



11 of the worst pieces of career advice for recent grads

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Everyone loves to toss pearls of wisdom at recent grads.

But how do you separate the valuable insight from the generic platitudes?

Business Insider asked a few career experts to break down some common clichés that are useless — or even downright misleading.

Here are a few well-meaning thoughts that everyone should probably stop sharing with recent grads:



Just smile and nod when you hear this generic advice.

Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

'Go back to school'

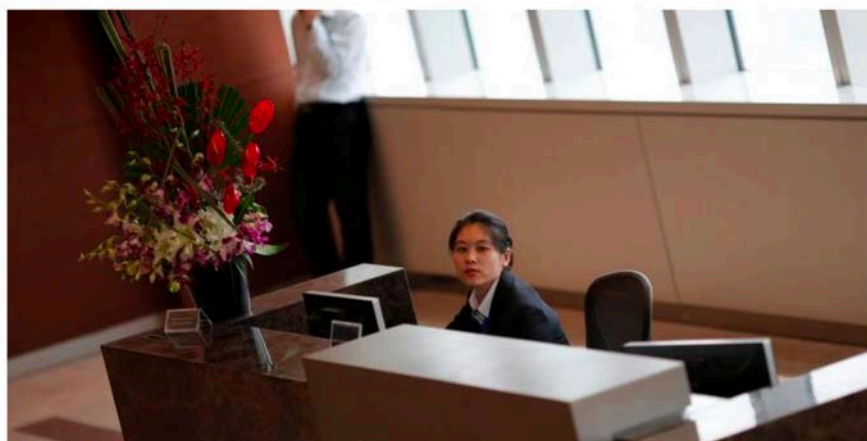
Go directly to grad school. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200.

Of course, pursuing grad school straightaway is a great option for many recent grads. However, [it's not for everyone](#). And it's one [expensive delaying tactic](#) if you're only doing it because you don't know what you want to do in your life.

[International business speaker](#) and author of "[The Humor Advantage](#)" Michael Kerr advises college graduates to thoroughly research and think about grad school before taking the plunge.

"If you are truly passionate about pursuing a career that requires additional education that's one thing, but staying in school or returning for an advanced degree as a holding pattern or as a default can lead to you racking up a huge amount of debt without necessarily gaining you any long term career advantage and earning potential, and may cause you to forestall many of your bigger life goals," says Kerr.

'Just show up at the office and ask for a job'



Thomson Reuters

Are you a recent grad with a dream and some gumption? Are you interested in a particular job? Well then, show up at the office and ask to speak with the boss. They'll be impressed by your moxie.

Actually, no. You'll probably just end up ticking them off.

Alison Green reflected on job applicants randomly coming to the office in [a 2012 Ask a Manager blog post](#): "It's annoying, it's disrespectful of other people's time, it displays a lack of understanding of how hiring works (because candidates can't decide on their own that they're getting an interview, regardless of the employer's decision), and it also shows a lack of understanding of how most offices work (because in most industries, people are busy and you

make an appointment to talk to someone — with their agreement — rather than just showing up at their office)."

Yeah, unless your career goals include getting escorted out of various workplaces by security, ignore your feisty uncle when he tells you to storm some unsuspecting office.

'Hide the tattoos'



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If you're a recent grad with tattoos and tattoo-hating relatives, you've probably already gotten an earful about how your ink will [ruin your entire career](#). Don't get psyched out, though.

When it comes to covering up, career coach, founder of [The Hired Group](#) and author of "[Hired! The Guide for the Recent Grad](#)" Ryan Kahn says that it's probably best to err on the conservative side for job interviews.

"However, in some industries having tattoos could give you an edge if that fits in with their company culture," Kahn says. "Do your research on the office environment prior to the interview. Ask a friend who works there or call the receptionist and dress appropriately based on what you find out."

'You need to land a job in your industry after graduation'



Thomson Reuters

Kahn says that in the current market, recent grads should be prepared to not land their dream jobs straightaway.

"Use your creativity to find a job in an alternative field that will grow relevant skills and qualifications," says Kahn. "For example, if you aren't able to land a job in your desired field of public relations, try looking in journalism, marketing, or social media. Learn as much as you can, and when the next public relations position does pop up, you'll be the most qualified!"

The road to your goals isn't always clear or linear. Keep an open mind.

'Go into teaching'



Reuters

People with liberal arts degrees get this one a lot. There seems to be this perception that humanities students have one career option: [teaching](#). Don't give unimaginative advice that boxes people in strictly based on what they studied.

'You've got to get involved in [something that sounds too good to be true]!'



Paramount

Know someone who seems to always be involved in a get-rich-quick scheme? Are they basically a wacky sitcom character come to life? They're probably not the best people to ask for job advice when you're straight out of college.

"If you're smart, you'd get your real estate license tomorrow because real estate is going to explode here — it's the next biggest thing! And if you don't do that, put all your scant savings into this one company I know — they are going to be huge!" Any advice that promises a shortcut to wealth or predicts future trends as the 'next hottest thing' is to be taken very warily," Kerr says.

"Mountains of research shows that even experts have an incredibly poor record identifying specific economic trends or big winners," he explains. "And the danger in heeding this advice is that even if it did pay off in the short run — you need to consider what's best for the long haul. It's a marathon, not a sprint!"

'Give everything 100%'



It's actually good to give less than 100% every once in a while.

"You'll rarely hear anyone tell you not to give 100%, but sometimes, that's exactly what you should do," Kahn says. "In today's modern work environment, most of us are expected to go full-steam ahead, all the time. But that's not really effective long-term."

Why? **Burnout is real**. Kahn recommends throwing in a few "10%" days every month to refresh.

"Slow your pace, and try focusing on just a subset of your work," Kahn says. "You'll find that when you cut out all the other noise, you can excel on a smaller set of tasks with a fraction of the effort."

'Don't worry about money'



Universal Pictures/Forgetting Sarah Marshall

Telling someone who's fresh out of college not to worry about money is terrible advice.

"The earlier you can start saving money, taking responsibility for your own finances, and mapping out a sustainable lifestyle that's affordable, the better off you'll be," Kerr says.

"Racking up huge mountains of debt is a huge issue for many young people, and one that they will soon regret," he says. "So being told 'the money will take care of itself' is tantamount to being told that the money fairy will magically land on your doorstep one day, or that the best long-term financial plan is to invest in lottery tickets."

It's fine to take a well-though-out financial risk and even take a pay cut in order to pursue a career you love. But it's important to be thoughtful about it and have a game plan, because your passion **doesn't always come with a great paycheck.**

'Make sure you get a stable job'



Getty images/Scott Olson

Having a stable job is important. But it's not everything, **especially if you're settling.**

"Of course this advice is well-intended, but it can also be extremely harmful," says Kerr. "Too often this advice, usually from people who have settled themselves, dampens dreams and sends the message that it's okay to settle for the first thing that comes along."

Kerr says that, since you do need to feed yourself, there are times when you may need to take a job until something better comes along. But too often people get trapped early on and forgo their bigger dreams thanks to this advice.

You've probably noticed that this is basically the opposite of the "don't worry about money" point. Balance is key. You can pursue your goals without being an unrealistic dreamer or a depressed settler. You just need to be honest with yourself, consider all of your options, and open to new opportunities.

'Job interviews are a piece of cake'



Flickr/Samuel Mann

Understandably, plenty of recent grads are terrified over the prospect of applying for gigs and lining up job interviews. It's a stressful process, especially if you've never done it before.

But sugarcoating reality and telling grads not to fret over job applications is not a good option.

"Job interviews are generally terrifying," says Nicholas Wyman, CEO of the [Institute for Workplace Skills and Development](#) and author of "[Job U: How to Find Wealth and Success by Developing the Skills Companies Actually Need](#)." "Practice makes perfect. Preparation is the key to a successful interview."

Instead of giving empty reassurances, well-meaning friends and relatives can help grads by offering to practice the art of interviewing with them. And recent grads should channel their worry into studying up and thoroughly preparing for every interview.

"Practice with a family member or a friend to get comfortable with your responses," Wyman says. "Become an expert. Read industry magazines, online news and blogs to keep up with developments in your field of interest. Knowing the latest trends will help set you apart from other candidates in an interview."

'College prepared you for everything'



Andrew Burton/Getty Images

This well-meaning attempt to boost a recent grad's confidence can really backfire. Just because you have a diploma doesn't mean you're necessarily ready to go out and conquer the world. In fact, grads who lack work experience still have a lot to learn as they enter the workforce.

"Many college graduates are finishing their educations lacking in both practical work experience as well as in the soft skills needed to land a job, be part of and work on a team, and navigate the day to day rigors of a modern workplace," Wyman says.

So, where can you learn these elusive skills?

"They can be learned in one place — a workplace," Wyman says. "Get a job, preferably in your area of interest and start learning, and practicing, the skills employers need."

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