

5 Mistakes People Make Straight Out of College

Finishing college is a big accomplishment, and for many people, a big relief. College can be a lot of fun, but some people are just ready to start their careers and start the next phase of their lives. Whether you're ready or not, you will need to move forward after college. If you are still attending, then you need to be sure to stay on budget while you are in school. Once you graduate though, making wise choices in your job search and at your first job, and smart financial decisions, will help set you up for a successful life and career. On the other hand, spending money like you will never run out, or failing to appreciate your first job and learn as much as possible, can set you down a bad path that can be hard to come back from. Here are five mistakes you want to avoid.

1. Failing to take your job search seriously

Ideally, you will have a job set up before you graduate. If you don't, you will want to make finding one your top priority. According to USA Today, you can get a job coach, and also network and reach out to people at a company that you want to work for. Don't make the mistake of assuming a job will simply fall into your lap; you need to get out there and apply.

Also, be careful of taking just any job. While you have to pay your bills, you will be in a much better place career-wise if you can find a job in your field. This is another reason why you should start searching early.

2. Coasting at your first job

Landing a job is a big deal, but don't assume that just because you get a job, you will keep it. It's important to work hard and prove that you deserve to be at the company. Particularly when you are working at your first job, you want to establish yourself as an asset to the company. Being lazy or doing the bare minimum will only hurt you later.

Even if your first job isn't ideal, you can still make the most of it: learn as much as you can, grow professionally, and network. You never know how your hard work will pay off. Even if your first job isn't as interesting as you want, or isn't at the level that you want, working hard and showing that you are a loyal and innovative team member may lead to just the job you do want.

3. Spending money impulsively

Once you have a job, it can be exciting to spend the money you make. Having a lot of money for the first time can be exhilarating and it can be very dangerous as well. As tempting as it is to go out and buy a new car, new furniture, and splurge on many dinners out, try to limit your extravagant spending. You probably have some time before

you need to start saving for retirement, but spending wildly just because you have a job won't pay off in the long run.

According to U.S. News & World Report, you should consider the benefits your employer offers and take advantage of them; also, think about your fixed costs and about your future savings.

4. Ignoring debt

If you took out student loans, you probably have a grace period before you need to start repaying them. If you have other debt you need to pay off, then it's reasonable to wait to pay off your student loans, especially if you have other debt with higher interest rates. However, it's a good idea to pay off as much debt as you can now. You don't need to pay the minimum due for your student loans, and if you have credit card debt, the same is true. The more you can pay off now, the more available funds you will have to save for traveling, a house, or retirement.

When you graduate college, you will most likely have as few responsibilities as you ever will. Now is the time to pay your debt if you can.

5. Forgetting about your health

Yes, you're young, and it can be tempting to spend money on the things you want instead of investing in health insurance. However, if you are no longer on your parents' plan (which you usually can be until you are 26 if dependents are covered), you do need to think about coverage. Even if you are still on your parents' plan, you won't be forever and you need to look at what plans your company offers and the cost of those plans. Also, it's important to consider how many years you have before you need to pay for the insurance, or how it will affect your budget.

If your parents can't cover you, then be sure that you do sign up for coverage. Without health insurance, you risk a serious financial hardship if an expensive health surprise comes your way (this is also a good reason to have an emergency fund).

Also, when you are working full-time, it can be easy to neglect other aspects of your health, such as exercise or diet. Maintaining a healthy diet, and finding time for exercise, will help you save money on expensive health care costs later.

The years after graduating college should be exciting, and you can learn a lot and advance professionally and financially if you avoid financial and career mistakes.

<http://www.cheatsheet.com/money-career/5-mistakes-people-make-straight-out-of-college.html/?a=viewall>