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Title: Advice for new graduates trying to get a job in web design!

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Description: Post graduation you will be staring at one of the hardest challenges of your life, here are a couple quick tips to land that first job.

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Advice for new graduates trying to get a job in web design!

Around this time of year the winter graduates of design programs are feverishly hunting down their first full time job. I spent two year before receiving my diploma, and another 6 months after in nearly constant fear that someone was going to smack me across the face, spit in my lunch and say I wasn’t good enough for that first job… apparently the emotional scars from middle school are still there.

By the time you graduate and are looking for your first post school job there are some things you should have done.

1. Learned basic skills — your should know the standard tools of your field ( Photoshop, HTML, JavaScript)

2. Done some networking — if you want to get a job at a physical location, you may have to physically walk into a meet up and introduce yourself.

3. Built your starter portfolio — the work you have done up into this point should be available to people in what ever format THEY way (pdf, personal portfolio site, behance, images on your phone). You want to have something to show people, in case the person behind you in line asks what do you do.

The job market for designers is pretty good right now, but as many of you know that doesn’t mean a job will just land in your lap it will take some work. If you are at a bit of a stuck point, try and here are some ideas.

Help with something you’re passionate about!

One of the smartest developers I have worked with got his bachelors degree in history. After school he was underemployed but had a super positive attitude, in his free time he made websites for his cycling team. After building feature after feature onto the site he realized that it was something he enjoyed doing, when it came time to switch careers he had a piece of work he loved talking about, because it was very much him.

Chances are you are connected to several people who are in need of either your skill set or a skill set that would benefit you to learn, because if you are looking for it, chances are so are potential employers.

The point of your first job is to gain knowledge/experience… not your dream job.

One thing I noticed my peers get trapped in after graduation is the hunt for their dream job. Your dream car will get old, your dream house is more then you should be paying, and your dream spouse snores like a hibernating grizzly. Its okay to take on a job that isn’t perfect. Every situation in life gives you new skills to learn, and experiences to learn from.

There are some obvious exceptions, please don’t take this advice to mean I am encouraging you to work for a militant baby sacrificing center, just don’t let your fear of missing the perfect job drive your decision to pass up a perfectly acceptable position.

Use recruiters to figure out what skills you need ( and maybe find a job)

Recruiters may not give you a second look for a job, but recruiters have their fingers on the pulse of the job market. Hop on dice.com, create a profile with all your skills, don’t be bashful about things you played with one time (see next point). When recruiters email you about anything reach out! These people make their Living finding you a job. Ask them what skills you are lacking, ask about what jobs they can’t fill. If they can’t fill a job, its a good area to investigate for employment.

Resumes are to get an interview

Never lie on a resume. Never ever. What you can do is list the tool/tech that you may not have mastered but played with a couple times, and felt that with more practice you could master it. When you get an interview, look at the job requirements. If nothing else read through everything on the list, learn a little bit about each tool/tech and what it does. You don’t need to know how go use it or do it, but know full well that from the day you get hired to your first day that requirements list will be your to learn list!

Desire to learn is more important then experience

You do not need to know everything about everything to land an entry level job. What you need is the ability to do research in advance, predict situations, and use all tools available to think and act with precision when called to do so. During the interview if your hear the question “do you have any experience with xyz?” You should answer honestly with “I don’t have any direct experience with xyz but I have used similar <class of tech> and I feel xyz is a step up because <your honest review of the product>. In my free time I am working on <refer to project from point one> and xyz looks like the perfect tool for that, so chances are I will be playing with it shortly.” This long winded banter is effective. It let’s potential employers know that you are up on trends, use your skills in real life situations, and most importantly are hungry to learn.