

Suffering from a mid-term crisis? Perhaps you're racked with career indecision. Maybe you know what you'd like to do, but don't know how to get it. Or perhaps you're simply resting on your laurels before you start company life in September. Whatever your situation, use Real World's flow chart to...

Take control

4 CLUELESS

If you're graduating with a degree of uncertainty, take heart. Never have there been so many resources available to help graduates make an informed choice about their futures. Thousands of finalists weren't struck as a toddler that they were destined to be an orthopaedic surgeon. The first and often most difficult part of job-seeking is deciding what you want to do. Narrow the options down: make a list of your idea of career hell and balance that with things that really interest you. Talk to your careers service – take personality questionnaires and find out what previous graduates from your course have done. A careers interest survey could help – online, try www.prospects.csu.ac.uk/student/cidd/qgm.htm or the very general ASE Careers Influence Survey at www.topjobs.co.uk/ccscripts/careerinfluences.exe. A comprehensive step-by-step guide for those with no idea what they want to do is *Choosing Your Career* by Sally Longson (Kogan Page, £7.99).



START



1 Do you know what you want to do when you graduate?

yes
2

no
3

2 Knowing what you want to do is half the battle. To win through you need to demonstrate your commitment with relevant work experience, a strong CV and a good knowledge of the sector you're looking to enter.

Are you going to take a gap year first?

yes
5

no
6

3 Are you planning a gap year?

yes
5

no
4

5 Planning is the key to a good gap year. Perhaps you're taking time out to consider your career options and get some work experience; perhaps you'd just like to gain experience of the wider world. What you don't want is for your gap year to form an embarrassing void on your CV which you can't possibly justify in years to come. For inspiration try www.yearoutgroup.org and www.gapyear.com or read *A Year Between* (Central Bureau).

6 Do you feel ready to start applying for jobs?

no
8

yes
7

You're not a finalist?

7 Research the industry you're targeting: check out your careers service, and industry sites (for a list, try www.careersa-z.co.uk). Identify the skills employers are looking for. Do you possess them? One way to find out if you've got the skills (and to get them if you haven't), is to do work experience.

Do you have any work experience?

yes
11

no
10

8 Research the industry you're targeting; check out your careers service, and industry sites (for a list, try www.careersa-z.co.uk). Identify the skills employers in your chosen field are looking for. Visit careers fairs (go to Timelines on page 9), research employers before you go, dress appropriately and bring some copies of your CV and have some intelligent questions to ask. Even with a brilliant CV and breathtaking work experience, ultimately everything may rest on the impression you make at interview, so get some practice in – your careers service should be able to set up a mock interview for you. The best way to test yourself, improve your CV and gain valuable contacts is, of course, work experience.

9 GOT A HEAD START

Excellent – time is on your side. Thinking about your career early will save you hassle and headaches later on. You've got plenty of time to fix up work experience and properly consider your options. Write down what you want to have on your CV before graduation. You can also develop skills and experiences (perhaps travelling or getting involved in a few student societies) that employers consider valuable. Expanding your horizons could also give you a clearer picture of what you'd like to do next. There is no sure-fire way to bag your dream role, but you're on the right track.

Do you have any work experience?

yes
11

no
10

If you're unsure what career area to try, go to 8. For work experience info, go to 10, and if it's your CV that's bothering you, try 12.

