intense anxiety. After graduating college in 2009, I was one of those people who graduated without a job and needed to move home — I didn't yet know what I wanted to do and I was petrified. I felt, for lack of a better word, like a loser, and it was hard to not compare myself to friends who had great jobs and were able to move out on their own.

At the time, it was also difficult for me to tell others that I was doing an internship after graduation and was technically unemployed. However, after having five years of experience to reflect on the year after graduation, graduating without a job was not the end of the world, moving home was a blessing and my internship was the best thing I could have done in my situation.

Many recent graduates struggle with the question of whether to take an internship after graduation. Here are some reasons why you should.



#### About the author

Ashley LoBue is an assistant director at Northeastern Career Development. A Boston College graduate, Ashley has over four years of experience working in higher education and is a proponent for international and experiential education. Ashley also enjoys binge-watching HGTV and aspires to be like the Property Brothers, Drew and Jonathan, as a possible secondary career.

Continue reading to find out four reasons why Ashley thinks you should intern after college.

# You're Not Broke. You're in Your 20s.

Going out can add up quickly. And when Friday rolls around, it's pretty easy to block out how much money you have in your bank account. Try these three tips for going out on a budget to help you stay on track:

## 1

Pull out what you plan to spend that night in cash and leave your credit and debit cards at home.

## 2

Find the best happy hours and invite your friends out for an earlier — and cheaper — evening.

## 3

Subscribe to a local events blog to keep up with the going out deals of the week.

See how to save on an [entry-level salary](#) + [how to build a budget](#).

## Why do math when an app can do it for you?

Try any of these five money tools to help you keep track of your spending.



Intuit Mint



Budgetpulse



BudgetTracker



Buxfer



MoneyStrands

# A Checklist for Winning in Your 20s

## Getting a Job

- Start networking online and face to face
- Prepare your resume before you even start job searching
- Apply to at least one job each day with personalized cover letters
- Follow up with a thank-you email after every interview
- Negotiate all offers

## Managing Your Money

- Create a savings account, even if you can only add \$10 a week to start
- Take advantage of free money like 401(k) matches
- Create a budget and stick (close) to it
- Only put on your credit card what you can afford to pay off each month
- Stay up on your FICO score (a.k.a. your credit score)



Your 20s should be your best years yet, but all the new responsibility can lead to some serious headaches. We hope this guide helps ease the transition from college to career, so you can spend more time on the fun stuff.

Have a question we haven't answered?  
Drop us a line at [education@nerdwallet.com](mailto:education@nerdwallet.com).