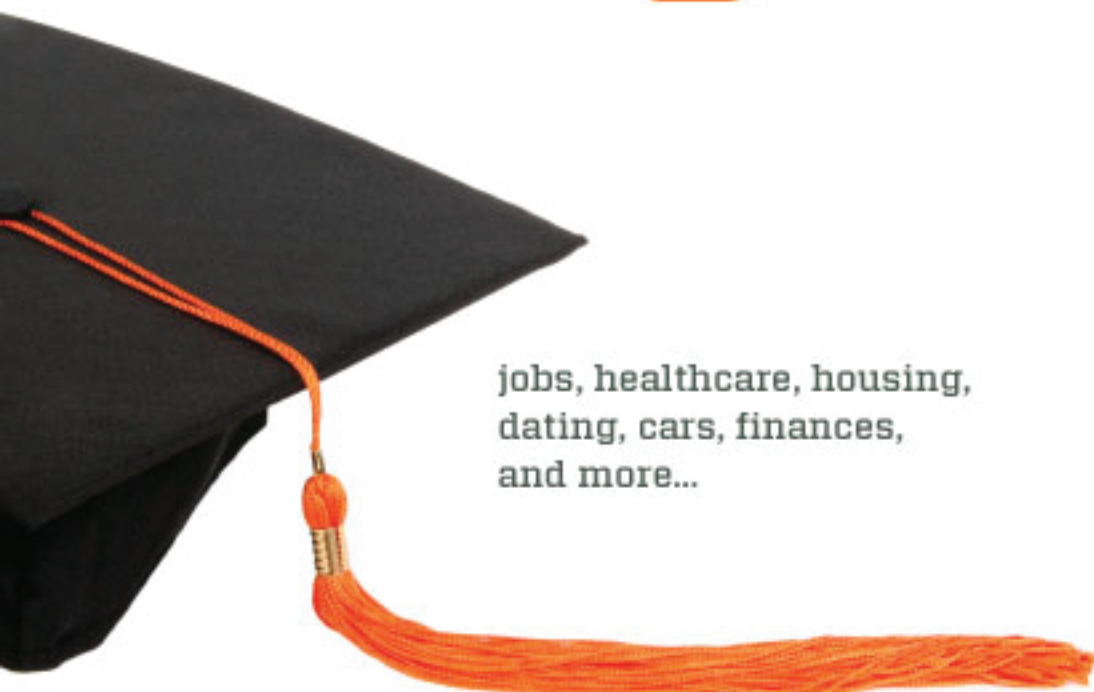


gradspot.com's

guide to life after college

A black graduation cap with an orange tassel is shown in the lower-left corner of the page. The tassel hangs down and to the right, ending in a long, fringed tail.

jobs, healthcare, housing,
dating, cars, finances,
and more...

BY DAVID KLEIN, CHRIS SCHONBERGER, STUART SCHULTZ & TORY HOEN

Gradspot.com's

Guide to Life After College



Written and Edited by
David Klein and Chris Schonberger
with Stuart Schultz and Tory Hoen

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Start Here



Why We Wrote This Book

A few months after launching our website, Gradspot.com, we received an email from one of our users who was looking for help improving her living situation. After we pointed her to content on our site and answered some questions, she said something we haven't forgotten since: "If only you had been around when I graduated last summer, I probably wouldn't have ended up in Newark!" Now, no offense to Newark, but we fully understand her sentiment. After all, it was just a short time ago that we were leaving school and feeling completely unprepared to deal with issues like 401(k)s, sheisty landlords, and office politics.

Time and again, our peers echoed our concerns about being sent out to sea without a life vest, as have the graduating classes that followed after them. Some didn't have any clue what to expect, while those who were actually proactive enough to seek out resources found that they were either out-of-date or out-of-touch. Thus, we figured there was no better time to create a resource that could fill that void—first Gradspot.com and now this book. Ultimately, **our goal in these pages is to expose you to the issues that are most likely to arise in your first year out of school and to share the methods we and others have used to successfully navigate them.**

Consider this book a road map of sorts that will help you navigate the intimidating terrain of the "real world." You're a college grad now (really let that soak in!) and for the first time in your life, completely independent. But no worries, we're here to guide you in the right direction. You've got a lot of questions, we've got a lot of answers. Looking for a job? We'll send you down the right path. Don't know how to do your taxes? We've got you covered. Not sure where to live? We'll help get you to your ideal destination. How to buy a car? Check. Dating tips? Check. Explaining the ending to *Lost*? Sorry, we can only do so much.

On top of all of the insights we picked up from our own experiences and included in this book, we've also called upon other recent grads and college students to share their experiences. They've provided us with a wealth of "insider" tips, many of which you can only find in this book. We also reached out to a wide range of topic experts for their input; and trolled every other pertinent resource out there. We even set up a "Life After College Lab" to test out high-pressure showerheads, budgeting tools, and anything else that might make the transition a little bit easier.

Being twentysomethings ourselves, we understand what it's like to be a graduate today rather than in 1965. Times have changed, and we wrote this book to reflect the experience of a recent grad *now*. We hope that you will find it indispensable and that it will ease the exciting, yet intimidating transition to life after college.

How to Use This Book

Gradspot.com's Guide to Life After College has many uses. You can prop up a wobbly chair with it, burn it for warmth when your parents kick you out the house, or “donate” it to your alma mater instead of making an actual monetary contribution.

Before you do all those things, however, we hope that you'll read it. While there is no set chronology to life after college, we've laid out the chapters in a way that approximates the general order in which you're likely to encounter different issues, from moving back home to coping with the pressures of a “one-year rut.” To help you browse the book, we've created a very thorough table of contents and an easy-to-use cross-referencing system that will allow you to navigate among topics quickly. Ultimately, we hope each chapter will provide a solid foundation for overcoming a range of obstacles along the post-college road.

We've also compiled a list of links to all of the resources we mention in the book that you can find at gradspot.com/book. Many of the URLs listed in this book are obvious, but in instances where links were too long to include in the text, we've made note of it so it's clear that the actual link is available on our online resource guide.

While we can help you understand the basics, share tips and tricks about how to take the next step, and give you the tools to make informed choices, many of the decisions that need to be made are based on your unique situation and may require extra research. So even with all the acumen you'll pick up in these pages, we encourage you to be careful when dealing with major issues. Whether you're filing a tax return, choosing a dental plan, consolidating student debt, or doing anything else that we discuss in this book, always consult a professional for help if you have doubts. Remember, many of your choices now will affect you for years to come.

Visit Us at Gradspot.com!

Needless to say, no matter how long we make this book, there will always be more to discuss. If anything else comes up that you can't find in these pages, never hesitate to visit us at the online destination for life after college: Gradspot.com. There, we have additional guides, a Q&A section where anyone can post a question about life after college to experts and community members, and a community blog where users can share their own unique life-after-college experiences.

Enjoy the read, and good luck!

Chapter I: Holy \$*%#, I Just Graduated!



Holy \$*%#, I Just Graduated

The last couple months of school are jam-packed with finals, parties, farewells, and finally...graduation. With so many things going on, this period can fly by in a disorienting haze of sadness and joy. But when you grab your diploma, drink your champagne, and walk out of the gates, be prepared for the heavy hand of reality to slap you right in your grinning face and for one question to arise: What now?

Up to this point, everything has been decided for you and served up on a platter—or at least force-fed. You went to high school. You did your homework (sometimes). You went to college, chose a major, and, if you were lucky, that basically accounted for all the big decisions you had to deal with for four years. But now, maybe for the first time ever, it feels like the “next step” is not completely obvious. And worst of all, you feel like you need to decide what you want to do for the rest of your life this second!

This is a pervasive fear that the vast majority of recent graduates faces. It is completely normal, but also completely irrational because now is the first time in your life when you actually have the freedom to set your own timeframes—so what’s the rush?

If you feel compelled to dive head first into the “big ticket” issues, by all means skip ahead (we’ve more than got you covered). But a word of warning: once you start obsessing over jobs, living situations, finances, and all of the other high-stress areas of life after college, things are going to get very heavy, very quickly. That’s precisely why we’re starting this book out with a chapter to help you find balance: all that heavy yin needs a lighter yang. We’ll cover everything from taking a year off to go traveling to food and romance, DIY education, and even grappling with the all-too-common first year rut.

This is the time when you can start anew and set the tone for your life as a college grad, so don’t take that for granted. And whenever things get you down, just think about these two words: no homework!





10 Things to Do After Graduating

- 1) **Join a kickball league.** Already miss the college spirit? Rekindle the camaraderie from your varsity/intramural glory days while laughing at the guy in skinny jeans waddling to first.
- 2) **Apply to a reality TV show.** What do you have to lose (except dignity and the support of your family)?
- 3) **Become a bar trivia pro.** Utilize that vast wealth of knowledge you just accumulated by winning free drinks and the respect of thirtysomethings desperately trying to stay young.
- 4) **Travel.** The post-graduation trip is a classic move for those who can afford it, and even grads on a tight budget have plenty of options close to home. Read more on page 6.
- 5) **Learn to cook.** Once you're living alone sans a meal plan, the ability to whip up a fricassee will save big bucks and impress potential mates like the plumage of a peacock (or a she-cock). Read more on page 24.
- 6) **Spend time with your family.** Take advantage of the time you can spend with your loved ones now, because tomorrow you may be busy. Or they may be dead.
- 7) **Be a kid again.** Go home and rekindle all those old feelings you had as a child. Dust off your old Nintendo console. Hit a tennis ball against a wall and pretend it's Monica Seles. Whatever it takes to get that spring back in your step.
- 8) **Get in shape.** We're not suggesting you become the girl who's hitting the elliptical so hard that her legs are about to fly off, nor that tangerine-colored dude who exclusively does upper body and can barely run a mile. But at the very least, get rid of the lingering traces of your "freshman 15" (funny how it never quite went away) and motivate yourself to take the next step.
- 9) **Volunteer.** Before you become too "busy" making money for yourself, demonstrate a little of the philanthropic spirit for which you may or may not be famous. Find something that appeals to you personally and get involved.
- 10) **Write a book.** Or if novels aren't your thing, pursue anything that you're passionate about. Record songs, paint pictures, or write the screenplay you've been talking about for three years. Now is the time.



Get a tattoo: My brother claims this is an awesome idea. ■

The Traveling Grad

Traveling after graduation is a time-honored tradition for many reasons, the most prominent of which is the fact that it's literally the perfect time to travel. Practically speaking, the chances of taking a two-month backpacking trip grow slimmer by the day once you're a working cog. We don't want to suggest that the clock is ticking on fun and exploration, but if you can pull it off, all of the pieces are in place for a great trip—youth, health, and a celebratory subtext. So why not get cracking on that “places to visit before I die” list?

Brainstorming Trips

The main factors that go into planning the perfect summer trip are budget, duration, and companionship. But once those are settled, the fun part can begin—what do you really want to do? There are countless places to get your post-college groove on and we have a few ideas to get you started. Needless to say, you're going to have to do some further research to figure out the ins-and-outs of traveling to these places, and you can even string together some of these destinations into a full-summer/year adventure, but we hope this section will at least help spark a wanderlust.

Note: Before you set out for a foreign country, get your passport straight (see above), and be sure to check if you need a visa or any vaccinations.

Tips & Tricks:

Passports



Be warned: Nothing sets a worse tone for a trip than arriving at check-in without the necessary identification documents. If your passport has expired, check the State Department website to find out where you need to send it for renewal. If you don't have your old passport, have never had a passport, or were under 16 when you received your most recent passport, you've got to trek down to the Post Office or your local City Hall and apply in person. You'll need a valid ID, two passport-sized photos, and proof of U.S. citizenship (e.g., a birth certificate). Generally, passports take about 4–6 weeks to arrive, but you can pay an extra \$60 to get the expedited service (three weeks). If you're really in a bind (way to plan ahead!), nongovernmental agencies like PassportsAndVisas.com can handle business Mafia-style—it's around \$59 for 8–20 business days and \$169 for the 24-hour service.



20 Hot Post Grad Trips

So you've made the decision to head west (or east), young man (or woman). But where exactly? Zach Aarons of TravelGoat.com (a website devoted to audio tours spanning the world) offers his super-sized list of potential journeys across the globe via planes, trains and automobiles.

- 1) Trans Siberian Railway:** The train is an epic journey from Beijing to Moscow. This trip passes through Mongolia, China, and myriad parts of Russia. It takes almost a month and is a perfect opportunity to meet people and unwind before starting a career.
- 2) Thailand:** Spend a couple of days peeking at lady boys in Bangkok before traveling to Phuket, a gorgeous oasis of beaches and fun. Make sure to check out the enchanted isle of Koh Phi Phi, where the famous movie, *The Beach*, was filmed.
- 3) New Orleans:** New Orleans is a city that has the exotic aura of foreign travel, with the expense of a quick domestic jaunt. Check out some of the best architecture in the world, eat some Po' Boys and listen to some great Dixieland jazz music.
- 4) Cross Country Road Trip:** The classic post college experience. Shoot straight across the country from east to west or west to east, stopping at various cities and national parks on the way. Locations can include: Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Omaha, Chicago, Yellowstone, Yosemite, San Francisco, and others.
- 5) Inca Trail:** One of the most spiritual trips in the world. Spend some time hiking through the Andes before arriving at the climax, the hidden city of Incas, Machu Picchu.
- 6) California Coast:** Start in San Francisco and head down the Pacific Coast Highway, finishing up for some good drinking in Tijuana. Make sure to stop along the way at Big Sur, Santa Barbara, LA, and San Diego.
- 7) Adriatic Coast:** Fly to the fantastic Medieval walled city of Dubrovnik. Spend some time island hopping to Hvar and Korcula before heading off to some of the unspoiled beaches of Montenegro.
- 8) Cyclades:** The classic post graduation hedonistic retreat, island hopping in the Cyclades is glorious. Make sure to check out both Mykonos and Santorini. For a less touristy vibe, try Sifnos and Milos.
- 9) White Water Rafting on the Snake River:** The Snake River in Jackson Hole, Wyoming has some of the best rapids in the world for all skill levels. It is both fun, exciting, and a great work out.

- 10) **Nicaragua:** Nicaragua is fast becoming the next Costa Rica with beautiful beaches, incredible jungles, and inexpensive prices. Make sure to check out both Managua and Morgan's Rock for an urban and oceanside experience.
- 11) **Patagonia:** The tip of the world has been luring adventurous folks for centuries. Go hiking in Torres Del Paine national park, visit the penguin colony at Seno Otway, and spend some time in Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world.
- 12) **Cinque Terre:** These five small towns in the Liguria region of Italy are picturesque and quaint. Many tourists every year take one of the two hiking trails connecting each village. The hike can be accomplished in a day, but it is best to linger and eat some pesto pasta along the way.
- 13) **Vietnam:** Vietnam is fast becoming the destination of choice in South East Asia based on great weather, beautiful beaches, and great food. Take a motorcycle ride through Hanoi, then wade through rice paddies in Sapa. Finish on the beaches of Hoi An and get a fine tailored suit for a low price in the village.
- 14) **South Africa:** South Africa is a country on the rise, thanks to its natural beauty and great food in Cape Town, its fantastic wines in Stellenbosch, and its safaris in Kruger National Park.
- 15) **Israel:** Israel is both an educational and exciting journey. Experience the nightlife of Tel Aviv, the spirituality of Jerusalem, and the vast expanse of the Negev Desert, all a quick car ride away from each other.
- 16) **Whistler:** No matter what the season, Whistler has skiing year round. Ski both Whistler and Blackcomb mountains while stopping for some ethnic food in Vancouver.
- 17) **Istanbul and the Turkish Coast:** Once the capital of the world, Istanbul has some of the most incredible markets, mosques, and sights in the world. Follow it up with some relaxation in Bodrum on the beach, and some Greek ruins at Ephesus.
- 18) **Goa:** Even the name of this famous Indian beach town evokes a yearning for something more.
- 19) **Buenos aires and punta del este:** The city of Borges, Eva Peron, and Diego Maradona is a cultural wonderland with some of the best food in the world. After poking around the city, spend some time on the beach in Punta Del Este, Uruguay.
- 20) **Cartagena:** This Colombian colonial beach town that Garcia Marquez used as the backdrop for *Love in the Time of Cholera* has undergone a renaissance and has become a popular seaside destination. ■

How to Travel Abroad For Free

There are plenty of ways—some common, some a little strange—to support a globetrotting lifestyle or live in a different country for an extended period of time.

When approaching the job hunt, grads with a deep-seated wanderlust should consider careers that will allow for travel—options include entering the hospitality industry, being a travel-heavy salesperson (e.g., pharmaceuticals), working for an airline (even if you aren't in the air, you usually get ace flight discounts), joining the armed forces, and many more. However, there are also some slightly more spontaneous and grad-friendly opportunities that can be leveraged for a plane ticket, room and board, and Facebook albums that will be the envy of all your friends. From NGO volunteering to life as a hostel-hopping bartender, here are some ideas to set your travel fantasies in motion.

TEACH ENGLISH. You've probably heard stories of people who teach English in Korea for \$3,000 a month and free housing. These gigs really do exist, and while not all English teaching positions are so lucrative (you may live on scraps—but at least you're in Venezuela!), they all offer a great opportunity to travel. Before you can teach English abroad, you've got to get certified. There are a number of certifications—most notably, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TOSEL), and Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). Courses will cost around \$1,000 and usually take about a month to complete (many people travel to attend a course, though you can almost always find one close to home). Some schools will offer intensive one-weekend certifications, and there are also online courses you can take remotely. But while these quick-fire and at-home options might be okay for someone who just wants to dip his or her feet into the teach-abroad waters for six months or so, people who would like to seriously consider teaching as a career should invest in a full classroom-based course—you will come out feeling a lot more confident, and you'll get to bond with other future teachers who will become your best contacts for finding gigs around the world. In addition to word-of-mouth, there are a number of good websites for finding openings, including ESLCafe.com, TEFL.com, and ESLJobs.com. Remember that each school is different, and that you'll need to make strategic decisions about which match your needs, based on location, teaching format, and pay scale.

JOIN THE PEACE CORPS.

Operating in countries as far-flung as Azerbaijan and Malawi, the Peace Corps is one of the most popular options for rough-and-ready grads to really see a developing country up close and personal. (You have to commit 27 months, so this one is not for the faint of heart.) In addition to having a positive impact on a community, the Peace Corps will help you accrue some benefits that will take you to the next step, like student debt forgiveness (p. 237), credit/financial aid at many grad schools (Chapter 9), and access to government jobs (p. 62).

BECOME AN AU PAIR. Childcare is apparently something that many families the world over feel comfortable farming out to a foreigner. Visit GreatAuPair.com to find gigs, and turn to page 80 for more information on becoming a babysitter/nanny.

FIND OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES. There are countless organizations that need bright young volunteers, so don't feel bummed if the Peace Corps is not for you. Look for opportunities at WANGO.org, Idealist.org, VolunteerInternational.org, and TransitionsAbroad.com. Another site with a lot of international volunteer listings is GoAbroad.com. Note that certain organizations (e.g., some NGOs offering internships abroad) will charge you for the pleasure of building a well in a desert in the middle of nowhere. In some cases, this charge is realistic—these organizations are strapped for cash, so it's not like they can shell out to send a bunch of inexperienced workers abroad (think Habitat for Humanity). Other organizations might provide room and board but leave the rest (airfare, transportation, souvenirs) up to you—for example, Grassroots Soccer (grassrootsoccer.org) offers a 12-month internship but suggests fundraising a minimum of \$10,000 to support yourself for the year.

Smart Money:**Hostelling**

Let's call a spade a spade. When it comes to post-grad travel, you're probably not going to be staying in five-star resorts. You're more likely going to find the cheapest hostel around and shack up for the night. But hey, that's great. They're twentysomething meccas and can cost as little as \$2 per night...including breakfast and dinner! Hostelling International is known for some of the best hostels around, and you can also search for traveler-friendly accommodations on Hostels.com and HostelWorld.com. In certain countries, hostels are referred to as dormitories and guest houses, so don't rule those out either. Since safety is always a concern when it comes to hostels (you shouldn't be concerned but just aware), referrals are always best. Recommendations from trusted guides like *Lonely Planet* and *Let's Go* are also useful.

In any case, it's important to always perform research on an organization so you don't find yourself stranded with a crappy, money-grubbing "nonprofit" in the Ecuadorian rainforest. Check out CharityNavigator.com to see if the organization has been rated, or at least search around for message board discussions or testimonials about other people's experiences. And see page 66 to learn more about finding and exploring full-time nonprofit opportunities.

JOIN THE WWOOFERS. If you've ever longed to herd sheep in New Zealand, work on a vineyard in France, or help out on a family farm in Peru, now's your chance! WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) is an organization that helps people find short-term work opportunities (usually on farms) in exchange for free room and board. Since WWOOF operates around the globe, joining up is a great way to see a new corner of the world and to engage in a real way with the local community there. But be warned: WWOOF experiences differ drastically from country to country and farm to farm. Some require some pretty serious manual labor, so make sure you understand what's expected of you before you sign on to help harvest 50 tons of rice. Check out wwooof.org to see where you can go and how to get started.

FIND A GRANT, FELLOWSHIP, OR PRIZE. Before you graduate, see what travel grants and prizes your school has to offer. Foreign Languages, History, and other departments usually have programs you can apply for with a simple application or essay. In addition, Fulbright scholarships and other travel grants are always worth pursuing, though they can be very competitive. Try to find grant or fellowship programs specific to your interests. Mira's List (miraslist.blogspot.com) tracks opportunities for artists (e.g., writers' exchange programs, photography grants), and institutions related to your field of interest may have programs, as well. There are awesomely random opportunities you can find, like the "Delaying the Real World Fellowship," which funded one twentysomething adventurer a year.

LEAD TRAVEL TRIPS FOR STUDENTS OR ADULTS. You'll likely need prior experience with a language or specific country (maybe you grew up somewhere else before going to school in the States), but leading others on an international adventure can be a great way to have an adventure of your own along the way. Check out Backroads.com, [All About Visiting Earth \(aave.com\)](http://AllAboutVisitingEarth.com), or [Putney Student Travel \(www.goputney.com\)](http://PutneyStudentTravel.com) to see if being a trip leader is right for you. If you can't get a job as a guide, you can also try joining the company in another capacity (maybe even as an intern) and working your way up to a position where you get to travel for marketing, research, or guiding purposes.



Confessions of an Adventurer: A Year “Dans le Noir”

by Tory Hoen

After graduating and toiling for a year and a half in New York, I was starting to feel a bit conflicted. The combination of life in a matchbox-sized studio, 12-hour workdays, and a boss who regularly told me, “You can be replaced,” was starting to get me down. I often found myself staring into a spreadsheet wondering, “This is my youth?”

Before long, visions of croissants began to cloud my thoughts, and the promise of pensive strolls along the Seine and cozy afternoons spent writing in cafes lured me to Kayak.com. A voice told me, “If you book it, they will come.” It turned out to be a one-way ticket to Paris on Air India. . . and they turned out to be a year’s worth of crazy French-flavored adventures.

For the time being, I had a plane ticket, a short-term sublet, and enough savings to get me through the first few months. Beyond that, I would either A) Find a job that would sustain me, B) Find an aristocratic suitor who would sustain me, or C) Return home none the worse for having attempted an international escapade.

I ended up finding a job that was a bit—how shall I say?—dans le noir (i.e., “in the dark,” also known as “under the table” or, if you insist, totally sketchy). No, I was not a prostitute, but I worked in real estate, which might be worse. Regardless, it was enough to sustain me while I pursued my real dream of writing the next great American ex-pat novel (or something like that). I found a longer-term furnished sublet, bought a pre-paid cell phone, and managed to attract some pretty cool friends. Bank account? Who needs it when you’ve got a perfectly good underwear drawer? Et voilà! I was off and running.

A few months into my tenure in France, I was invited to a new friend’s chateau, and as I sat in the grand salon sipping ’83 Château Margaux with a giant taxidermy lion’s head looming above me, I thought, “Paris was a good idea.”

Yes, it was a gamble, and my existence was not really sustainable in the long-run. But I love France and I wanted to live there. . . is that so wrong?

If you have a dream (or even a momentary impulse masquerading as a dream), I say: go with it. If you’re wrong, you can always come crawling back. And if you’re right, then you are in for many long wine-soaked nights of pontificating in *franglais* around a table of questionable French guys who self-identify as “philosophers.”

Isn’t this what your youth is for? ■



Smart Money: Using Your Student ID

It may feel like the advantages of being in college (like sweatpants-all-the-time and sleep) have suddenly disappeared in a puff of smoke. But before cranking up “Glory Days” and shredding all college memorabilia in a violent fit of denial, know that there’s one item not to scrap: your student ID card. You spent most of college trying to pretend you were 21; now you have to act like you’re back in college to get deals on all sorts of goodies. Don’t feel bad about this white lie—just claim you believe you’re still a “student” in the European sense of the word (i.e., poor). Or get cracking on your own “D.I.Y. Education” (p. 14) and then you’ll technically be a student in your own personal *L’école du Stuff I Want to Know*.

Holy \$*%&# | Just Graduated!

Note: If you’re in grad school, you don’t have to worry about faking the funk. And if you haven’t yet left college, it’s probably worth getting a new ID before you leave so you have one that doesn’t look like it’s been through four years of swiping already.

Tried and True

The following places are pretty lenient about offering student discounts. Remember the drill: Flash and proceed. Flash and proceed. Cool as a cucumber, you are.

MUSEUMS. Whether you’re an art fiend checking out a Degas at the Getty in L.A. or an oddity fiend viewing the largest human colon at the Mutter in Philly, museums nationwide offer discounts and even free admission for students (or pretend ones).

MOVIES. If necking with the date you met at the museum isn’t reason enough to go to the movies, a reduced fee should add some incentive.

PERFORMING ARTS. Ballet, opera, symphony, theater, concerts—discounted tickets are often box-office-only, but the options are limitless.

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS. View the world’s largest Pez dispenser or smallest working sawmill—all at a reduced price!

LOCAL BUSINESSES. If you live near a college campus, many restaurants, bars, and bookstores offer cheaper or tax-free goods. Support their business and save enough to support that coffee habit.

Worth a Shot

Getting these deals with an expired student card might be a stretch, but this is the real world, where smoke and mirrors can be the secret to your success.

CLOTHES. Just because you're no longer a student doesn't mean you can't dress like one. Retailers like J. Crew and EMS offer reduced rates to students (until graduation). As far as your wardrobe is concerned, if you hit upon the right salesperson, graduation may never come.

VACATION DEALS. STA, Student Universe, and Travelosophy all offer student discounts on flights, hotels, packages, and tours. Consider getting an International Student Identity Card (ISIC), which offers savings everywhere from Seattle to Switzerland (and it's just \$22 a year). The same company also has an International Youth Travel Card for non-students under 26. Go to Isic.org for more information.

TRAINS. Amtrak offers 15% off, but not only do you need a college ID, you must have either a Student Advantage Discount card or an International Student Identity Card. But just as two negatives multiply to produce a positive, two expired IDs can occasionally add up to one cheap train ride.

BUSES. This form of travel is generally inexpensive to start with because it is about as fun as a Brazilian wax, but Greyhound offers 15% off tickets and 50% off shipping for students. The snag? You need a Student Advantage Discount card in order to get the deal.

APPLE STORE. You need Mac Books, iPods, and iPhones like nobody's business, but fundage is limited. Luckily, Apple offers student discounts, and the word in the blogosphere is that, if you hit upon the right salespeople, they barely check to make sure your student status is legit. If at first you don't succeed, try another Apple store.

BANK ACCOUNTS. Most banks offer no-fee accounts for students. Most banks also check to see if you're really a student. The good news: if you set one up when you really were a student, you can probably coast for years to come.

MOVING AND STORAGE. If you're moving or storing stuff, inquire about potential student discounts. If you're like many grads, moving is going to become a major theme in your life over the coming years. The fact that you're moving from college or your parents' house might be a dead giveaway, but whatever—no harm in trying.

CELL PHONES. Beware: A lot of cell phone companies claim to have student discounts when what they're really offering is just a plan geared towards college-aged kids (more text messages, free ringtones, an anti-drunk dial device, etc.).

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. Major cities sometimes offer major reductions on subway and bus cards. Don every item of university paraphernalia available and hand the attendant the card while singing the school's fight song. If "Hail to the Victors" does not make you victorious, nothing else will. (Note: You could get fined pretty badly for this one.)

Holy \$*%&# | Just Graduated!



D.I.Y. Post-College Education

Unless you decide to go to grad school (Chapter 9), you may experience pangs of guilt about whether or not you fully took advantage of your college experience. "Uh oh," you might think to yourself while watching *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?* "Has my window for enrichment passed me by in a haze of whippets and '80s parties?" Of course not. As Mark Twain once said, "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education." Now you have the opportunity to set a precedent for a lifetime of learning, and this time, there's no homework or tuition!

A little digging around online can reveal an endless fount of free content covering almost any topic imaginable, from the intellectual (e.g., university lectures) to the practical (e.g., how to fold a shirt like a Japanese store clerk). Even beyond your computer screen, there are plenty of ways to flex your brain muscles without paying tens of thousands of dollars for the privilege. Here are some great places to get your D.I.Y. education off the ground. **Some of the following URLs are too long to include here; to find these links and even more great resources, head to gradspot.com/book.**

College Redux

Justice (justiceharvard.org). The most popular class at Harvard is now available to everyone thanks to a partnership with Boston public television and a great website. The class broadly covers the question, "What is the right

thing to do?” Through the lecture videos, you’ll learn about the philosophies of such pivotal thinkers as Immanuel Kant, Aristotle, John Locke (no, not the dude from *Lost*), and John Stuart Mill, then watch as Professor Michael Sandel and a bunch of Harvard kids debate issues like affirmative action, abortion, and whether or not it’s okay for Abercrombie & Fitch to hire only hot people.

Academic Earth (academicearth.org). Free video courses from leading universities, broken down by subject, university, and lecturer. Watch a Yale class on the Old Testament or find out what Guy Kawasaki has to say about entrepreneurship at Stanford.

100 Podcasts from the Best Colleges in the World. It’s funny how much easier it is to listen to a lecture when you’re not busy swinging crude text messages to your friend across the auditorium. Why not download an educational podcast once in a while and listen to it on the way to work or in the gym? Choose from subjects such as “The Future of the Internet,” “Italian Culture,” “Nintendo: A History of Innovation,” and “String Theory.” Or just keep listening to “Poker Face” instead. Whatever floats your boat.

Ten Places to Get Free Online Business Courses. If you listen to that guy from *Wired*, giving stuff away for free is the greatest business model of all time. So when places are giving away free lessons on everything from starting your own business to marketing, networking, and nonprofit management, we’re inclined to think they probably know what they’re talking about.

Ten Universities Offering Free Writing Courses Online. Some people think writing can’t be taught, while others challenge that it might just be the key to unlocking the talent that’s waiting to explode. Instead of investing \$100K in grad school to find out, try checking out a UCLA screenwriting course or MIT’s “Introduction to Fiction.”

Free Berkeley Courses. The left-leaning university offers free video and MP3 lectures from a wide range of courses, including Chemistry and the Roman Empire.

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History (gilderlehrman.org). Fancy yourself a bit of a history buff? The Gilder Lehrman Institute was created in 1994 for the express purpose of “promoting the study and love of American history.” It’s not a college, but it does offer over 50 free podcasts and video lectures on the founding fathers, the Civil Rights Movement, and everything in between.

General Education

LibraryChick.com. This utterly overwhelming page is like an all-you-can-eat buffet of self-education. Check out free textbooks, audio books, and resources from this beneficent librarian. There's even an "Online Learning" section featuring links to courses, tutorials, and more.

The 60-Second Lectures. Every fall and spring, professors at the University of Pennsylvania are asked to give one-minute lectures on any topic of their choosing. Sometimes they run a little bit over, but for bite-sized snippets of high-minded intellectualism (topics range from the human brain to JFK's sex life), this archive is a great place to waste some time.

BigThink.com. Cut through the hot air of talking heads and commentators by finding out what "ideas" politicians, thinkers, and other doers have about the topics you care about. Check out short videos on everything from John McCain's thoughts on terrorism to Moby's advice for young musicians.

TED.com. Authors, politicians, designers, and other people with "ideas worth spreading" meet at conferences in Long Beach, CA, and Oxford, England, each year to give talks lasting about ten to 20 minutes on whatever they want. They all go up on TED's fantastic website, where you can watch Al Gore talk about climate change or see "mathemagician" Benjamin Arthur race a team of calculators to solve problems.

Fora.tv. More big names talking about big ideas. As the site explains, "We gather the Web's largest collection of unmediated video drawn from live events, lectures, and debates going on all the time at the world's top universities, think tanks and conferences." Deepak Chopra on the afterlife of Michael Jackson? Yes, please.

Lifehacker.com. Leading the charge in the "efficiency movement" is Lifehacker, a site where you can procrastinate for hours learning a thousand and one ways to...stop procrastinating. Irony aside, it features tons of great tips, as well as frequent links to how-to and free education sites.

Skill-Building

Learn a language. We all know the best way to learn Spanish is to go live in Spain (or El Paso). But whether you're trying to brush up your skills or start from scratch, there are plenty of online tools to help you get the ball rolling.

Check out MyLanguageExchange.com to find native speakers who will be your email/text/video-chat pen pal. Also worth checking out is LiveMocha.com, which offers free online classes and the chance to interact with other speakers. If you're just looking for a little vocab building, Learn10.com will email you ten new words a day in whatever language you want.

Learn computer skills. Web skills are pretty bankable these days (see page 71 for more on freelance programming), and who knows—one day knowing computer languages could be just as important as knowing foreign languages. W3Schools.com has free web-programming tutorials that look pretty basic but definitely do the trick for beginners. For a monthly fee of \$25/month (or \$250/year), Lynda.com offers a wide variety of tutorials covering programming, design, Photoshop, Flash, digital photography, and much more. WebMonkey.com is the original free resource for web developers, offering a comprehensive list of tutorials and an easy-to-search “code library.” Of course, you can always just try Googling what you want to learn along with the words “how to” or “tutorial.”

Learn random skills. Want to know how to avoid wrinkles, start a fire with a battery, and fold a shirt correctly? Check out Howcast.com, Instructables.com, Smin.com, and VideoJug.com for short videos and posts on all sorts of stuff—both practical and useless.



Dating

The transition to life after college is hard enough without the added complication of figuring out how to woo potential mates. In some ways, dating will never be as easy as it was in college (although would you actually call what you did in college “dating?”). If we remember correctly, a combination of raging hormones, close quarters, and socially acceptable binge drinking meant that people were hooking up left and right. This is all well and good, but the transition to real life provides a great opportunity to meet people beyond the confines of the keg room. For some, it can be a rude awakening; for others, it's a breath of fresh air.

Beyond actually finding dates, one of the biggest challenges of post-college dating is simply making the time. Once you start working, your free time becomes more precious than ever, and it can be frustrating to waste it on one dud after another. In fact, some people become so career-oriented in their twenties that they only look for casual relationships, keeping any emotional investment that would take up too much time and energy at arm's length. Others feel like

they need a stable relationship to counteract all the other uncertainties of life after college.

Honestly, we can't really get into all that—this isn't Dr. Phil! Relationship advice is a dish best served by friends. But before you throw on your “going-out shirt,” we wanted to bring up some key aspects of post-college dating that tend to catch recent grads off guard.

Keeping an Open Mind

Many recent graduates say the hardest part about post-college dating is figuring out how, when, and where to meet people. You may find yourself wondering why dating seems to require so much effort and strategy. After all, you're young, you're cool, you're pretty good looking...what's the problem?

Often, it's a matter of expectations. It's possible that you and so-and-so will lock eyes and fall in love while reaching for the same box of Trader Joe's Os, but it's unlikely. While relationships may develop naturally for some people, others have to be a bit more creative. Picking up strangers in bars is not for everyone (nor is it as easy as it looks), and even more structured social scenarios can leave a lovelorn grad wondering how to make the first move. Without a built-in social scene at your disposal, you might have to think outside of the box when on the prowl.

The key is to stay open-minded about how and when you might meet people. In college, you may not have thought to put out the vibe until you were three drinks in on a Saturday night. In the real world, you are more likely to meet someone interesting when you least expect it: when helping a friend move into her apartment, or when your boss sends you to pick up a document from someone with a cute assistant, for example. You don't have to start dreaming about what your children will look like or whether a hottie is “open to adoption” every time you meet someone new, but keep in mind that sometimes love can bloom in the least likely (and most awkward) of situations.

Prime Prowling Grounds

If you know you're in the mood to dip into the dating pool, try attending cultural events, joining co-ed sports leagues, getting involved in your school's local alumni association, volunteering at a local nonprofit, or attending readings, screenings, performances, and lectures. Zeroing in on an activity or subject you love is a great way to connect with people who share your passion. Think about

it: If you're hoping to find a girl who loves kickball as much as you do, your chances of meeting her are better if you actually join a kickball team (it can be one of those drunken-Sunday-afternoon ones, if that makes things easier). If you want a guy who appreciates art, start attending art openings and try to join a committee at a local museum or gallery. Bonus: When you're passionately pursuing your own interests, you appear that much more attractive to other people, and if no flames are lit you won't feel you wasted time doing something you didn't actually want to do. MeetUp.com is a great site for finding groups whose interests align with yours—from cyclists to classic film buffs, artisanal beer lovers to design junkies.

Online Dating

Young grads often make love connections through Facebook. If you fancy yourself a “Computer Love” aficionado, there is also the next level—online dating sites. These are a great source of contention among recent grads. To some, they are sketchy and sad—an admission that you've hit rock bottom and are ready to throw caution to the wind. To others, they make total sense. We live so much of our lives on the Web, and we're as adept as ever at making basic judgments about people from their online profiles, so why not move the awkward flirty stage of dating to the 'net to cut out a lot of hassle? The stigma is definitely fading—in 2006, a Pew Poll reported that 31% of adults in America knew someone who had used an online dating service, and the popularity of online dating continues to rise.

If this approach appeals to you, start by visiting the most popular sites like PlentyofFish.com, Match.com, eHarmony.com, and Yahoo! Personals. There are also options catering to individual preferences, such as JDate.com (for Jewish singles), Adam4Adam.com (for gay guys), and Lesbotronic.com (for gay girls). In all cases, just remember why you're using these sites: The point is to expand your potential dating pool and eventually turn some of the connections you make into *offline* dates. It's easy to get bogged down in “winks” and other silly features without ever meeting anyone in the flesh.

Another option for efficiency freaks is speed dating, which offers the ability to meet a ton of people in a very short period of time. You may not fall in love, but you'll inevitably gain some stories that you can later use to regale your chums (and their single friends). Check out 8minutedating.com and HurryDate.com for events in your area.

Hazard:

When it just isn't meant to be



One of the things that's both difficult and liberating about post-college dating is that you may date someone who has no ties to your social network. This can feel like an adventure, but it can also lead to anxiety and confusion. Out in the wider world, it becomes easier to make out one minute and then disappear off the face of the earth when you no longer want to see the former object of your (momentary) affection. That's not meant to be a depressing revelation, but rather a caveat for those who are used to the more insular dating pool college provides. Whereas mutual friends used to ensure that you knew what your college make-out buddy was thinking and where he or she lived, those you date in the real world may be less accessible. Sometimes romantic mysteries go permanently unsolved. Luckily, there are plenty of fish in the post-college sea. Eat a tub o' Chunky Monkey and keep it moving!

Taking the Dating Plunge

Whether you're meeting a date online or in-person, it can be intimidating to put yourself out there. Keep in mind that there's a reason why half of every standup routine is devoted to relationships—dating ups and downs are something almost everyone has to encounter, and having a sense of humor and adventure will help you deal with any bumps on the road. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, right? (Of course, if you're setting up a date with someone online, use common sense and plan your first meeting in a public place with lots of other people around.)

The Anatomy of a Date

When you do score a "real world" date, there are a few basics to keep in mind. Try to choose a spot or activity that is convenient and/or appealing to both of you. If you don't know the person that well yet, veer away from stuff that's egregiously guy-centric or girlie. Also, while group dates can work if there's some mutual acquaintance or it's billed as such beforehand, don't immediately throw your new date into a pressure situation where they have to hang out with all your best friends—wait until you know if you actually like the person to save everyone the effort of being nice to a new person!

Once you're out on your date, make like a Buddhist and be in the moment. While you might think that your BlackBerry's constant vibrating is a sign of your importance (and therefore a turn-on), it's actually more likely to distract than it is to attract. Turn off your technology, and turn on the charm. When it comes time to pay the bill, proceed with caution. It often makes sense for the inviter to pay for the invitee (at least at first). It's a modern world, and we don't want to imply that the guy must pay (particularly if there are two guys on the date), but a lady does like to be treated right. On a first date, it's a nice gesture if the guy offers to pick up the tab. Ladies, beyond the first date, it's considerate if you start pulling your financial weight. On a related note, don't choose a restaurant that's way out of your league just to impress someone on a first date. Keeping up the façade will quickly drain your funds, and besides—don't you want to find someone who loves you for you?

Long-Distance Relationships

If you graduated in love or somewhere close to it, you may find yourself in the extremely difficult situation of dating long-distance. Maybe your beau has yet to graduate, or maybe you and your mate have decided to pursue opportunities in different cities. There's no magic formula for a successful "LDR," but start off by having a candid conversation about your expectations and set a realistic timeframe for how long you will remain apart. Temporary distance really can make the heart grow fonder—or it can make the heart completely forget about the other person, which also simplifies things. Another issue to discuss is whether you are going to have an open or closed relationship. If it's the former, will you be expected to disclose your extracurricular activities or keep them to yourself? Going with the "let's see what happens" approach might work for some couples, but it also breeds suspicion.

Presumably one or both of you is moving to a new place and meeting lots of new people, so long periods of "radio silence" might not go over well, especially if someone's latest Facebook album features him or her doing body shots. Realistically speaking, however, these are all just things to think about. There is no set rulebook for LDRs, so the real key is just to be honest with yourself about your motivations and feelings. If you feel dissatisfied, is it because you wish you could be with your boyfriend or girlfriend, or because you wish you could see other people? Follow your gut rather than intellectualizing the situation to death, because there are few ways to rationalize a \$200 phone bill (hint: get Skype) and months of loneliness.



Confessions: Breaking Up in the Age of Gchat

by Mary Kathryn Burke

Two years post-college, I had my first real-adult dating experience. I was 24. It was about time. It was classically too-good-to-be-true, and I wanted to tell anyone who would listen: Doorman. . . drycleaner. . . butcher, baker, candlestick maker. . . you name it. He pulled out chairs and wore a suit to work and put his tasseled Cole Hahn loafers on shoe trees before flossing, perusing the WSJ one last time and going to bed at a reasonable hour. You know, a real-adult man. And with that came a subsequent, inevitable, real-adult breakup.

Well, it's been a while now and from my toils, I offer a few humble tips for a more graceful breakup in 2010 and beyond. From someone who (hopes she) learned the hard way. As my dear friend and fellow Gradspotter Christine would say, "It used to be just tearing a photo in half. Now it's much more complicated to rid ourselves of the relationship residue." These days, comrades, it's everywhere. And it's your choice to pick a place to draw the line.

1. **Texting/Calls.** Eventually the goal is to stop. But let's be honest—it's going to happen. Especially if you're not teetotalling. While weaning yourself off your cell dependency, the next best step is warning your future 4 am self not to call or text him. Change the name in your phone from "John Perfect" to something that will make you think. Something like "Doyoureallywanttodothis?" This way, at least if you slip up you will first get a little reminder that you should feel guilty about it from your formerly sober self. It's like Nicorette gum except with words and without the chewing and the drug rush.
2. **Outlook.** Dear innocent college kid on PINE, webmail, or Macmail: Someday you will sit in an office. . . in a cube. Like the one I am sitting in right now. And when you work in this cube you will undoubtedly email the coworkers 20 yards away from you all day in an email system known as Outlook. And Outlook, despite its many inefficiencies, is remarkably adept at remembering every damn person you ever emailed. One of those people is probably the boy you just broke up with. You may or may not have spent the better part of your days at work emailing him over Outlook at J.T. Marlin or wherever the hell he worked. Maybe you even sent him clever calendar reminders. Delete, delete, delete. Go into your address book at D-E-L-E-T-E. There is nothing worse than going to email your innocent

intern Johnny and having John E. Breakup's email address come up. It's not worth it. Delete.

3. **Blackberry Messenger.** I don't do this, but I've heard stories and it sounds like trouble. (See #1.)
4. **Gchat.** Now we're talking. Something with nuance. Gchat has a lot of options, and the best thing to do is to try what is right for you. For a while you might want to go "invisible." You might be tempted to block him, but that's too transparent. Even more transparent than "invisible" if you can believe it. Do this: Hover over his Gchat name. Choose "more" and then "never show." He can see that you're online, but you won't have to stare at his name... and picture... and cutesy away-status. Tempting you. Mocking you. Added bonus: Make sure your picture is something fabulous you did in his wake.
5. **Twitter.** Don't tweet unless you are a celebrity. If you are a celebrity, go on a date with some ladykiller your PR person calls, then have your assistant tweet Page Six and make sure your ex gets a link. If you must tweet, at least stop "following" him.
6. **Online "Date."** Or, rather, browse. You don't have to go on a date with someone from Match, JDate, or Eharmony—just look around. Get a feel. We have our entire thirties to date on these sites. But it's a better distraction than Facebook, phone, Blackberry, and iPod, tempting us to break rules 7, 1, and 3, respectively. Have a coworker sign you up for one of these things and just look. Because eventually, you will be in your apartment, tempted to break rule 4. And you have to remember that there are other guys floating around whose hearts you have yet to break.
7. **Facebook.** This is the biggie. "Hide" him in your feed. Make sure your best friend "hides" him on her feed. And if worse comes to worst, gracefully "defriend." He's not dead. You can always say hi later, a long time from now. But in the interim just get off your devices and get out of your room. You survived college, and you'll survive this.

Remember, you're an adult... sort of. ■

Cooking

One of the harshest realities of living independently is dealing with the necessity of feeding yourself. For many of us, dining hall meal plans only reinforced a lifetime of culinary ineptitude. Maybe you mixed a nice salad or figured out that making *matzo pizza* was not as disgusting as expected, but beyond these trial-by-fire experiments, most college students graduate with no basic grasp of how to buy, store, and prepare food. “Home economics” isn’t at the top of the curriculum anymore and, let’s face the facts: some parents are horrible in the kitchen, as well.






One thing is for sure: You watched the Food Network. And it turns out that after watching over 1,000 hours of programming, you know how to properly remove the meat from a snow crab yet you still don’t know how to boil an egg. There’s no real shame in that—any self-respecting person would rather watch Gordon Ramsay tell someone to go screw himself than write down a Rachael Ray recipe. That said, a rotation of simple, quick recipes is essential to any budget- and body-conscious grad. This talent, in turn, has a trickle down effect into your broader life, allowing you to impress friends, dates, and colleagues with your culinary acumen. Of course, the allure of takeout menu roulette is always tempting, but it is ultimately a far more expensive and less satisfying option than going DIY in the kitchen.

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Web Links: Finding recipes

Along with Gradspot.com’s “Recipe of the Week,” check out these sites for recipes, tips, and cooking inspiration:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Chowhound.com |  CookThink.com |
|  FoodNetwork.com |  Recipes.com |
|  Epicurious.com |  Rouxbe.com |
|  Cookstr.com |  Mark Bittman’s NYT blog |

Kitchen 101

More than likely, your kitchen looks more like a small closet than the *Iron Chef* Kitchen Stadium. But that doesn't mean you can't whip up a few well-practiced dishes. Before you get started, it's important to make sure your cooking area is clean. (*Ratatouille* is a bit unrealistic—having a rat infestation is not going to make you into a master chef.) Use a disinfectant to wipe down surfaces, especially after handling raw chicken. Clean all your cookware and utensils to avoid germs and food that always tastes like the *last* thing you cooked. (“I really want stir-fry on Thursday, so let’s have it on Wednesday, shall we?”) As annoying as it may sound, it really is easier to give things a quick rinse and scrub immediately after using them than battling with a dried-up, filth-encrusted mound of dirty dishes at the end of each month.

All clean? Okay, let’s proceed. Hopefully you have a stovetop, oven, sink, and refrigerator. If you’re lucky you have a microwave and a coffeemaker, but those are luxuries. When push comes to shove, you can do most cooking with some pretty simple tools—don’t be lured by the apple slicer and fresh yogurt maker when you reach the checkout at the kitchen supply store. Here are a few essentials that should serve you well. **Depending on where you shop, you should be able to outfit your whole kitchen for \$150 to \$200 total.** To reduce costs significantly, try to pick up as many items as you can from home (your parents or grandparents probably have stuff lying around), and try to find a local kitchen supply store for wholesale prices.

Large saucepan (3+ quarts; \$14–25)	You want it to be big enough to cook a whole package of spaghetti or make a batch of sauce/soup.
Medium or small saucepan (\$9–20)	For heating soups, sauces, etc.
10" frying pan (\$13–15)	For cooking eggs, sautéing meats, making stir-fry, etc.
13"-by-18" metal baking sheet (\$5.75–15)	For baking and toasting bread.
Roasting pan (\$6.50–10)	For roasting chicken, making lasagna, etc.
Mixing bowls (set of three; \$5–11)	For preparing food, serving, and storing leftovers.
Measuring cup (\$6.50–7.50)	For measuring out ingredients.
Peeler (\$3–6)	For peeling vegetables like carrots, potatoes, etc.
14" colander (\$7–10)	For draining pasta and other food cooked in water and washing fruits and veggies.

Wooden spoons (set of three; \$3–10)	These are better than metal because they're easier on the surfaces of pots and pans.
Ladle (\$2.50–3)	For serving soups, sauces, etc.
Bread knife (\$3–8)	For breads, bagels, etc. Serrated edge also works well for cutting tomatoes.
Chef's knife (medium-sized; \$10–13)	Good for chopping pretty much anything (including your fingers—be careful!).
Paring knife (might come with chef's knife; \$3)	Useful for cutting small items and peeling.
Rubber spatula (\$4.50–8)	For flipping pancakes, making scrambled eggs, sautéing, etc. Rubber is easier on surfaces than metal.
Whisk (\$3–4)	For whipping up scrambled eggs and batters.
Can opener (\$4–10)	That can of soup will taunt you if you can't open it.
Measuring spoons (\$1–5)	For teaspoon and tablespoon measuring.
Cutting board (\$6–9)	Plastic ones are a lot easier to clean (crucial when you're cutting raw chicken and other potentially dangerous foods).

Learning to Shop and Cook

Stocking “the pantry” (or the mini-fridge and cupboard, as the case may be) can be an inordinately onerous task for recent grads with no kitchen know-how. When you do a lap around the supermarket and end up with cereal straws, a steak, Kool-Aid mix, Double Stuf Oreos, Dave’s Insanity hot sauce, and some Kraft Singles, you know you’ve got a little work to do. Putting some thought into your purchases beforehand (or even bringing—dare we say it—a *shopping list*!?) can help cut down on impulse buys and produce a more useful end result. So, what should you look for?

Beyond the obligatory salt-pepper-olive oil triumvirate, take stock of what you like to eat and build your pantry based on your preferences. Do you like hummus? You probably do. But did you realize that keeping garlic, oil, a few spices, and a can of chickpeas around will help you to make it whenever you want? The fun of learning to make your favorite foods from a few staple ingredients is threefold: 1) You save money; 2) You can experiment with a food that you already know; and 3) You can create a personalized version of a favorite dish that will wow your guests.

Rice, polenta, and oatmeal are other good stock items; they will never leave you hungry, and they are extremely versatile. Frozen chicken, pork, or sausage all serve a similar purpose in the kitchen—they provide a good base protein and can be deployed in a wide range of dishes. Pasta is also a major staple for the young adult, but unfortunately most pre-made sauces are gross. We recommend keeping a can of crushed tomatoes around at all times to make a quick sauce from scratch. Over time you will develop a “signature” sauce, and everyone will think you are either a) of Italian ancestry, b) the jam, or c) both. A basic tomato sauce is the perfect base for a variety of add-ons, and it requires only minimal cooking time. After you get a great multi-use sauce going, make a big batch and save it for pastas, pizzas, or whatever else you dream up.



Smart Money: The Under-\$50 Pantry

You don't want to be running to the store every time you try to make a recipe that involves “salt and pepper.” There are some basic items that you want to keep on hand at all times—they'll last a long time and make your cooking forays a whole lot easier. (Prices vary according to geography and store, but these prices from a Safeway in the Bernal Heights neighborhood of San Francisco shouldn't be too far off hat you can find.)

Olive oil (25 fl oz, generic).....	\$9.99
Salt	\$0.89
Pepper	\$3.79
Dijon mustard.....	\$2.99
Butter (1 stick)	\$1.49
Mixed Italian seasoning.....	\$5.49
Balsamic vinegar	\$4.58
Soy sauce (10 oz).....	\$2.59
Red pepper flakes	\$4.61
Cumin	\$4.19
Chili powder	\$4.69
Pam Cooking Spray	\$3.99
Total.....	\$49.29



Ask The Expert: Cooking Advice From Mark Bittman

Mark Bittman is best known as a food columnist for the New York Times, a regular guest on NBC's Today Show, and the author of the classic cookbook How to Cook Everything. He's also traveled around Spain with Gwyneth Paltrow and Mario Batali for a television series on PBS and given a TED talk entitled "What's Wrong with What We Eat." We think he's pretty much the man, and his philosophy on his craft makes him the perfect guru for post-college: he rejects the notions that tools and ingredients must be expensive, that recipes must be followed to the letter, and that cooking isn't worth the effort. We caught up with him to get his advice for twentysomethings making their first forays into the kitchen.

How did you start cooking for yourself?

My senior year of college and my first year after college I lived alone. I cooked every day—sometimes alone, sometimes with other people—and I really taught myself how to cook. In school I wasn't an over-achiever. I was always looking for shortcuts to get the grades I needed, and I approached cooking the same way: I never followed the directions exactly. I improvised as needed, and most of the time it came out okay.

What do you actually need in your kitchen to cook?

It's not \$20 worth of stuff, it's more like \$150–200 worth of stuff. Get stuff from your parents, grandparents, Salvation Army. Second-hand places are a good deal; if something was able to make it to the store, it's probably in pretty good condition. Even if it's rusted, you can literally throw it in a fire and the rust will burn off. You don't need fancy stuff when you're young; [the expensive things] only help when you're in your '60s and '70s and you're less likely to want to hold heavier things.

How do you figure out what to buy for the week?

The most important thing about shopping is the pantry. If you stock a good pantry, then you don't have to shop that often, and there's no excuse to run out to buy a slice of pizza at 10 pm. If you have grains, beans, eggs and onions, spices, and herbs—a very, very basic list—then you don't have to run out shopping. It can be a \$25 investment a week until you build a full pantry. And then every now and then you have to run out and buy the fresh things, milk or lettuce, and that's how you take care of the fresh items. People always say, "Ahh, but I didn't have X, Y, or Z," and it's complete

nonsense. There's no excuse not to cook. I have a small kitchen, I don't have a ton of stuff. I have maybe 50 things, \$200 worth of things, and I can always cook whatever I want. Shopping is never a big deal.

What are entry-level things that grads should do if they want to start cooking?

People should always invest in a cookbook. These days you don't really need one because you can go online, but it's hard to judge if it's a good recipe or not. And if you don't have any cooking experience you really can't tell. You want to invest your time in learning to cook something you want to eat. Find a recipe, find how long it's supposed to take to make, and then double that time, because you have no idea what you're doing, and then go to work. It's not going to be Michelin-quality beautiful, but it's going to be fine. You just have to go for it. When people recognize how simple and straightforward cooking is, that's when they get into it.

Why do you think people eat healthier if they cook for themselves?

Well, there are many reasons—it's portion, it's ingredients, it's many things. I don't believe you can make yourself an 1,800 calorie salad. You look at what's going in there, and you think, "I don't even want to eat all that crap!" If you go to the store, you'll buy vegetables, and then you'll come home and cook them. You'll eat only what you buy. You can't possibly eat as badly as when you're not cooking. People who don't cook eat terribly. Two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese—those are not cooks. I doubt even 10% of those people are real cooks.

You have a daughter who's a recent college grad. What are your observations about people our age when it comes to cooking?

I'm optimistic about your generation because I feel like we've hit rock bottom. [Laughs.] I'm pessimistic about your generation because so many people of your generation grew up eating prepared food, take-outs, ordering in, and so much of this thinking is shaped when you're young. It's going to be up to you guys when you become parents to demonize over-eating. There was this ad with this kid saying to his mom, "Why are you smoking?", and the same is going to have to happen with over-eating: the kid has to be able to ask his mom, "Why are we going to McDonalds?" I think McDonald's is trying to change and I'm not saying those places are all bad. Those places are fine for a special occasion if you always eat at home, but to think of McDonald's as a staple place for eating? That's tragic. ■

Finding the Time to Cook

At the end of the day, it's important to remember that "when you're hungry" is not the only time of day to cook. Take an hour on the weekend to make a large casserole or chili that you can freeze and eat throughout the week. If you have roommates who are also interested in eating at home, set up a rotation where you cook for one another. Finally, don't be intimidated—with basic ingredients it is hard to make food that is inedible, and remember that, these days, you've always got the Internet as a resource to tell you the difference between frying and sautéing, or to provide simple recipes for almost anything. Once you nail one dish, you can build off that and mix and match with others—before you know it, you'll have a whole range of tricks up your sleeve.

Now that your kitchen is locked and loaded, it's time to actually get cookin'. Turn to the Appendix for some of our favorite recipes.

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Drinking

The "transition" may drive some recent grads to drink. But while shot-gunning Bud Lights and sake bombing were considered power moves in college, they begin to lose their cachet after graduation. Now's the time to add a touch of class to your alcoholic endeavors.

Needless to say, not drinking is also a totally reasonable lifestyle choice (especially if you've discovered Abita Root Beer, perhaps the most delicious root beer ever made). You don't have to booze to be the consummate grad. The point is that if you are going to partake, it's worth expanding your horizons beyond Carlos Rossi and red Solo cups. So fill up your glass, light a fire, and let's talk drinkin'.

Wine Appreciation 101

Whether you're looking to sound savvy at a business dinner or trying to impress that hottie from next door, a little wine knowledge goes a long way. There's no need to emulate that ostentatious guy from *Sideways* with his Merlot-phobia, but being able to navigate a wine menu can add an intriguing string to your post-grad bow. The world of wine is complex; the basics are not. Let us help.

Types of Wines

The three main categories for wines are red, white, and sparkling. (Note: Rosé is also quite popular as a warm-weather drink among Euros and wannabe-Euros.)

Within the three main categories, the options are endless, but here's a quick rundown of wines you are likely to find at restaurants and bars in the United States (where wines are generally categorized by varietal).

Red

- Y **CABERNET SAUVIGNON.** Generally full-flavored with a smooth and lingering finish.
- Y **SYRAH (OR SHIRAZ).** Tastes full-bodied with flavor notes of anything from raspberry to espresso to spice.
- Y **MERLOT.** Has a medium body with hints of berry, plum, and currant, and a buttery finish.
- Y **PINOT NOIR.** A light crisp wine with an acidic finish.

Whites

- Y **CHARDONNAY.** One of the most versatile wines, it's often oaky, but it can also be soft with fruity flavors or smoky with flavors of vanilla, caramel, or butter.
- Y **SAUVIGNON BLANC.** Tastes crisp, dry, and refreshing with flavors ranging from grass to tropical fruit.
- Y **PINOT GRIGIO.** Can be good for beginners due to its sweet, light, crisp, and neutral flavors—but not all pinots are created equal.

Sparkling Wines

- Y **CHAMPAGNE.** Designation reserved for sparkling wines produced in France's champagne region (the gold standard in sparkling wines). Think Dom Perignon, Moët et Chandon, and, of course, Cristal. Always go for "Brut" (i.e. dry) champagnes unless you like your bubbly very sweet.
- Y **PROSECCO.** Italy's answer to champagne. Generally cheaper in price than actual champagne.
- Y **CAVA.** Spain's version of champagne. Also cheaper in price.
- Y **SPARKLING WINE.** The general designation for any carbonated wine.



Lingo: Vino Edition

There's no need to be overwhelmed when it comes to wine speak. When the waiter explains that a certain wine has notes of aged English leather and tiger lilies with a smooth, walnut-y finish, you may be tempted to opt for a mineral water instead. But don't let the pomp and circumstance deter you. Here's a list of the terminology you need to know. And even if you don't know it, you're still allowed to drink.

OLD WORLD: Generally refers to wines produced in regions with long histories of winemaking (e.g., Europe, parts of the Mediterranean basin).

NEW WORLD: Generally refers to wines produced in “newer” regions such as the United States, Australia, South America, and South Africa.

VARIETAL. A fancy word for a type of grape and a way of classifying wines. Examples of different varietals include Chardonnay, Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Riesling.

REGION: An indicator of where the wine was produced and another way of classifying wines. Examples of regions include Burgundy, Bordeaux, Chianti and Rioja. (Many European wines are classified according to region.)

FULL-BODIED VS. LIGHT. A way to describe the “weight” of wines in your mouth. Does it feel inky? Watery? The more robust the flavor, the more “full-bodied” it is.

VINTAGE. This refers to the year in which the wine was produced, and some years are better than others for specific wines depending upon the weather and other factors. That's not to say that 2005 was a great vintage for every wine, but it might have been for some. If you know the key years for specific wines, you'll be able to pick out some stellar bottles.

BLENDS & TABLE WINES: "Blends" and "table wines" are made by blending different types of grapes, which can yield delicious or disastrous results. Table wines are usually on the cheaper end of the spectrum and can be pretty tasty if you find the right one.

EASY-DRINKING WINE. This is one of those vague phrases that wine people like to throw around, but it basically means that the wine at hand is fairly innocuous, will please a variety of palates, and can be enjoyed alone or with food. It's smart to choose an "easy-drinking wine" if you're trying to please a group whose preferences vary from one person to the next. New World wines tend to be good crowd-pleasers.

FINISH: A word used to describe the "impression" that a wine leaves as it's being swallowed. The finish is often described in terms of acidity or specific flavors (oak, fruit, spice, etc.)—or emotions if the person is a total BSer.

Holy \$*%#; I Just Graduated!

For more information on wine terminology, check out the helpful online encyclopedia at Wines.com.



Ask The Expert: How to Order Wine at a Restaurant

As an aspiring writer, Gradspot.com contributor Adam White has learned a thing or two about waiting tables. And with waiting tables comes the opportunity to try wines. . . lots of wines. We asked Adam rules of thumb for mastering the wine list (or just faking your way through it). You probably won't be going to too many somelier-staffed parties with your friends, but you never know where your work and romantic life might take you.

- 1. Be confident in your knowledge level.** You don't have to pretend to be a know-it-all. Even if you're telling your server, "I know very little about wine," engaging him or her on the subject will ensure that you end up with an interesting bottle.
- 2. Cheap is fine.** Don't be intimidated by the high price tags in the Burgundy section—nobody ever orders the thousand-dollar Grand Crus (they're like the beautiful convertible in the window of a car dealership that's only there to lure prospective sedan-owners). Every wine list has hidden gems; it's your job to get the server to reveal them to you.
- 3. Ask for the *somme*.** If you're at a fancier place with a sommelier, tell him or her what you're looking for (keep it simple: red or white, full-bodied or light, Old World or New World) and ask for a recommendation. Say, "I don't drink much wine, but I'm learning and I'd like to try something interesting—preferably for less than [insert budget here]." You're likely to come away with a beautiful bottle, an education, and maybe a new friend.
- 4. Just sniff.** Until you master swirling and sipping (especially under pressure), smelling the wine will do. All you're smelling for is wet newspaper (which means the wine is corked) or an overwhelming molasses smell (it's oxidized). These are the reasons you would send it back. If you do taste, you are not tasting to see if you *like* the wine—you're tasting to make sure it's in good condition. A classic rookie move is to send it back because the taste is not what you expected.
- 5. Get drunk.** Wine novices tend to sip slowly and tentatively. This makes no sense. Good wine is intended to be appreciated, yes, but it's also intended to make you feel good. Once you make it through the ordering, reward yourself by boozing it up. ■

Exploring the World of Beer

According to the Brewers Association, the total number of U.S. breweries on July 31, 2009, was the highest total in 100 years: 1,525. The craft beer industry has grown exponentially in the past ten years—beer bars are on the rise in every major city, more and more restaurants are offering beer pairings with their dishes, and innovative new beer styles are constantly being invented. If you're interested in drinking connoisseurship (a great pursuit to grow old with), you no longer have to feel like Joe or Jane Sixpack just because you'd rather grab a brew than a Bordeaux. Beer is *en vogue*!

Before you embark on your journey into the wide world of beer, let's get one thing straight: drinking beer should be fun, enjoyable, and never stressful. Never drink beers that you don't like, unless there are no other beers available and you just want to get drunk. Some varieties are considered “trendy” and “refined” in the same way certain wines are, but if you are ordering a Tripel to look sophisticated, you may end up regretting the decision. Your best bet is to try a bunch of beers and see what you like. Here's a very quick overview of some popular types of beers worth exploring, as well as some terminology that will help you ask for them at stores and bars.

Types of Beer

Ales and pale lagers are the most common families of beer, but there's a vast world out there to explore. Here's the tip of the iceberg.

- ▣ **LAGERS.** Lagers are the most popular beers in the world, and probably what you've been drinking most of your college career (Bud, Miller, Coors, et. al. belong to the family of pale lagers). That said, the world of lagers is extremely varied, and each beer-drinking country has its own varieties. Light lagers are generally—but not always—lower in alcohol and more carbonated than dark lagers, which get their richer flavor and color from roasted barley and hops. Another popular variety is the pilsner, a light-colored lager hailing from Europe—it is generally hoppier and more bitter than its American cousin. You might also run into German lagers of the “bock” family—you'll notice they're maltier and higher in alcohol content. Lagers are usually stored and served at cold temperatures, and in general you can expect an ABV of about 4–5.5%.

- ▣ **Ales.** As with lagers, the diversity of ales is astounding. However, if you need some basic ways to differentiate, here goes: Ales are less carbonated, lower in alcohol, and have a stronger taste of malty hops. There are bottled varieties, but ales are really best when cask-conditioned and served from the tap. “English Bitters” are the kings of ales, especially when served at room temperature with a nice pie. Brown ales—most famously Newcastle Brown Ale—are also popular, and they’re generally distinguished by their reddish-brown coloration and a sweeter taste of fruitiness or nuttiness. Darker “porters” are heavier and have a complex, chocolaty flavor. Finally, pale ales are generally known for their balance of malt and hops.
- ▣ **STOUTS.** Technically, stouts are a sub-category of ales, but we think they’re worth mentioning in their own right, mostly because a lovely drop of Guinness is always a great fallback. Stouts are dark, often with a creamy head and taste of roasted barley (think chocolate and coffee undertones). Oatmeal, chocolate, and oyster stouts are also interesting options.
- ▣ **HEFEWEIZEN.** The hefeweizen, hailing from Germany, is the most popular variety of wheat beer. Wheat beers are highly carbonated and generally have a cloudy appearance when poured. The wheat provides a crisp, refreshing taste that makes these beers popular in summertime.
- ▣ **BELGIAN/FRENCH/TRAPPIST.** Expect far higher alcohol content, stronger tastes, and funny glasses. Generally, these are considered “sipping” beers, so you won’t find them in a standard Irish pub or late-night hot spot. True “trappist” ales are rare because they are literally brewed by or under the control of Trappist monks. Only seven of the 171 Trappist monasteries produce beer (six in Belgium, one in the Netherlands), the most famous of which are Chimay and Orval. The different strengths are generally labeled Enkel (“single”), Dubbel (“double”), and Tripel (“triple”). Belgian blonde ales, being lighter and more akin to a hefeweizen, are a good introduction to the often intimidating world of Belgian and French beers.

With the ranks of Duvel-quaffing beer geeks filling up fast (thanks hipsters!), the call has come to separate the wheat from the chaff in the beer community. No longer does “hating Coors Light” make you eligible for the club. So get out there and learn what great beer is all about!



Hazard: **Coping with the One-Year Rut**

While this chapter has focused on the lighter side of graduation, we'd be remiss not to acknowledge that you'll inevitably hit some speed bumps as you transition into life beyond the dorms. So before we immerse you in the joys of the job hunt, finding an apartment, getting health care, and all that fun stuff (ie. the rest of this book), we wanted to make a quick P.S.A. . . .

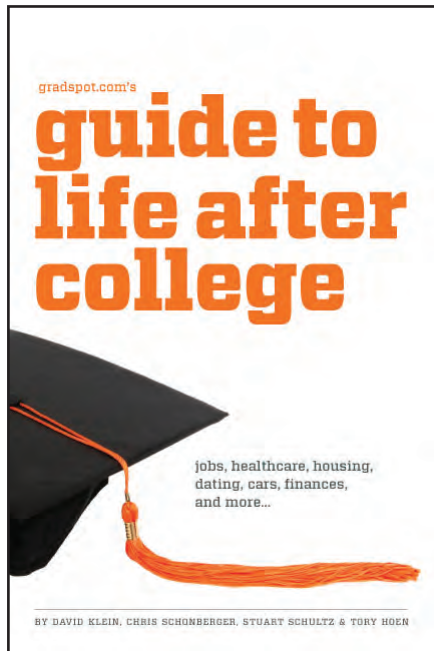
We aren't going to lie: Post-college life isn't all fun and games. No matter what stage of the post-college transition you find yourself at, it's almost inevitable for a "grass is always greener" mentality to creep into play at some point. For one thing, missing college is totally normal. Yet, there are also more complex dilemmas. The people who jump right into a job begin to feel burnt out and wonder if they should have taken time off. The ones who took time off fear that they have fallen behind. Socially, it can grow harder to stay in touch with friends, and demanding work schedules make dating and hanging out much more difficult than they were in college. To add insult to injury, in comes the myriad of new responsibilities to seize and issues to confront that, quite frankly, most grads aren't prepared to face.

We aren't telling you the above to worry you. It's quite the opposite. We're telling you to prepare you for what's going to occur. You're going to hit some ruts, but just like the millions of recent grads who came before you, you'll persevere. How do we know? Because yes, even we, the good folks at Gradspot.com, recently went through and got through it all ourselves, as did our friends. And you and your friends will too. However, as you're navigating the at times bumpy road ahead, make sure to maintain the perspective that you are not the victim of a massive anti-recent grad conspiracy—"the rut" is normal, and you're in control of your own life, so get out there and do your thing. As you keep reading, please keep this chapter in mind and continue to reference it every so often in order to take some of the attention off work, roommate problems, and anything else that's getting you down. And whenever you do confront an issue, instead of freaking out like we may have done, just turn to any page in this book and find a solution to your problem. Journey forth, young grad (and turn the page). ■



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