



Get an edge in your job search

If you're looking to break into public relations, it can be tough. Prospective employers are looking for experience. But how do you get that experience if no one will hire you? It's the purpose of this document to provide university and college students with suggestions to help them navigate this conundrum and give themselves an edge as a job candidate.

- A good way to get experience is to volunteer. Your school likely has opportunities for you to get involved in activities that help you develop communications skills. Or look for a non-profit organization that works on an issue you feel strongly about. They may be looking for someone to join a communications committee or to help with a special event.
- Write for your student newspaper or get involved with your campus radio station. The former will help you develop your writing skills and give you a ready-made portfolio to show your future employer. The latter shows your interest in communications and gives you experience as a broadcast journalist.
- Get involved in student politics to demonstrate your leadership ability and your skills in working as part of a team. Your role doesn't have to be one in public relations, so pick something you'll enjoy and where you feel you can make a difference.
- Check out the [International Association of Business Communicators](#) and the [Canadian Public Relations Society](#). Both organizations offer student memberships and professional development through evening workshops, breakfast meetings, luncheons and more. Consider volunteering on one of their committees—it's a great way to begin developing your network along with those all important skills.
- Look for other free (or low cost) events in a subject area that interests you. If you're interested in social media, here are a few suggestions to get you started:
 - o [Toronto social media events](#)
 - o [Third Tuesday Toronto](#)
 - o [Pod Camp Toronto](#)
 - o [Twestival Toronto](#)
- Take a look at your existing skills and view them from an employer's perspective. Do you work in retail? Emphasize your verbal skills and your experience in handling difficult customers. Have experience in an office? Stress the skills you've already developed in filing, photocopying or researching. Use your new insights to craft a more impressive resumé.

- Develop a presence on a number of social media platforms, including LinkedIn. Consider starting a blog or creating your own website. PR employers are looking for people who have traditional PR skills, and who are savvy when it comes to social media.
- Listen to podcasts about public relations and communications such as InsidePR and For Immediate Release to get a sense of the issues impacting the industry (and to give yourself an advantage in interviews when you discuss public relations intelligently).
- Read the newspaper, watch news broadcasts and follow influential bloggers. These activities will give you insight into what media are talking about and how to potentially engage them in a client's story.

We typically get two to three inquiries every week from students looking for PR internships or entry level jobs, far exceeding our need for this type of talent. It's a crowded field of potential candidates and the above tips are just a few suggestions to help you stand out. Above all, stay positive, don't give up and be open to opportunity. Even if a job or volunteer experience isn't exactly the opportunity for which you're looking, consider it anyway. It may just open doors for you down the road that would otherwise remain closed.