Life After Yale

A Guide for Yale College Class of 2015

Yale University
Office of Career Strategy
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The alumni who offer advice throughout this guide deserve a round of applause for making the transition to life after Yale and being willing to share their experiences with the senior class. We have incorporated many of their tips.

Special thanks to the staff of the Office of Career Strategy for their work on this publication.
To the Class of 2015:

As you embark on the adventures that lie ahead—graduate/professional school, a new job, a fellowship, travel, or something unique—you will face many new, exciting challenges.

There will also be many “firsts.” Finding an apartment, setting up utilities, managing a personal budget, and cooking on your own are just a few of the experiences that may be new to you. To help you make a smooth transition to the “real world,” we have compiled information on these topics and many more that we hope will be of interest.

Because recent alumni are the best resource for tips, information, and insights about what it is like to leave the comforts of Yale, we have surveyed them about these issues and included many of their thoughts and experiences throughout this guide. We hope that next year you will also lend your newly acquired expertise to the guide.

Aside from these practical tips, the staff at OCS is available to provide professional assistance regarding your career. Our resources, website (ocs.yale.edu) and career advising appointments are available to you as alumni.

Best wishes to you as you start your new life!

Office of Career Strategy
Yale University
1. Keeping the Bulldog Alive

There are dozens, if not hundreds, of ways you can stay involved with Yale as an alum: volunteering, networking with other alumni, traveling the world, or developing your personal or professional interests. All over the United States and abroad, Yale, regional alumni associations (often called “clubs”), and Yale alums host social events to connect you with other alums — younger and older alike. Your alumni experience is what you make it — and there are plenty of opportunities to make it meaningful.

AYA: Your Alumni Home Base

Be sure to bookmark the Association of Yale Alumni (“AYA”) homepage, www.aya.yale.edu. The AYA will alert you to alumni news, regional Yale clubs, your class officers, Shared Interest Groups, Students and Alumni of Yale (“STAY”), online services, and major alumni initiatives. In addition to this virtual hub, visit the Rose Alumni House at 232 York Street—right in the center of campus—when you return to New Haven. The AYA’s doors are always open to alumni visitors.

Staying Connected with the Class of 2015

The strong bond you established with your classmates doesn’t have to end with graduation. Volunteering to help your class officers plan events ensures that the Class of 2015 will stay close for years to come.

- Regional Events. Younger classes often organize multi-class events in major metro areas so people have the chance to see friends who attended Yale at the same time.
- Last Home Football Game. The AYA sponsors Alumni Village outside the Yale Bowl during the final home football game of the season. Many classes hold their own tailgates.
• Class Notes. It’s the first part of the *Yale Alumni Magazine* you’ll flip to. Find out what your classmates are up to and report your own news by emailing your Class Secretary.

• Reunions. Every five years, spend a weekend at Yale reconnecting with your classmates.

If you are interested in organizing a class event or getting involved in class leadership, contact one of your class officers: Joshua Barrett (joshua.barrett@yale.edu) and Rachel Tobin (rachel.tobin@yale.edu), co-secretaries, and Sandra Medrano (sandra.medrano@yale.edu), treasurer.

**Connect**

**Regional Yale Clubs**

No matter where you choose to live after graduation, there is likely to be a Yale Club or Association in the area. From Seattle to Miami and Hong Kong to Berlin, Yale Clubs and Associations provide the foundation for alumni activity around the world.

Getting involved with a club is a key way to make contact with other Yalies in your career field. It’s also a great way to make new friends in a new town. There are a wide variety of events sponsored by the clubs. Some promote networking, others offer service opportunities, and still others encourage continued scholarship. Happy hours, dinners, and other social events are popular ways to meet and network with other Yalies. Educational programs, seminars, and visits from Yale faculty and administrators keep alumni abreast of goings-on at the Yale campus and around the world.

Several Shared Interest Groups (see below) have active regional chapters, particularly in larger cities. You can find out more either through a SIG’s national chairs or through the local Yale Club.

To find the contact information for the Yale Club closest to you, go to [www.aya.yale.edu/content/clubs](http://www.aya.yale.edu/content/clubs). This will link you to regional club pages where you can find the events calendars and officers’ contact information.

**Shared Interest/Identity Groups**

In addition to the traditional building blocks of clubs and classes, Yale alumni can connect through affiliations created through shared interests. Such interests may stem from student activities or associations while at Yale,
or through a common vocation or avocation. These alumni connections complement the work of clubs, classes, and graduate and professional alumni associations. Some of the largest SIGs are listed below. You can find a complete list at [www.aya.yale.edu](http://www.aya.yale.edu). Also follow us on Twitter for information on the latest SIG events @YaleSIGs.

**Yale Black Alumni Association (YBAA)**
[www.ybaaonline.org](http://www.ybaaonline.org)
The Yale Black Alumni Association is a national organization whose mission is to serve, involve, and inform the Yale community of Black alumni to build powerful networks, promote mentoring, create initiatives, and execute programs that connect members to one another, their communities, current Black students and faculty, and Yale.

**Asian and Asian-American Yale Alumni (AAAYA)**
[www.aaaya.org](http://www.aaaya.org)
AAAYA provides a vehicle for Yale University alumni to promote the civic participation, leadership, and service of Asian Americans and Asians at Yale and in the broader society.

**Yale Latino Alumni Association (YLAA)**
[www.yalelatinos.org](http://www.yalelatinos.org)
YLAA serves as an umbrella organization supporting the diverse communities of Latinos joined by their connections to Yale.

**Yale Latino Alumni of the Tri-State Area (TSA)**
[www.facebook.com/groups/74153164552](http://www.facebook.com/groups/74153164552)
TSA supports the diverse communities of Latinos joined by their connections to Yale who are residing in or otherwise affiliated with the New York tri-state area.

**Native American Yale Alumni Association (NAYA)**
[www.yale.edu/nacc](http://www.yale.edu/nacc)
NAYA is a national organization dedicated to fostering relationships among Yale’s Native alumni and supporting the success of future Native leaders through recruitment, encouragement, mentoring, and service.

**Yale GALA: LGBT Alumni Association**
[www.yalegala.org](http://www.yalegala.org)
Yale GALA is an educational and cultural organization that promotes the well-being and betterment of the Yale University LGBT community, including alumni, faculty, students, and the public at large.
Yale Alumni Chorus Foundation (YAC)
www.yalealumnichorus.org
The Yale Alumni Chorus began in 1998 with a tour to China, where its mission of promoting international harmony through the universal language of music began. It has since traveled as ambassadors of song to England, Wales, Russia, the Netherlands, South America, and South Africa, building relationships through music and cultural outreach. It also supports the creation of new choral music by commissioning new choral works for its tours.

Yale Political Union Alumni Association (YPUAA)
www.yale.edu/ypu/alumni
The YPUAA is developing its board and membership network. Since its founding in 1934, the Yale Political Union has been a fixture on Yale’s campus. Through war, recession, protest, and controversy, the Union has survived as an enduring intellectual force on campus and in America.

Yale Life Sciences Alumni Association (YLSAA)
email: JHuang@IIRUSA.com
YLSAA is a volunteer-based organization that seeks to foster a strong global network of Yale alumni in the life science community.

Yale Science and Engineering Association (YSEA)
www.ysea.org
YSEA is a group for alumni interested in science and engineering.

Yale Alumni Real Estate Association (YaleAREA)
www.yalearea.org
YaleAREA is a group of alumni from Yale College and various professional and graduate schools at Yale who share an interest — professional or personal — in real estate.

Yale Athletics Sport Associations
www.yalebulldogs.cstv.com/boosters/yale-boosters.html
The mission of the Sport Associations is to provide all alumni and friends of Yale with information about athletic programs, to support Yale’s current student-athletes, and to sustain the proud and storied history of Yale athletics. Through career networking and job placement, special events, and fundraising to support Yale’s teams, the Associations enhance the student-athlete experience and establish a strong connection between Yale Athletics and the greater Yale community. The Sport Associations invite all alumni,
parents, and friends to join as many individual sport associations as they wish.

YaleWomen
www.yalewomen.org
The mission of YaleWomen is to create a vibrant, engaged community of alums, drawn together by the common thread of our Yale experiences, who are committed to advancing women’s voices and perspectives and to enriching and inspiring one another, Yale, and the world.

Yale Blue Green
www.facebook.com/YaleBlueGreen
The mission of Yale Blue Green is to connect and inspire Yalies and non-Yalies interested in the environment, clean energy and sustainability by leveraging Yale’s world-class resources, faculty, and alumni.

Yale in Hollywood
www.yaleinhollywood.com
With chapters in Los Angeles, New York, Toronto and Hong Kong, Yale in Hollywood is your alumni source for all things entertainment. The mission of Yale in Hollywood is to help alumni get their foot in the door and connect alumni within the industry. Vibrant programs and conferences are a hallmark of the organization. Get involved!

Yale Veterans Association (YVA)
www.yaleveterans.org
The Yale Veterans Association is comprised of Yale alumni, students, faculty and staff who have served in uniform. Its mission is to leverage the strengths, talents and dedication of its members and friends to uplift and support fellow veterans, and to cultivate leaders for military and public service.

Yale Alumni Journalism Association (YAJA)
www.linkedin.com/groups/Yale-Alumni-Journalism-Association-4447694/about
The Yale Alumni Journalism Association provides a forum for Yale men and women to participate in the national conversation on the role of a free press.

STAY (Students and Alumni of Yale)
yale.edu/stay; or email stay@yale.edu
You may already have heard of STAY– Yale’s exciting student-alumni organization founded by Yale alums, the AYA, professional schools, graduate
schools, and Yale College student leaders. Whether or not you served as a STAY committee member while you were at Yale, STAY welcomes all alums to take part in STAY-sponsored initiatives such as student-alumni leadership forums, sessions on financial literacy, career panels, service initiatives, and networking/social events. Unique in the Ivy League, STAY offers many ways to collaborate with Yale students long after you’ve graduated. Questions? Reach out to the best email address in Yale history: stay@yale.edu!

Social Media and Email Subscriptions

Sign up to receive e-newsletters produced by Yale departments with information on campus news and events, and stay connected with Yale people and activities around the world through social media — and use the hashtag #YaleAlumni on your own posts about alumni events.

Email subscriptions: yale.edu/subscribe

Facebook: facebook.com/yale

Twitter (@Yale): twitter.com/yale

Instagram (@Yale): instagram.com/yale

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/school?id=18043

YouTube: youtube.com/yale

Tumblr: yaleuniversity.tumblr.com

Flickr: flickr.com/yaleuniversity

Professional Online Identity

Social media is a powerful tool, allowing you to create connections with employers and professionals, build your personal brand, and maintain social relationships. But if not managed wisely, your online identity could be harmful. Employers may conduct online searches to vet potential candidates. Content and photos found online could impact how potential employers perceive you, and if they are inappropriate or offensive, may cost you an opportunity. To avoid this, follow these tips for maintaining a professional online presence:

Search your name through Google and other search engines to see what information is available; are you comfortable with what is viewable? Take
steps to remove content you would not want an employer to see and adjust your privacy settings as needed.

If there is information online that you would rather employers not see, focus on building your brand on professional networking sites such as LinkedIn so that less flattering information will appear lower on a Google search.

To be safe, assume content and images you post on social and professional networking sites may be seen by potential employers.

Volunteer

Alumni Interviewing for Yale College Admissions (ASC)

Approximately 8500 alumni around the world conduct evaluative interviews of prospective students for the Office of Undergraduate Admissions as part of the Alumni Schools Committee. Prospective students enjoy meeting alumni and learning about their experiences at Yale, and alumni find that ASC work keeps them connected to the University. The primary responsibilities of an ASC member are to conduct the interviews assigned by a local ASC Director and to report back to the admissions office. The time commitment varies by local committee. To learn more or become a part of your local ASC email Donna Alchimio at donna.alchimio@yale.edu.

Alumni Leadership — Become an AYA Delegate

Each fall, hundreds of delegates to the AYA Assembly representing diverse alumni constituencies meet on campus for a two-day conference. The Assembly is the preeminent leadership development program for alumni. The Assembly is actually two things. First, it is the body of delegates, as outlined by the AYA Constitution, who serve as representatives of the alumni community. Second, it is the annual gathering of these leaders that is held on campus in New Haven on the weekend of the last home football game in November. Delegates are elected or appointed to attend the Assembly as representatives of a regional Yale Club, Yale College class, graduate or professional school alumni association or shared interest group; in addition, there are other volunteer leaders who serve as ex officio delegates. There are also at-large delegates to the Assembly who represent alumni outside of these constituencies. If you are interested in becoming a delegate for a specific group on campus, contact your regional Yale club, your class officers, or your shared interest group. For more information about how to become an at-large delegate, contact Nicholas Roman Lewis at nicholas.lewis@yale.edu.
Yale Day of Service

A highlight of regional club activity calendars is the Yale Day of Service. The tradition of service rooted in Yale’s past is perhaps more relevant today than ever. The global Day of Service allows alumni and friends to participate in a unique event as the larger Yale community collectively embodies Yale’s commitment to service to others. Last year over 3500 volunteers made a difference in their local communities as part of the Yale Day of Service; we invite you to join us each spring! For more information, visit www.yaledayofservice.org.

Yale Alumni Service Corps (YASC)

YASC provides an opportunity for alumni, family, and friends to join in global service, to immerse themselves in a foreign culture, and to connect with people in the local community. YASC projects vary — from medicine to education, arts, construction, and more — building on the diverse skills of our alumni constituency. For more information or to get on the service tour e-mail list, go to www.yaleservicecorps.org.

Partner with Office of Career Strategy (OCS)

Alumni are invited to partner with OCS in many ways. Consider sharing your expertise by participating in an OCS educational program or hosting a student at your organization through the job shadowing program. For more information, contact OCS at careerstrategy@yale.edu.

Keep Yale Going Strong:

Participate in the Yale Alumni Fund as a member of the Bulldogs of the Last Decade (BOLD)

Congratulations! With leadership by Co-Chairs Denzil Bernard SM, Evi Steyer TD, Jake Dawe TC and Schuyler Arakawa SY and more than 175 volunteers within the colleges, the Class of 2015 achieved 78% participation and raised over $26,000. The final impact of the Senior Class Gift included an additional $74,000 thanks to alumni and parents who helped encourage participation by challenging the class.

By supporting the senior gift, you have already contributed to the Alumni Fund and made an immediate impact on campus. This fall, Timothy Dwight and Trumbull Colleges will each have a Nathan Hale Associates scholarship named for the class and presented to an incoming freshman because they
secured at least 95% participation. Pierson will also receive two scholarships in recognition for raising the most dollars ($3,568) and for having the highest average gift ($46) during the Campaign.

Every gift made by members of the Class of ’15 represents the class’s ongoing commitment to the University. “In donating to the Alumni Fund, one may broadly decide how to allocate a donation from six potential pools; thereby signaling to the administration what its soon-to-be-youngest alumni think is most important. Donating to Yale implies an endorsement of the culture and philosophy Yale represents: lux et veritas. Light and truth.” [as written by previous SCG Co-Chairs in the Yale Daily News 2/17/09.]

Now that you have graduated you are officially a member of the Bulldogs of the Last Decade (BOLD). Even though you may have physically left New Haven, do not underestimate the impact that your continued support can make here on campus. Last year, relatively small gifts (under $100) to the Alumni Fund raised nearly $1 million collectively! Just like the Agents promoting the Senior Class Gift, the Alumni Fund depends on dedicated class volunteers to meet fundraising goals.

Even after graduation, you can stay connected and make a difference by volunteering for the Yale Alumni Fund, which takes only a few hours each year. As a volunteer, you would be involved in shaping class communications and raising money for the areas of most need at the university. If you’re interested in joining the ranks of the 2,000 other Alumni Fund volunteers as a class agent for 2015, please contact youngalumni@yale.edu.

As a new alumni and a member of the Bulldogs of the Last Decade, you will be contacted by the Yale Alumni Fund for an annual gift each year. These gifts differ from class dues in that they provide the university with immediately expendable core support for basic operations and new programs. To receive credit in the Alumni Fund, your gift must be designated to one of six categories. These include unrestricted purposes, facilities, faculty support and curriculum development, financial aid, library resources, and undergraduate life. You can always support Yale College online by visiting www.yale.edu/giveYC. The Alumni Fund’s annual campaign year runs from July 1 to June 30 (along with Yale’s fiscal year).
Learn

Yale Educational Travel

The AYA arranges a wide range of exceptional travel programs for alumni and their friends and families. Our customized, faculty-designed trips provide unforgettable academic journeys. You will experience illuminating discussions led by Yale professors, meaningful engagement with fellow alumni, and captivating travel destinations. Join a Yale Educational Travel program today and see why so many alumni choose to travel with Yale. For more information or to register, visit www.yaleedtravel.org, call 203-432-1952, or e-mail edtravel@yale.edu.

Online Resources

As newly minted alumni, you can take advantage of the Yale University “Online Alumni Community.” The online community is password restricted to registered users only. In the weeks before Commencement, you will receive an e-mail message (most likely to your name@yale.edu account) from the AYA inviting you to register. Registration is free, easy, and allows you to take advantage of the following services:

Online Alumni Directory (OAD)

The online directory contains information for all Yale alumni, including you. Once you register for the online community in spring 2015, you can update your address and contact information online. Doing so ensures that your fellow alums can reach you and that your copy of the Yale Alumni Magazine will be sent to the right address. You’ll also receive important notices, such as new online services under development, and class news and events. You can also tailor how your personal and professional contact information will be available to other alumni. For example, if you want others to reach you by e-mail but do not want to disclose your home phone number, you can suppress that piece of information while still displaying other parts of your record.

Yale Career Network (YaleCN)

The Yale Career Network gives you the opportunity to interact with other alumni and students. The YaleCN is a database containing substantial career profiles for over 14,000 alumni who have volunteered to be available to speak with you about careers, cities, and other topics relevant to networking. After
you have registered for the online community in spring 2015, you can use this tool to search for interesting alumni by a range of criteria, create your own profile in order to make yourself visible and available to other alumni and to current Yale students, and upload a copy of your resume. Visit www.aya.yale.edu/career and start networking!

Virtual Yale Station (VYS)

After receiving your invitation to join the Yale University Online Alumni Community shortly before Commencement, you’ll be able to create a Virtual Yale Station (VYS) permanent e-mail forwarding address free of charge. This means you can maintain a permanent address such as yourname@aya.yale.edu that will forward mail to any e-mail address you choose. Your VYS account does not receive or store any e-mail, it just forwards it to any email address you designate. One advantage is that if you change e-mail addresses, you need to update only your forwarding address; your VYS address stays the same. You should note that this is a completely new e-mail address that is independent of your Yale account and does not forward e-mail that comes to your current Yale email account. You will receive information about your Pantheon account directly from Yale ITS, but it generally remains active until the fall.

Yale on iTunes
itunes.yale.edu

Open Yale Courses
oyc.yale.edu

JSTOR Access for Alumni
www.aya.yale.edu/content/jstor-access

Yale News
news.yale.edu

Yale Daily News
www.yaledailynews.com
2. Living Within Your Means: Money and Taxes

There is no one plan for all everyone regarding these fun topics, but we’ve outlined some basic considerations and asked alumni for advice, most of which we’ve left in their own words. None of these comments should replace professional advice from an accountant or financial planner, but we hope that they at least draw your attention to these important subjects.

Budgeting for the New Graduate

Unless you landed a job with a salary so high you couldn’t possibly spend it all, you need to begin thinking about developing a reasonable monthly budget. Whether or not you’ve landed a job, establishing a budget, actual or estimated, will help you determine what you can realistically afford to spend each month and prevent you from overextending yourself financially. Meg Martinez ’10 encourages you to “make a budget (even if you have to revise it a million times) and keep track of what you spend.”

Jennifer Shelby ’13 suggests to “find a smart phone budgeting app that works for you, like XpenseTracker or Mint. In your first few months out, challenge yourself to enter each expense as you spend — every last one, right down to that snack you just bought from the food cart. You’ll gain a realistic perspective of your monthly costs and where you can tighten up or treat yourself.”

Sponsored by the Association of Yale Alumni and Students and Alumni of Yale (STAY), the Financial Literacy Workshop is a must for every student and alum who wants to learn more about managing personal finances. Held each spring, this workshop covers issues such as understanding your paystub, preparing income taxes and budgeting for food, clothes, and entertainment. Check the OCS events calendar for this and other workshops in the “Life After Yale” series: ocs.yale.edu.
Your budget doesn’t have to be an elaborate spreadsheet of numbers and formulas. A piece of paper or Word doc with plusses and minuses is a good enough start for now. We’ll keep it simple and divide your budget into two categories: income and expenses.

**Income**

Let’s start with your salary. Anyone who has ever been employed knows that your full salary isn’t what winds up in your bank account—the government takes its share first. Once you get your first paycheck you’ll know exactly how much the government is going to be taking, but for now an estimate will do. If a single person with no dependents makes $37,000 - $90,000 per year, assume that the federal government will be taking about 25 percent of each paycheck for taxes. Then there are state and sometimes city or local taxes. The more you make, the more they take, so adjust this figure accordingly. You can use online paycheck calculators found on sites such as [www.paycheckcity.com](http://www.paycheckcity.com) to estimate what your net, or “take home pay,” will be.

Many of you will be going on to graduate or professional school. Your “income” will most likely be a combination of research assistantships, scholarships, loans, and stipends. For loans, remember that there is always a loan origination fee of around 3 percent of the amount you borrow. So if you take out $10,000, you will only receive a check for $9,700. If you are receiving scholarships, assistantships, and/or stipends, pay attention to the way this funding will be disbursed to you. Some schools will apply this money directly to your student account, while others will cut you a check that you then use to pay your tuition and fees. In the latter method, you will need to report this income on your tax return and may have taxes taken out of your disbursement check as well. It may be best to ask if you can be paid directly into your student account.

Other possible sources of income include signing bonuses and any dividend checks you receive from personal investments. Since we’re working on a monthly budget here, only include those additional sources of income that you will be receiving monthly. A one-time windfall such as a signing bonus shouldn’t be factored in.

You can use the tax calculators at [www.bankrate.com](http://www.bankrate.com) to help estimate how much money will be in your paycheck or, if you don’t know what your income will be, how much your gross salary needs to be in order to cover your estimated expenses. There is also a student budget calculator to help those of you continuing your education.
Expenses

Here’s where the subtraction comes in. Your expenses will vary greatly depending on where you live. The cost of living in major metropolitan areas, including New York City, San Francisco, Boston, and Washington, DC, to name a few, is significantly higher than the national average. For those of you job searching, keep in mind that there are many other metropolitan areas that have lower costs of living and excellent quality of life.

Your expenses can be divided into four broad categories: household expenses, existing debt, personal/recreational spending and savings.

Household Expenses

Rent will likely be your biggest expenditure. It will vary considerably depending on where you’re living, but you shouldn’t plan on spending more than a quarter to a third of your monthly income on rent if you can avoid it. In areas with high costs of living, such as New York and Washington, DC, the amount you spend on rent will most likely be higher. You may be relocating to a city already familiar to you and have a good idea of what the rent is going to cost you. In case you don’t, check out websites such as www.rent.net or www.craigslist.org to get a sense of what you should expect.

In some cases you may need to find a roommate or two in order to comfortably afford your rent. If you are relocating for a new job, ask your new company whether they offer any kind of relocation services to help you find an affordable apartment. If you are entering graduate or professional school, contact the housing office at your new university for assistance. Most schools will have on-campus housing available, as well as resources for finding an apartment off campus. Some will also offer a roommate matching service.

The next part of your household expenses will be your utilities: electricity, gas, phone, internet, cable, renters insurance, and so on. Sometimes rent includes electricity, heat and/or hot water. Be sure to ask when considering a rental. When they are not included in the rent, keep in mind that some of your monthly expenses—renter’s insurance, for example—will have a fixed dollar amount so you’ll know the amount to budget for each month. See Chapter 4 for more on renter’s insurance. The rest of your utilities will vary from month to month, depending on your usage. When you call to set up your utilities, ask what the average monthly bill for your apartment was the previous year. Most companies have this information readily available, and although your personal use might vary from the average, at least you’ll have an idea of what
to expect. You may also want to ask about setting up a budget plan so that you have a set amount you pay each month. Jennifer Shelby ’13 suggests that “if you are living in an apartment that does not include electricity, remember to account for the fact that your electricity bills will vary widely throughout the seasons depending on how much heat or AC you use. I say this because I was shocked by the huge variation!” More information on utilities can be found in Chapter 4: Setting up House.

Finally, you need to consider transportation expenses associated with owning and parking a car or using public transportation. Depending on where you live, public transportation may be the easiest and most affordable option. An alumnus states that, “basically everyone in New York, LA, and other major cities commutes to work. This is particularly true for the straight-out-of-college kids who tend to live in less expensive parts of town. Hip places in Brooklyn for the twenty-somethings mean hours on subways and/or buses, and that means big transportation costs. You can almost always get a break on your commute through one of a number of agencies that conduct pre-tax commuter programs. A lot of people I know use www.wageworks.com, but there are plenty of others; in my case, my company provides the service itself. The way it works: you enter in your employee info on the agency’s website, you purchase the monthly commuter pass online in advance, and the purchase is taken out of your salary before you’re taxed on it. I save around 33 percent a month on transportation costs, and the subway ticket is mailed to me well before my old one expires, so I’m never surprised to find that my pass has run out.” If you will be commuting via public transportation, most subway, train, or bus systems have monthly passes available for purchase. Along with your commuting expense, don’t forget to budget a little extra for the cost of Uber or cabs for evenings out or personal errands.

For those of you living or working in areas where public transportation is not a viable option, you’ll most likely need a car. Owning a car comes with expenses, including the costs of purchasing, registering, and maintaining your vehicle. Undoubtedly, your parents and/or siblings have purchased a few vehicles at some point; it’s a good idea to discuss your needs with them for advice on finding the right vehicle for you. Additionally, www.bankrate.com and www.dinkytown.net have a number of auto calculators (buy vs. lease; new vs. used; auto payment calculator) to help you weigh your options, and websites such as www.edmunds.com and www.kbb.com can give you estimates on car values and car buying tips.

Once you have your car, don’t forget about insurance and registration. Registration fees and, in some states, car taxes are typically yearly expenses
that aren’t usually figured into your monthly budget, but it’s important to look into what it will cost you and plan ahead. Insurance may be a monthly, biannual, or yearly expense, depending on the payment plan you choose. Shop around; rates may vary. Also, you should ask about discounts for setting up both auto and renters insurance policies. (See Chapter 4 for more information on renters insurance.)

Additionally, you’ll need to factor in the cost of maintenance and filling your gas tank. You can get a good idea of how much to budget for gas by first estimating how many miles you’ll be driving per month. Use websites such as [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com) or [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com) to see how far your workplace is from your home; add extra miles for weekend trips to the store and going out. Next, check your car owner’s manual to get an idea of how many miles per gallon your car averages. Divide your estimated miles per month by the average miles per gallon to estimate how many gallons of gas you’ll use per month. Multiply this number by the price per gallon of gas in your area. Gas prices fluctuate regularly, so it’s better to use a slightly higher price to avoid underestimating. Websites such as [www.gasbuddy.com](http://www.gasbuddy.com) can help you find the gas stations in your area with the lowest prices and provide historical averages that you can use to project how much you may spend on filling up your tank.

Parking may be another expense to consider. Some apartments have parking included; others charge a monthly fee. The same holds true for your office or campus. Is there free employee/student parking, or are you at the mercy of a public garage? If you will be using a public garage, monthly rates are generally much cheaper than paying daily, so make sure you do a little shopping around to find a garage that is close, safe, and economically feasible.

**Health Insurance**

Healthcare and insurance coverage are major public policy issues that may be in flux over the next few years, so make sure you stay current on laws that may affect you. But for now, whether you are contributing to your employer’s plan or purchasing your own, health insurance is critical.

Most of you will have the option of signing up for healthcare through your employer, with your employer paying a portion of the cost as a benefit. Take advantage of this. If your employer doesn’t offer this benefit, if you’re freelancing, or if you’re job searching, don’t fret—you still have options.

Gabriella Puente ’13 suggests, “Don’t forget to schedule doctor appointments! You can use [zocdoc.com](http://zocdoc.com) to easily find nearby doctors based on your insurance coverage and you can schedule your appointment online. Remember to
schedule appointments with a primary care physician, OB/GYN (if female), dentist, eye doctor, and any other specialist that may be needed. Try to schedule your appointments for the year in advance because it can take weeks to get an appointment.”

First we’ll focus on demystifying some of the terminology you may encounter as you look at health insurance plans. Below are common terms and acronyms defined.

**HMO** — A Health Maintenance Organization is a type of health plan that contracts with doctors, health care providers, and hospitals, who agree to offer services at a fixed price and accept payments from the HMO. These plans have set guidelines you need to abide by. That means they tend to give members less flexibility in choosing doctors, and they require you to obtain referrals from your “Primary Care Physician” before you can see a specialist for services. These plans tend to be more affordable than other health plans, because they offer lower out-of-pocket costs, such as co-payments and deductibles, and lower premiums.

**PPO** — Preferred Provider Organization — Like an HMO, this plan also contracts with doctors, hospitals, and health care providers who agree to accept payments from the health plan. PPOs are less restrictive than HMOs, allowing members to choose doctors outside of the ones who have contracted with the network, though they may reimburse these doctors at a lower rate. Additionally, PPOs allow flexibility in seeing specialists without a required referral. Due to higher out-of-pocket costs and premiums, a PPO is typically more expensive than an HMO.

**Co-Payment** — A co-payment, or “co-pay,” is a predetermined fee that you pay when you access health care services. For example, some HMOs require a $10 co-payment for each office visit, regardless of the type or level of services provided during the visit, or a $15 co-payment when you fill a prescription.

**Deductible** — This is a predetermined amount that you must pay for health care expenses before insurance covers the costs. Oftentimes, insurance plans have yearly deductible amounts. For example, with a $100 deductible, you would be responsible for the first $100 in health care charges for the year. After that, the coverage would be split according to your plan formula which may cover a percentage of the fee charged, or limit your costs to a specific co-payment.
Premium — The amount it will cost you each month to purchase health coverage.

Evaluating Plans

Here are some key questions you should ask yourself when deciding on a plan. While this is not an exhaustive list, it will give you an idea of the range of considerations. Evaluate plans based on your individual needs.

How often do you see a doctor? Do you have any pre-existing medical conditions that need to be managed or monitored? If so, what types of services related to your condition(s) will be covered?

Are you taking any prescription medications? Are these covered? What deductibles or co-payments would you be responsible for?

If you have a history of using one physician, can you continue to see this physician under your new plan?

Are vision services covered? What about dental coverage?

How much is your co-payment per visit? Are there any yearly deductibles? How much are these?

No Employer Insurance?

Thanks to the recently passed health care reform laws, if you don’t have access to insurance through your employer, you can get coverage through your parents’ insurance plan until age 26. Talk with your parents about their insurance coverage to find out about the enrollment process and the cost.

Existing Debt

If you are lucky, you managed to get out of Yale without student loans and with a zero balance on your credit cards. However, some graduates will have one or both of these forms of debt, which will require a monthly payment. You may benefit a great deal from seeking professional advice on your options for managing your debt. An exit-interview advisor (for your student loans) or a financial advisor can offer solutions that may include refinancing or consolidating, and can advise you on how the current economy affects the options available to you.
Student Loans
The following advice applies to federal loan programs. If you have taken out loans through private sources, you should contact them directly regarding their loan-repayment process.

Here are some basics to know about loan-repayment. If you are going straight into graduate or professional school, you should submit a request for a loan deferment. Once granted, you will not have to make monthly payments on your loans until you have finished your next degree, but depending on the terms of your loan (subsidized or unsubsidized), interest may continue to accrue while you are in school.

If you are heading straight into the work force, you will have a “grace period” of six months before you need to start repaying your loans. Once repayment begins, there are four types of payment plans — standard, extended, graduated and income contingent. With the standard plan, you pay a fixed amount each month until your loans are paid in full. Your monthly payments will be at least $50, and you’ll have up to 10 years to repay. The extended plan also has monthly payments of at least $50, but you will have up to 25 years to repay your loans, depending on the amount you owe; you must have more than $30,000 in loans to be eligible for this plan. With the extended plan, you can choose to have fixed payment amounts for the life of the loan, or payments that start low and increase every two years, as with the graduated plan. If you choose the graduated plan, your payments will start low and increase about every two years, and you will have up to 10 years to repay your loans. With the income contingent plan, your payments are based on your ability to pay each year, and your monthly payments will be calculated on the basis of your annual income, among other factors. You will have up to 25 years to repay your loans with this option.

While it might initially seem best to go with the lowest possible monthly payment, don’t forget that you are accruing interest on your loans each month. So while you may save money on a monthly basis with the lowest monthly plan, the total amount you pay back could be much more than if you choose the highest monthly payments. This is not to say that every person will be able to subscribe to the standard plan. Based on the amount of money you borrowed and your upcoming salary, you may only be able to afford the lowest monthly payment. Making double payments, even once a year or so, can make a big difference in the amount of interest accrued.

You should also think about other debt when trying to decide which payment option to choose. If you pay less on a loan that charges an average of 7-percent
interest so that you can pay more on a credit-card that charges 17-percent interest, you are actually coming out ahead of the game. Begin by visiting the Direct Loans website, www.ed.gov/DirectLoan, and use their repayment calculators to determine what your monthly payments will be and which plan will be best for you. While on the website, check out the information on loan consolidation. If you have two or more federal loans, you may be able to consolidate them into one interest rate and one monthly payment. Oftentimes, this will lower the total amount you would be paying each month.

Credit Cards
If you’re lucky, you don’t have any credit card debt and are able to pay your balance in full each month. For those carrying a balance on your credit cards the goal is to pay off your debt as quickly as possible, but at the same time not to leave yourself so short on cash that you wind up charging even more. If you can afford it, pay more than the minimum monthly payment for each of your credit cards. Just paying the minimum barely covers the interest you generated in the course of the month, so you aren’t really getting ahead. Try to pay as much as possible above the minimum payment (without leaving yourself short on cash) to start reducing your total balance. If you are carrying more than one credit card, pick out the one that has the highest interest rate and pay it off as soon as you can, then move on to the next highest interest-rate card. If your interest rates are fairly even across your cards, begin by paying off the one with the lowest balance. That way you will reduce your number of monthly payments as quickly as possible while generating a feeling of accomplishment that you knocked out one card completely. Then remember to cancel the card or put it away for emergency use only. Keep in mind that canceling a credit card could negatively impact your credit.

For some of you with multiple credit cards, you may have the option of transferring your balances onto one card with a lower transfer interest rate. Before you start consolidating credit card debt onto one card, make sure you read the fine print and understand the terms of the transfer. There is often a transfer fee, and that lower interest rate may only last for a certain period of time. If possible, consult with a financial advisor to make sure this is the best move for you.

Stay focused on the goal of avoiding unmanageable credit card debt. An alumna suggests that you “only charge what you can afford to pay off at the end of the month, and if you do have credit-card debt, have a solid plan to pay it off quickly. Carrying credit-card debt costs a fortune!”
Other Debt
Have you purchased any large ticket items, such as a computer or furniture, for which you are currently making payments? Don’t forget to factor these payments into your monthly budget as well.

If you purchased any of these items on a “zero interest for twelve months” plan, be sure to pay off the full amount well before the deadline, or all of the accumulated interest from the twelve-month period will be added to your balance.

Personal/Recreational Spending

Some of your personal spending will be absolutely necessary, including groceries, toiletries, laundry, and prescription medications. Start with the assumption that you will spend between $50 to $75 per week on groceries, depending on how often you eat out, the number of store-brand, ready-to-eat, and organic foods you buy, and the cost of living in your area. If you stock up on basics when they’re on sale, make dishes from scratch instead of buying canned or pre-packaged, and buy generic versus name-brand items, you can trim your grocery budget. Toiletries can run you anywhere from $30 to $75 per month, again depending on how many name-brand versus generic items you buy. “Generic brands are really no different, except that they’re cheaper” advises Meg Martinez ‘10. Keep in mind that buying toilet paper in a 12-roll pack is cheaper in the long run than buying individual rolls; the same goes for many other toiletries, so carving out some space in the bathroom to store bulk purchases can save you money in the long run.

You should have a vague idea of how much you spend on laundry, since you have been paying to do it at Yale or in your apartment building for the last several years. If you will be working in an office where professional dress is required, don’t forget about dry cleaning. Laundromats and cleaners often have coupons and Groupons which can save up to 50%.

Next we move to the fun stuff—entertainment, clothing, and other miscellaneous expenses. Here are some activities that make your money disappear: going out to eat, buying your morning coffee, seeing a movie, going to a concert or the theater, subscribing to magazines, and purchasing music, new clothes, vacations, and haircuts, to name just a few. You probably know how much you currently spend on recreational items, so begin by factoring in that amount into your budget to get started.
If your budget is tight, you may need to reduce the frequency or expense of some of your excursions and indulgences.

If you start out in a big city, there’s ‘always so much to do.’ Keep in mind that not everyone is in the same income bracket -- so if you do tend to make more, you should try to accommodate friends who do not have the ability to spend as freely -- choose affordable/fun activities. Staying in and cooking dinner together is great fun, and something I have started doing in NYC, where eating out can really rack up the credit card bill. Make sure to start saving early, and don’t feel like you have to attend every party or go to every bar event that you see on Facebook. That said, have fun (within limits), because life must be defined by more than work alone.

— Alumna ’13

Savings

Establishing an emergency savings fund is necessary. Savings can give you peace of mind when unexpected challenges come your way. You’ll be grateful for the financial cushion an emergency fund provides if you experience a job loss, car trouble or even a medical emergency. An alumna suggests that you “start saving from the beginning. Make a habit of putting aside money every month that you don’t touch.” Another alum echoes that sentiment and recommends that you “make sure it’s the first thing out of your paycheck, not the last, otherwise you might find yourself postponing your savings every month.”

Start small and build up your fund over time. Though there are a wide range of guidelines on how much you should have in an emergency fund, a common recommendation is to have the equivalent of 3-6 months of your take home pay stored away in an interest-earning savings account.

Planning Ahead

Some of you may be preparing a budget before you know what your income will be (or perhaps where it will come from). Although it may seem impossible at first glance, it is feasible to live on a limited income, even in expensive cities. The key is limiting your expenses accordingly, perhaps by choosing not to live in the trendiest part of town or by having several roommates.
I’ve personally found that my expenses and cost of living take a toll on my disposable income (after taxes) and limit my saving, so I decided to get a part time job to help make some extra money and still allow me to do full-time work. I was very surprised how prevalent the test-prep/college admissions counseling market is. My job is strictly 9:00AM-5:30PM without travel or weekend work, so I am able to put in extra hours as an SAT tutor/college admissions consultant. Rates for this type of work vary from $25-$50 per hour and it’s a self-designed schedule. Test-prep agencies are keen on recruiting graduates of Ivy-League colleges, so it makes for a great opportunity for anyone looking to earn extra income. Some of my other Yale friends do similar work independently or through online agencies. There are tons of flexible and high-paying part-time gigs out there in the test-prep agencies.

—Monika Adamczyk ’10

Staying Organized

In the end, you want to make sure you have a good idea of how much you spend every month so you can work out how to live within your means.

Monika Adamczyk ’10 has found that “Quicken is a great program for doing budgets, so long as you are committed to keeping up with it and do monthly reconciliations. It allows you to download expenses and class them based on self-created categories and gives you a visual picture of your expenses and how you are measuring up to (or surpassing) your self-created budgets. Other free programs exist to help recent graduates do the same; www.mint.com is an online tool similar to Quicken and PearBudget is a useful Excel sheet that is great for budgeting.”

Another alumnus recommends Google Docs personal finance spreadsheets. These are free and customizable, and they can be edited from your phone or through your laptop. These will help you see precisely how much you are spending on eating out, clothing, entertainment, and other expenses. Remember, there is no one-size-fits-all way to manage your money; you may need to try out a few different methods to find one that works for you.

Still a little bit shaky on creating a budget? Here are some additional resources and suggestions from Yale alumni:

• *The Money Book for the Young, Fabulous & Broke* by Suze Orman
• *The Millionaire Next Door* by Thomas Stanley and William Danko
Credit Reports

Think of your credit report as your financial transcript and your credit score as your financial GPA, only this GPA is a bit more complicated to calculate. There are three nationwide consumer credit reporting companies — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion — that compile information on your credit history, including how many lines of credit you have open, how much you owe to each creditor, and your payment record. This information is used to calculate your credit score, which lenders use to establish your interest rate and terms for loans or credit cards. Your FICO score, the best known and most widely used credit score, is a three-digit number ranging from 300—850; the higher the number the better. Your score is seen as a predictor of your creditworthiness and likelihood to pay your debts on time.

With your written consent, your credit score can also be accessed by those evaluating your applications for insurance, home or apartment rentals, and employment. You want to keep your credit score as high as possible, so make sure you pay off all your bills on time, and consider consulting a parent or financial advisor for more help learning about and managing your credit report and score.

Needless to say, it is important to periodically check your report to clear up any discrepancies and guard against identity theft. It is also recommended that you check your credit report before applying for loans and/or starting your apartment search. Yes, landlords can turn down your rental application based on your credit report and score! You are entitled to receive one free credit report every 12 months from each of the three credit reporting companies, and you can always access additional reports for a fee.

An alumna recommends that you “check your credit report a few times a year with www.annualcreditreport.com just to make sure all the info is correct and nobody has opened any accounts in your name. The three free reports don’t have to be obtained at the same time, and credit monitoring services seem to be a waste of money. It’s easier to keep the report accurate from the beginning
than to get calls from a collection agency asking for a person you’ve never heard of regarding an account you never knew existed.”

Monika Adamczyk ’10 agrees, stating that checking your credit report and knowing your credit score “is an incredibly important step because it gives you a picture of where you stand and lets you correct any discrepancies that can endanger your ability to get loans later in life or could compromise your ability to get certain federal jobs. I would advise all recent grads to familiarize themselves with credit reports and basic tax forms because they are here to stay and financial literacy is an important life skill to develop.”

Taxes

If you are not familiar with income taxes, take time now to talk with your family, friends or a financial advisor to learn the basics. You don’t want to be surprised by owing more tax than has been withheld by city, state, and/or federal governments, or by the receipts and records you may need before April 15 (the deadline for filing taxes typically falls on April 15). For many, this year is the first year filing as an independent. If you are doing contract (or freelance) work, you’ll need to familiarize yourself with self-employment tax, which you may be required to pay every three months. The following are additional tips from Yale graduates on the fun subject of taxes.

The most complicated part of doing your taxes the first year after graduation is that half of the tax year was your last semester at Yale, while the second half probably involves moving, getting a job, going to school, traveling, etc. The most important thing is to get all of your paperwork together before you start, since your W2s and other forms might be mailed to your school, permanent, or new address. Most recent grads can e-file their federal returns for free (some states offer free options as well) using software available through the IRS website. Also, some tax prep services like H&R Block offer reduced rates for recent grads if you don’t qualify for free e-filing.

—Alumna

Here are a few tips on how to handle taxes for those fresh out of college. Seeking help is a great idea and will often get you big breaks on your taxes. I sat down with a representative from a financial company just a few blocks from where I work one evening. Within an hour the representative had gone through every conceivable deduction for which I qualified, and she knew plenty of tricks to save me money. I had only
worked three months in 2003 (after taking the summer off), I had been a student for half of that year, and I was a recent resident of New York (both state and city). In short order she used this and other information to get me a big tax break. Of course, the meeting wasn’t free— but the net profit was totally worth it.

— Alumnus

For people whose parents have always handled taxes before, it is an extremely good idea to talk with them about what you are preparing to do in terms of tax filing your first year out. Not only will they have good advice but (more importantly) they may need to know exactly what declarations and deductions you are making in order to have it line up with their own filing. Are you still a dependent? Are you declaring the work you did at your parents’ store over the holidays and summer? This sort of stuff can be very helpful for everybody involved, and may help avoid an ugly audit for your folks.

— Alumnus

You should also think about how taxes will affect your savings and investments. Believe it or not, now is the time to start thinking about retirement planning. To get the most out of your savings or investments, you’ll want to efficiently manage your future tax burden—I strongly encourage you to save in your company’s 401(k) plan (or the Thrift Savings Plan for federal government employees) and a Roth IRA. Having both types of accounts will allow you to save for future expenses, like your first house or retirement while managing how much you pay in future taxes.

— Alumnus

If your ideal occupation does not involve working for someone else and you would rather paint, write, act, direct, etc., following your own inspiration, you may experience the thrill of creating along with the reality of keeping your expenses in order, especially regarding tax issues. A recent graduate has outlined the following three suggestions:

Ask around amongst other people working that job for an accountant who specializes in helping workers in that industry. For example, there are accountants who specialize in waiters, and working with one was extremely helpful for me in my serving days. (To waiters: It is legal for you to claim as a business expense the money that you “tip out” to other restaurant workers.
Find an accountant who knows this; it makes a huge difference. Simply put, a trustworthy accountant with a focused expertise will know of more legal deductions and will save you much more money than the cost of the accountant’s services.

Second, keep receipts for your business expenses. For artists, these may often seem counterintuitive as “business” expenditures. Again, speak with a knowing accountant. Examples of expenses for actors include movie tickets/rentals and theater tickets as research, and travel in your car or on the subway to and from auditions; painters can deduct museum visits; musicians can deduct CDs and stereo equipment; all artists can deduct periodicals that relate to their industries, etc. These little deductions add up, and you should keep track of them. (If you spend cash on a deductible, then keep the receipt and write any details on the receipt you might forget. For example, if you call an alumnus after graduating to get some advice, and he isn’t kind enough to pick up the tab, then you should write “Dinner with ‘X’ for career advice post graduation” on the receipt and keep it in one place with your other receipts. If you use a credit or debit card, then bank statements and end-of-year reports will likely contain all the necessary information.)

Third, you may find it helpful to form a “dba” in your city, or a “Doing Business As” name. This is a relatively cheap form of license that allows you to open a bank account with a business name like “Mary Beth, dba Artist Girl.” Keeping a separate account with a separate debit card from your personal account can make keeping track of expenses easier, because you can pay for every business expense with that debit card. At the end of the year, this makes your separation of personal and business expenses very clear. At some point in your career it may make fiscal sense to incorporate. Again, speak with an accountant for the necessary expert advice, which can be both industry and state specific. (Roughly and inexpertly defined, incorporation is the creation of a formal business entity that is a more legally delineated and protected version of the above dba and often includes many tax benefits for self-employed people.)
You’ve heard the success stories: The friend of a friend who landed a fabulous two-bedroom loft with river views in a rent-controlled building for under $900 per month . . . and it allows pets. You’ve heard the nightmares: The cousin of your roommate who realized after his first night in the new apartment that his upstairs neighbor is a professional clog dancer . . . who practices at home. Searching for an apartment can be frustrating, but if you know where and how to look, what to look for, and what to avoid, it can actually be a fun experience!

The apartment searching process will vary depending on your personal situation. In this section, you will find general information on the many factors and considerations you may need to take into account as you go from starting your search to signing your lease.

Where to Start

Before you view apartments, it’s important to know what you’re looking for—otherwise, you may end up wandering all over town looking at places that you can’t afford or that don’t fit your needs. Here are a few questions to think about before you start this process:

- How much can you reasonably afford to spend each month on housing?
- Are you planning to live alone or do you want/need to live with a roommate(s)?
- Are you looking for short-term or long-term housing?
- Do you have any must-haves or specific criteria? (Location, furnished/unfurnished, smoking/non-smoking building, pets allowed, apartment size/number of bedrooms, etc.)

Keep in mind that your first place may not be your dream apartment, but you need to make sure it’s a place that you can live in, for a little while at least.
How Much Can You Afford?

A good rule is to spend no more than one-third of your monthly income (after taxes) on rent, though in areas with a high cost of living you may need to spend more. Now depending on the cost of living, you may not get all you hope for. On the other hand, if you’re moving to an area with a lower cost of living, you may be pleasantly surprised at what you can get. Keep in mind that apartment searching takes a degree of flexibility; your criteria may change once you see what is actually available.

Roommates

If you are moving to a new city with classmates or friends, you may already have made arrangements to share a place. Many new grads will discover that they cannot afford to live alone but don’t know anyone in their new city. There are certainly benefits to living with a roommate or two. In addition to saving money on rent, utilities, and household expenses, you have a social connection, which can be invaluable if you are new to the area.

There are various ways to find a roommate. Common resources are www.craigslist.org and Oodle Marketplace. Bulletin boards at bookstores and coffee shops can be a great way to find a roommate and/or a place in a specific neighborhood. Don’t forget about Facebook as a way to connect with friends and classmates who are planning to move to a specific area. You may also want to check with any groups or clubs you plan to join, including local Yale clubs. They may have online forums or housing resources you can access. In medium to large cities, there are roommate matching services you can contact for assistance. Typically you fill out an application, pay a fee, and the service will match you up with prospective roommates based on your stated preferences. Check local websites for information.

Cristina Isabel Ceballos ’13 suggests that “if you are going to live with roommates, keep in mind that living in apartment is different from living in college. You will have dirty dishes to wash, garbage to take out, a bathroom to clean, and all sorts of tasks that can create friction that did not exist in college. I recommend drawing up a house ‘constitution’ with some ground rules for communal living. The constitution should include a mutually-agreed upon and enforceable cleaning schedule. Do it at the beginning, before any big fights happen.

“That said, I think it’s much more fun to live with roommates than alone. In college, it was easy to find parties and social events: they happened right in
your dorm or a few blocks away. There was zero effort required. In the real world, you have to put actual effort into organizing things and it’s easy to fall into the life of a hermit if you’re not careful. Live with roommates, and you’ll have more of a social network and more fun.”

When posting or responding to ads, keep safety in mind. It’s best if you don’t give out your last name or too much personal information unless you are sure the arrangement will go forward. Be sure to meet with potential roommates and discuss your needs, wants, and lifestyle preferences to determine if you are compatible. If you agree to move in, be sure to get something in writing that states your share of the rent, utilities, etc. If they already have an apartment rented, make sure you get your name put on the lease so you are protected along with everyone else living in the apartment.

Short-Term or Long-Term Housing?

Depending on your situation, locking yourself into a 1+ year lease may or may not be the best option. If you are still job hunting, only planning to live in a location for less than a year, or not ready to commit to a particular neighborhood, then short-term rentals or sublets may be an option for you.

Basically, subletting is when a current tenant or lessee rents out all or part of their apartment to another person. This is typically done when the original tenant is relocating temporarily and intending to return to the apartment after a time away. A short-term rental is an agreement directly with the landlord to lease an apartment for a shorter than standard one-year time period (weekly, monthly, or for a few months).

Some people will choose to sublet an apartment for a few months while they get to know the area better and determine where they want to live. Subletting can also give you time to transition into a new job, apartment hunt, and/ or find a roommate. In addition, sublets often come with basic furnishings, which can save you a lot of hassle if you’re only planning to be in an area for a little while. You can find short-term rentals or sublets on craigslist, as well as in local publications such as New York’s Village Voice or the Boston Phoenix. For more information on subletting, review the section on “Signing a Lease or Renters Agreement” and “Protecting Yourself When Subletting.”

Specific Criteria

Here are examples of additional criteria to consider when preparing to begin your apartment search.
Types of Buildings
Depending on where you are doing your apartment search, there may be several types of buildings from which you can choose. You may rent an entire house, an apartment within a house, or an apartment in a complex. Some of these dwellings may have an on-site landlord, and a management company may run others. For obvious reasons, elevator buildings are usually more expensive. While high-rises (usually more than six stories) are required to have an elevator, some will also have a full-time or part-time doorman or elevator operator, and some will not. Doorman buildings, sometimes called “luxury buildings,” are usually among the most expensive buildings but can provide added security that walk-ups do not offer.

Inclusions/Exclusions
Various utilities are sometimes included in the monthly rent. The most common utilities to be included are heat and hot water. If you don’t want the added stress of an additional monthly bill, or if you live in a cold climate, you may want to consider looking for apartments that include heat. For those of you who prefer to have your place toasty, keep in mind that if heat is included in the rent, the landlord or management company typically controls the thermostat and is only required to heat the apartment to a certain temperature, usually 68 degrees. Occasionally electricity is also included, and in rare cases some landlords will even include basic cable or wireless internet service. Many apartment complexes in small to medium-sized cities include parking for tenants and occasionally have covered parking or a garage for an additional fee, though in large cities such as New York where space is at a premium, you shouldn’t count on this. Be sure to investigate exactly what is included in your monthly rent before signing a lease.

Location, Location, Location
Apartments in popular, trendy, or extremely convenient locations are typically the most sought-after and can cost quite a bit more money. When considering neighborhoods, take into account the length and expense of your daily commute, the availability of parking, and the proximity to public transportation, shopping, or nightlife. Determine what is most important to you. Would you rather be able to walk to work or live near a park? Is it important for you to be near a subway or bus line, or would you rather live off the beaten path? In addition, prices vary greatly not only by city but by neighborhood within a city, so be sure you are familiar with various sections.
I wish I’d known how important location is to your housing – a daily commute of even just 5-10 minutes eventually builds up over time, not to mention how tough much longer commutes can be. But at the same time, I wish I’d realized how important it is to balance location with cost.

-Nick Defiesta ‘14

Pet-friendly
It is much easier to find an apartment or sublet if you don’t have any pets. It’s common for landlords to specify “no pets allowed” in the ad. If you absolutely must have a pet, think small. Cats and small dogs (under 20 pounds) are much more likely to be allowed than a Golden Retriever. If an ad doesn’t specify whether pets are allowed and you are going to have a pet living with you, make sure to let the landlord know. When negotiating the pet policy with a landlord, offer to provide pet references from former landlords and your veterinarian, as well as proof of training classes completed to demonstrate that you are a responsible pet owner. Don’t try to sneak a pet into an apartment or assume that it is okay to have a pet, just because the landlord did not explicitly say pets are not allowed. Your landlord will inevitably find out, and you could risk losing your security deposit—or even eviction—especially if your pet does any damage.

Furnished or Unfurnished?
Unfurnished apartments are typically cheaper and more abundant. If you are planning to stay put for more than six months in the apartment or area, an unfurnished apartment may be the better financial decision. You can pick up inexpensive furniture at discount retail stores or look into purchasing used furniture through websites such as Facebook and craigslist. By going this route you have more control over the type and quality of furniture in your apartment.

Furnished apartments are usually more expensive than unfurnished and are typically harder to come by. So why would you choose this option? Furnished apartments are good if your living situation is relatively temporary. Those of you who are only planning to stay in a city or region for a few months, usually less than six months or a year at most, may be better off subletting or renting a furnished apartment than trying to purchase furniture for a short period of time.

If you do choose to rent a furnished apartment, make sure you are clear about what is and is not included. The contents will vary; some furnished apartments
have only the bare minimum, while others are fully stocked with furniture and kitchen essentials. When considering the apartment, take a good look at the furniture and evaluate it for cleanliness. You don’t know who was living there before you. Make sure the furniture and the living environment are at a standard you are comfortable with, or at least can adjust to for a short period of time.

After signing a lease or sublet agreement, go through the apartment with the landlord and make a list of all the furniture in the apartment. Taking pictures of the apartment and furniture while you’re with the landlord is also a good idea. This kind of due diligence can help you avoid any future disputes over the ownership or condition of items.

**Apartment Hunting**

Since most tenants are required to give at least 30 days notice when they’re vacating an apartment, you’ll want to start looking at least a month ahead of time. In some cities it is not uncommon for apartments to be rented within days — and sometimes even hours — from the time they are listed, so be prepared to work quickly. Block out a few weekends for your search. Every city has a number of places that list apartments for rent. Craigslist is a common search tool and covers cities around the world. You can also consider looking at local publications or websites for additional housing leads. In major metropolitan areas, such as Washington DC, landlords may simply put a “For Rent” sign in front of the building and rely on foot traffic and word of mouth to advertise the apartment. It doesn’t hurt to spend time walking around neighborhoods that interest you, both to get a feel for the area and for leads on apartments.

Realtors and apartment brokers are also an option to consider if you’re apartment hunting in a large city. Realtors/brokers often have access to a wider range of listings, including apartments that may or may not have made it to craigslist yet. In areas where apartments go quickly, realtors/brokers may give you an advantage by showing apartments as soon as they become available or by sharing leads on upcoming vacancies. Find out about any fees charged by the realtor before you establish a relationship with him or her. In some areas, the realtor/broker fees are covered by the landlord; in others, realtors will charge renters who use their listings or services. Sometimes the fee represents a percentage of the monthly rent (e.g., one half of one month’s rent), and other times it can be a percentage of the annual rent. This can translate into quite a bit of money on an expensive apartment. Check Facebook to find
brokers who are Yale alumni, particularly by checking the Oodle Marketplace section. LinkedIn is another good source for finding Yale alums in real estate.

If you are heading straight to graduate school, keep in mind that most schools have some sort of graduate student housing, whether on-campus or university-owned apartment complexes off-campus. Check with the graduate housing office to see what resources are available. An alumnus recommends, “Once you make the decision to head straight to graduate school from Yale, see if your new school publishes a list of students seeking roommates and available apartments. Add your name to the list. The key to finding a low-rent apartment and agreeable roommates is to begin your search early!”

Cristina Isabel Ceballos ’13 states that “for apartment-hunting in a competitive city, PadMapper, Lovely, and craigslist are your best friends.”

Deciphering the Ads

Apartment ads use a language all their own. Below is a list of some common abbreviations you’ll see in rental ads.

- ALC = Alcove
- APP = Application
- BR = Bedroom
- CA = Central Air Conditioning
- CEIL = Ceiling
- CONV = Converted / Convertible
- D/M = Doorman
- D/W = Dishwasher
- EIK = Eat-In Kitchen
- LR = Living Room
- M/W = Microwave
- NEG = Negotiable
- OH = Open House
- RM = Room
- SF = Square Feet
- W/D = Washer / Dryer
- W/W = Wall-to-Wall carpet
- XPSR = Exposure
- INCL HT/HW = Heat and hot water included in rent
- LNDRY = Laundry facilities in building

Most ads list apartments by the number of bedrooms and price. You’ll need to determine how many bedrooms you need for yourself and your roommate(s). In some cities, such as New York, it is common for recent college grads to rent smaller, less expensive apartments and put up a temporary “wall” in the living room to create an additional bedroom. There are companies that put up and take down walls for a fee. Not all landlords allow you to construct walls, but if you are permitted and want to save some money by adding another roommate, then this is an option to consider. If you don’t want to pay to put up a wall, but still want the benefits of another roommate, think about using
curtains or bookcases to block off an area and form a wall of sorts. Though this doesn’t lend quite the same amount of privacy, it is cheaper.

Checking the Place Out

On your first day of apartment searching, wake up early, get online, and identify the listings that fit your needs. Spend time making phone calls to set up as many showings as possible. Give prospective landlords your cell phone number, so they can reach you while you’re out looking at apartments. Before you leave a deposit or sign a lease, be sure to give the place a thorough check. You don’t want to find out after you move in that the toilet is broken and an army of roaches live in the kitchen cabinets.

Apartment-Hunting Checklist: What to Ask and What to Look For

Bathroom — What to Check

• Water pressure in the sink, toilet and shower. Do the faucets leak?
• Does the water heat up? Do the sink and shower drain?
• Look for mold throughout.

Kitchen — What to Check

• Which appliances are included in the rent? Do they work? Test them.
• Water pressure in the sink. Does the sink drain?
• Tap water — does it have an odd taste, smell, or color?
• Open the cupboards. Are they clean? Any evidence of pests or mold?

General — What to Check and What to Ask

• Outlets in each room? If possible, test them out. Bring something small, like a cell phone charger.
• Ethernet connections – Does the unit have them? Where?
• Carpentry rules – If the unit has hardwood floors, are there any carpeting rules? Does the landlord require that rugs cover a percentage of the floor to lessen noise? Buying rugs can add up.
• Are there cracks, water stains, or mold on the walls, floor, or ceiling?
• Working smoke detectors and fire exits — How many and where?
• Heating ducts — How many and where?
• Utilities — Who pays and controls? If you control them in the unit, test them (both heat and air).

• Windows — Do they seal and lock? Are they cracked? Do they stay open on their own? Are there screens? Are the screens in good condition?

• Pictures and decorating — Can you hang pictures or paint walls?

• Lights — Do they work?

• Pests — Look under radiators, in corners, and behind the stove for evidence of pests and traps.

• Exterminator — Who is responsible, the landlord or the tenant?

• Repairs — What is the process and wait time? Which is the landlord responsible for?

• Neighbors — Can you hear them?

• Do doors have deadbolts, adequate locks, and peepholes?

• Are there any strange smells?

Miscellaneous

• Hallways and stairwells — Are they clean and well-lit?

• Mailboxes — Are they locked and secure?

• Building security — Are there buzzers? Is the building locked?

• Doorman — Full- or part-time? When is he/she there?

• Laundry facilities — Are they clean?

• Snow removal and lawn care — Who is responsible?

• Water and trash removal — Are there extra fees for these?

• Parking — Is it included? Off-street or on-street? Visitor spaces?

• If possible, visit the apartment both during the day and at night to get a sense of noise and atmosphere.

You’ve Found A Place. Now What?

Making the Commitment

Once you’ve found a place you like, you need to be prepared to move quickly. It’s a good idea to bring your checkbook and supporting documentation, such as proof of income, when apartment hunting. You should also be prepared to leave a deposit to hold the place while the landlord verifies your information
and conducts a screening. If you leave a deposit, get a receipt from the landlord that clearly states what the deposit is for, and preferably that it is refundable if, for any reason, you don’t end up signing a lease.

Verification and screening can consist of contacting current or future employers to verify income, running a credit check and background check, and contacting any previous landlords for a reference. In competitive markets, landlords often require proof that you can pay the rent. Some may simply ask where you work, others want formal documentation. A recent pay stub from your job will usually suffice. If you haven’t started working yet, the landlord may request a letter from your future employer stating that you will be a full-time employee as of a certain date, along with verification of your salary. You should have these materials on hand in case you need them so you can work quickly to get the apartment.

In some cases, landlords may require that you have a guarantor or co-signer, which is a person, usually a parent or relative, whose personal income is some multiple of the annual rent. This may come up if, after verifying your income and credit history, the landlord is not totally comfortable renting to you. By agreeing to be the guarantor, this person basically assumes responsibility for the rent if you, the tenant, can’t pay. This is not a common practice, but it is possible in larger cities where rents are high or in situations where the landlord is uncomfortable renting to recent college grads who have not established themselves at steady jobs. If a landlord denies your application to rent an apartment, you have the right to inquire as to why and to clear up any discrepancies.

Security Deposits

You may have heard the phrase “first month, last month, security deposit” and probably thought little of it. However, when you do the math, those innocuous words can mean a lot of money. As the phrase suggests, it is common for a landlord or management company to require that you pay the first month’s rent up front; they may also want you to pay the last month’s rent and a security deposit before moving in. Security deposits can be anywhere from a few hundred dollars to one month’s rent. (The standard deposit varies from city to city.) Therefore, you may need the equivalent of up to three months of rent saved up ahead of time. The security deposit is returned to you when you move out of the apartment, assuming you didn’t break your lease and the apartment is in the same condition as when you moved in. To ensure that you get your entire security deposit back, it is a good idea to inform the landlord of any problems you find in the apartment when you move in (chipped cabinets,
broken floorboards, etc.) so the landlord doesn’t charge you for those when you move out. Consider taking photos or a video of the apartment shortly after moving in, and again when you move out, to protect yourself against claims that you damaged the apartment beyond normal wear and tear.

Signing a Lease or Renter’s Agreement

Most landlords require you to sign some sort of lease or renter’s agreement before you move in. Keep in mind that this protects both you and the landlord. Most leases are for a 12-month period, although they can be longer. Less common is a “month to month” lease, which means you are not committed to the apartment for a full year and can leave at any time as long as you give 30 days notice. This type of lease is beneficial for someone who doesn’t intend to stay in the same apartment for a full year.

Read the lease carefully before you sign it. Make sure you understand all terms of the lease and that special agreements, such as being allowed to have a pet or holding the landlord responsible for certain utilities, are clearly spelled out. Get a signed copy of the lease for your records. It is unwise to live in an apartment without some sort of written rental agreement.

Protecting Yourself When Subletting

Although subletting is a shorter-term option, it may still require you to go through the same process of verification, agreements, and deposits as renting does. Before agreeing to sublet a place, make sure the current tenant has received the landlord’s permission to sublet. Depending on the terms of the lease, the landlord may require that you complete an application and go through a background check before she or he approves of you occupying the apartment. Before you move in, make sure you have a written contract outlining the terms of the sublet. Never move in without a written agreement signed by every party involved.

Maximum Capacity

In cities with a high cost of living, such as New York, it’s not uncommon for recent grads on a tight budget to cram as many roommates as possible into an already tight living space. While you may be fine with sharing a small living space with many friends, your landlord may not be so accepting. To avoid problems down the road, make sure the landlord knows how many people will be living in the apartment. In some cases, your lease may specifically state the maximum number of occupants in the unit. Overcrowding and housing
violations are major concerns for landlords, and you don’t want to get on your landlord’s bad side, or worse, get evicted for violating occupancy terms outlined in your lease. Don’t let the landlord find out later that you have six people living in a studio with a maximum capacity of two.

**Additional Resources**

Recent alumni are often great resources for city-specific information. Below are some tips and resources for apartment hunters, provided by alumni currently living in cities around the country.

Housing resources can also be found at [ocs.yale.edu/content/housing](ocs.yale.edu/content/housing)

**New York**

*Village Voice* — [www.villagevoice.com](www.villagevoice.com) — Apartment ads

Metro Transit Authority — [www.mta.info](www.mta.info) — Public transportation schedules and maps. (Also use [www.tripplanner.mta.info](www.tripplanner.mta.info) for help with routes.)

Yale Alumni Association of New York — [www.yaany.org](www.yaany.org) — Apartment hunting resources


City Realty — [www.cityrealty.com](www.cityrealty.com) — Rental information

**San Francisco**

*SF Gate* — [www.sfgate.com](www.sfgate.com) — Apartment ads and public transportation

Rent-in-San Francisco — [www.rentinsanfrancisco.com](www.rentinsanfrancisco.com) — Apartment ads

**Chicago**

*Chicago Reader* — [www.chireader.com](www.chireader.com) — Search for apartments by zip code, type of housing and price range

Chicago Transit — [www.transitchicago.com](www.transitchicago.com) — Public transportation

**Boston**

*Boston Apartments* — [www.bostonapartments.com](www.bostonapartments.com) — Rental magazine
MBTA – www.mbta.com – Public transportation map and schedules

Los Angeles

Los Angeles Times – www.latimes.com – One alumnus recommends checking the ads online: “By the time it’s in print, the apartments are gone.”

Westside Rentals – www.westsiderentals.com – Paid rental listing service for Los Angeles and Orange County

South Bay Rentals – www.southbayrentals.com – Apartment listings for the Los Angeles area

Washington, DC

Washington Times Classifieds – www.washingtontimes.com – Apartment rentals

Metro Homepage – www.wmata.com – Transportation information

Roll Call – www.rollcall.com – Capitol Hill newspaper

HillZoo – www.hillzoo.com – Online magazine geared toward congressional staffers. Features classified ads


GW Hatchet – www.gwhatchet.com – GW’s newspaper that emphasizes grad housing options

Southern Management Corporation – www.apt-locators.com – Search for apartments in DC and surrounding area

Philadelphia

4 Walls in Philly – www.4wallsinphilly.com – Apartment rental guide

SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) – www.septa.org – Public transportation guide

Seattle

Seattle Weekly – www.seattleweekly.com – Comes out on Wednesdays
Abroad

If you’re planning to move abroad, it can be especially difficult to find housing in advance. To ease your move, try to connect with local alums, Yale Clubs, or expat groups, or check with your employer for resources.

Alumni living in Asia recommend walking around neighborhoods looking for realtors and agencies or using www.thatsshanghai.com (for Shanghai, Beijing, or Guangzhou). Another web resource is www.asiaexpat.com, which covers classifieds, nightlife, dining, etc., in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Singapore, and more.

In London, alumni recommend using www.loot.com or checking classified ads in the Evening Standard at standard.co.uk.

General

Apartment Finder – www.apartmentfinder.com – Search for apartments by zip code

Craigslist – www.craigslist.org – Apartments, furniture, roommates, and more; covers cities around the world

Oodle – www.oodle.com – Join a regional network to see local listings; postings often include furniture, miscellaneous items, and apartments for rent

Additional Tips

Here are some additional tips for success from alumni.

Moving to a new city will be kinda like freshman year, where you have to find a niche in the world all over again. It can get hard to find a community and friends at first, so remember to put yourself out there and socialize, using websites like Meetup etc.

-Alumna

Med students make the best roommates because they’re not there half the time and their life is always more stressful than yours.

—Alumnus

Graduate schools must deal with an influx of hundreds of students every year, so they have experience in helping people in your income and age brackets find housing. Why reinvent the wheel? Schools can provide listings or show you where professional listings are kept.

—Alumnus

I ran into an interesting situation where an agency offered me the apartment I wound up taking for $150 more than the landlady charges directly. Be wary of paying rent to a middle man!

—Alumna

Try and avoid moving into a place on September 1. That’s the day when all the students are moving into their apartments so the streets are crowded with moving vans. If you do have to move in on September 1, reserve a U-Haul early!

—Alumna
4. Setting Up House

For the past twenty-odd years of your life, it’s likely that electricity, cable, and heat were just there and you never gave much thought to where they came from, how much they cost, or how they got into your house or dorm room. For those of you facing the prospect of renting your very first apartment, “setting up house” can be a bit overwhelming. We’ll start by breaking down the essential and nonessential utilities to help you plan what you’ll need to do before you move in and to prepare your budget.

Essential Utilities

Electricity

There’s no getting around it: you need electricity. Find out the name of the regional electric company from your landlord, neighbors, or co-workers or look it up online by searching—you guessed it—“electric company” and your city or zip code. There is usually a toll-free number to call or an online system to help you establish your account. You can set this up in advance and have the company turn on the electricity beginning the day you move in.

Most electric companies give you the option of being on a “budget plan” or paying for the actual amount of electricity you use each month, which can vary greatly from summer to winter. The budget plan averages electricity costs for that apartment from the previous twelve months and then charges that averaged amount each month. At the end of the year they take the actual meter reading; if you overpaid, you get a credit on your account. If you used more electricity than the average, you’ll be sent an additional bill. Many prefer this type of budget plan because monthly bills will not fluctuate, making it easier to manage expenses. If you live in an apartment where you’re responsible for paying for heat or air conditioning, this cost can significantly add to your monthly expenses. If your apartment doesn’t have a thermostat that can be programmed to put out less heat during the day when you’re not home, make
it part of your morning routine to turn down the heat before you leave each
day. You’ll be happy you did when the bills arrive!

Depending on where you live, your electric company may have the option
for some or all of your electricity to come from renewable energy sources.
For more information on getting your electricity from the “Green Power
Network,” check with your electric company or refer to the U.S. Department
of Energy website.

Gas

Some apartments have a gas stove and/or gas heat. Usually the landlord will
give you this information, but if you aren’t sure, look at the stove. If it has
a flame burner, you will need to connect the gas. In some regions the gas
company and the electric company are the same, and you get one monthly bill
for both utilities. In many areas there are two separate companies that provide
service. Check with your landlord to determine how these utility companies
are organized.

Non-Essential Utilities

Telephone

Having a phone in your apartment was once considered an essential utility,
but with the wide variety of cell phone plans currently available, many people
choose to spare the expense of having a phone in their home and use their cell
for all calls. If you choose to get telephone service, do a little research ahead of
time to determine what plans the provider offers and which plan would be the
best for you. Don’t let them talk you into getting additional services you don’t
want or a more expensive plan you don’t need. You can always add services
later if it turns out that you need them.

Cable

Many of you may put cable into the “essential” category, but it is an expendable
luxury if you are on a tight budget. Depending on where you live, you may
not have a choice of which company provides your cable service, but some
metropolitan areas have access to more than one cable company. Every cable
company has a variety of plans, ranging from the most basic channels to
the most expensive premium cable channels. It is not uncommon for cable
companies to run specials for free installation, free premium channels for a
limited time, or other discounted deals. Find out the exact terms of the special
before agreeing to anything. Expanded service and premium channels are the usual culprits for extremely high cable bills, so unless you can’t bear to go without “Sports Center” or “The Daily Show” you may want to forgo these channels and stick to reruns of “Glee.”

Internet Service

It was very easy connecting to the wireless service at Yale, but in the real world there may be a bill collector on the other side of that service. Be sure to research internet service providers in your area and assess your needs before signing up for a service that may not be necessary. Keep in mind that you might not really need service at home, especially if you can get online with your smartphone or have wireless hotspots nearby. Also, when shopping around for internet service providers, look into package deals. The cable company may offer discount internet service to customers who are signed up for cable; the phone company typically has similar deals.

Note

If you are living with roommates, it is not a good idea to have all the utilities in one person’s name. While having a utility in your name is good for establishing credit (if the bills are paid on time) if your roommate bails on you, you don’t want to be stuck with your name on all the bills!

Non-Utility Essentials

Renters Insurance

You’re required to insure your car, but few people think about insuring the contents of their apartments. Landlords and management companies insure the building, but their insurance doesn’t cover your personal possessions in case of damage including broken pipes, fire, theft, or other dangers. That means you are responsible for insuring your own possessions. Additionally, renters insurance protects you from being liable if someone is unintentionally injured in your apartment, bitten by your dog, or if your personal possessions are stolen. You may be surprised at how quickly the value of your books, clothes and furniture add up. Most of you will be fortunate enough never to experience a burglary, fire, or other catastrophe, but some of you won’t be so lucky. Strongly consider getting renters insurance to put your mind at ease. Meg Martinez ’10 states “when in doubt, buy the insurance.”
Typically, renters insurance is inexpensive with policies as low as $10 per month. Most insurance agencies will give you an additional discount on your car insurance if you also open a renters policy. Shop around to see who offers the best deal. Before you begin searching, make a list of the contents of your apartment and determine how much it may cost to replace your possessions. This list will come in handy when deciding how much coverage you need and will help if you ever need to file a claim. If you are living in areas where floods and/or earthquakes are a concern, make sure to get a policy that covers damages associated with these; this coverage is not always standard and may need to be added separately. Be sure to clarify whether your possessions are insured at current value or replacement cost. Current value is the amount it would cost to replace your insured items minus an amount for depreciation due to age and use (e.g. used furniture and electronics are worth less than new; how much less depends on how old and well-used the items are). Replacement cost is the amount it would cost to replace the insured items with comparable items, without regard to age and condition. You would be shocked at how low the current value of your possessions is in the insurance company’s eyes. Starting out, either one is fine, but as you move from just-for-now furnishings to pieces you plan to keep for awhile, you may want your policy to reimburse at replacement value.

Miscellaneous

Here are a few additional tasks to complete before and after moving.

Before you move, provide the post office with your updated address so your mail can be forwarded; this can be done online at www.usps.com. You also need to provide your new address to all creditors, your bank, your employer, Yale, and your friends and family. Don’t forget about magazine and newspaper subscriptions; the post office will only forward your magazines for a few months before they start sending them back. You can do most of this online through company websites.

Also, before you move, look into auto licensing and registration procedures in your new state of residence. States typically require you to get a new license and transfer your auto registration within a certain period of time after relocating. Checking this before you move will help you plan what you need to do in the first few weeks and budget for the DMV licensing and registration fees. The amount of time you have to transfer your license and register your vehicle can vary from state to state, but on average it’s 30 days. Though few people enjoy spending a day at the DMV, you need to get this done as soon as possible.
5. Kitchen Basics

It wasn’t until you experienced dining-hall food that you began to truly appreciate Dad’s homemade blueberry pancakes. Well, it may not be until you are out on your own, feeling helpless in the kitchen that you suddenly begin to rank the dining hall chefs up there with Julia Child.

Since most of you will either be in a rigorous graduate school program or working long hours, quick and easy meals are the way to go. Coming home late at night to whip up a three-course meal is probably not your idea of a relaxing evening. However, if you do a good job stocking your pantry and freezer with some basics, you can throw together a decent, inexpensive meal in a matter of minutes.

Though takeout and pre-packaged meals may be tempting and easy, they can eat into your budget and may not be the healthiest options, as they’re typically loaded with salt, calories and fat. One alumnus says: “Forget the freshman fifteen — beware of the post-grad twenty. Working a nine-to-five job will make it harder to stay in shape than it was in college. You won’t have as much time to exercise. Without the convenience of the dining-hall chicken breasts and salad bar, it is really easy to get into the habit of living off macaroni and cheese…figure out how to make a diet work with your new schedule from the get-go.”

For grads on a budget, cooking at home can save a lot of money. One alumna notes “if you need to save money, actually making dinner from the raw ingredients and paying attention to how much they cost can make a difference.” She adds, “Bring your lunch to work. You can easily spend $5 to $10 daily for lunch, which can be almost $200 a month!” Another alumna suggests that you “cook Sunday night, divvy the food up into containers and you’re set for the rest of the week. Eating breakfast before you leave, packing a lunch, or cooking a simple dinner will save you loads of money, be much healthier than eating out, and really not take that much time once it becomes part of your routine. And then you won’t feel guilty at all when you do splurge on meals out.”
At first, cooking may seem like a chore, at least until you find your inner chef. An ’03 alumnus shares that he “never thought cooking would be such an important—and even enjoyable—part of my life. But to live within your (very small) food budget, cooking for you is essential. It’s remarkable that someone like me—who used to consider EasyMac and a granola bar to be a complete breakfast—now makes pad Thai and chicken and pasta dishes on a regular basis. If you do it right, it’s much healthier for you and much cheaper.”

No one becomes an expert chef overnight. Don’t be afraid to try a new recipe, or better yet, to make your own combinations. Know that not everything you try to make will turn out perfectly the first time; you may need to make the dish a few times before you have it just right. Occasionally your meals will turn out badly; don’t let this discourage you, it’s all part of the learning process. Remember, worst-case scenario, there’s always pizza!

Tips for the Novice Chef

This section was inspired by a 2010 grad who reluctantly admitted that he’s been eating cereal for almost every meal because he has no idea how to begin shopping for and preparing meals. If you can relate, or if the thought of cooking for yourself is frightening and overwhelming, read on. For those of you who have lived on your own, have grown up cooking with your family, or are budding foodies, chances are this section contains nothing new.

You may be really bad at cooking first, but stick with it. After the first month or so, your dishes should be edible and then it’ll get fun. (Note: Try to get at least one roommate who already knows how to cook.)

—Cristina Isabel Ceballos ’13

Food can be problematic, given that things usually aren’t sold in sizes fit for one person. Things will go bad fast if you buy loads, so make sure you know what you need, and maybe buy more frozen stuff to keep things fresh for longer. It helps to plan out the menu on the weekend before your week starts, so you can have a good idea of what to make. Also keep loads of canned soups, because sometimes when you don’t want to cook, a grilled cheese sandwich and some tomato soup can be very wholesome and healthy, and doesn’t require too much effort.

—Alumna ‘14
As far as cooking goes, I’d recommend just getting in the kitchen and practicing. I used a service called Blue Apron that sends you the ingredients and recipes for three meals a week to help me build my basic cooking skills and repertoire of recipes, and other online services like Plated do the same. Cooking is an easy way to save money, have fun, and decide what you eat.

-Nick Defiesta ‘14

Kitchen Equipment — What You Need To Get Started

If you’ve been living on-campus during your four years at Yale, this may be the first time you’ve had to purchase kitchen supplies and cookware. Before you can become an iron chef you need to have a few basic pieces of equipment; below is a general list of supplies to start with.

Knives: A few good knives are all you need for now. Remember, “good” and “expensive” are not synonymous. Don’t feel like you need to spend a fortune — shop around.

Chef’s knife: A good chef’s knife is a foundation of any kitchen and can be used for a variety of tasks from chopping vegetables to dicing chicken; you can usually find a decent, sturdy knife for $10.

Paring knife: Depending on your cooking abilities and preferences, a paring knife may also be a wise investment. A paring knife is basically a smaller version of the chef’s knife and is best for more delicate tasks that require more control and maneuverability, such as cutting fruits or removing eyes from potatoes.

Steak knives: Though not everyone has the cooking know-how or the room in their grocery budget to enjoy steak dinners at home on a consistent basis, if you know you’ll be preparing meats on a regular basis, you may want to purchase a couple of inexpensive steak knives. Vegetarians, don’t let the name deter you; these are great all-purpose knives you can use for chopping veggies.

Serrated knife: These are sometimes referred to as bread knives, since that is what they are most often used for. They’re also great for cutting tomatoes. Unless you eat a lot of bread, specifically loaves that aren’t pre-sliced, you may want to pass on this one for now.
Cutting board: Using your new knives will be much easier, and safer, if you have an appropriate cutting surface. Wood or synthetic — your choice, both are fine. You can purchase either type inexpensively. You don’t need a huge cutting board; something small and easy to store and clean is fine. Kitchen counters are not a substitute for a cutting board. You will damage the counter; unless you want to forfeit some of your security deposit when you move out of your apartment to cover the cost of a new counter, you need to buy a cutting board.

Mixing bowl: One or two versatile mixing bowls are a nice addition to a new grad’s kitchen. Glass, stainless steel and plastic are all good choices. These bowls can be used for everything, from tossing salads to mixing cake batter.

Baking sheets and dishes: There are many different types out there; start by evaluating your needs. Find one that’s versatile and will work for what you plan to cook. Those who love to bake cookies or make garlic bread may prefer a shallow cookie sheet, while the more ambitious who have plans to roast meats, bake chicken or make lasagna may want to buy a deeper glass or ceramic baking dish. If you have no intention of using your oven, you can pass on these for now.

Pots and pans: Though high-end pans are nice, they’re not necessary. Buying expensive pans will not make you a better cook. Depending on your cooking abilities and interests, a few basic pots and pans will be enough to get you started. Think functional.

   Saucepans: One or two of varying sizes, depending on your needs (large enough to boil water for pasta, small enough to heat sauce).

   Skillets: One or two, a smaller diameter (5”-7”) and a larger diameter (10”) is typically more than enough. If you can only buy one, start with the larger skillet.

Microwave: Some of you may put this item in the essential category. Believe it or not, everything you cook in the microwave can also be cooked on the stove or in the oven. Yes, it may take longer, but it is possible. If you’re short on cash, try living without a microwave for a while.

Coffee maker: Coffee lovers will remember the alum in the budgeting section sharing the advice that the $4 lattés at Starbucks can really add up and make a dent in your budget. Making your own coffee is a cost effective way to get your morning caffeine without spending a fortune. You can pick up a small coffee maker for as little as $15 and it will last for years.
Countertop grill: Alumni and students alike have raved about the George Foreman Grill with one calling it “the world’s greatest invention since the wheel, maybe since fire.” Others have complimented the ease of cooking fish, chicken, hamburger patties, and veggies, stating that it cleans up easily.

Dishes and cutlery: Plates, bowls, silverware, and glasses are all necessities if you plan to eat at home. You do not need to spend a lot of money on these; you can pick up a dinnerware starter set from Ikea for $20. Unless you plan to hold elaborate dinner parties, you don’t need to have a large supply. Depending on how often you and your roommate(s) wash dishes (hopefully every day) and how many of you there are, you can get by on as little as one four-piece set. Don’t forget to pick up a dish scrubber, dish towels and a drying rack.

Here are some additional kitchen supplies you may want to pick up.

- Can opener
- Colander/strainer
- Wooden or plastic cooking spoons
- Spatula
- Measuring cups
- Plastic storage containers, a few practical sizes, you don’t need a lot of these, only the basics.
- Potholders

While shopping for the basics you may be tempted to purchase some of the many other gadgets and small kitchen appliances out there. Before you give into temptation ask yourself how often you will actually use that egg poacher, bread machine or ice cream maker. Don’t waste your money on something that will sit in your cupboard collecting dust.

Cooking Resources

Below are a few cookbooks and websites recommended by alums as sources of recipes and cooking tips. They’re broken down by difficulty.

Easy

- [www.cooks.com](http://www.cooks.com)
- [www.allrecipes.com](http://www.allrecipes.com)
- [www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus)
Intermediate to Advanced
  • www.smittenkitchen.com
  • www.tastespotting.com
  • www.epicurious.com

Cookbooks
  • The Healthy College Cookbook by Alexandra Nimetz
  • Cooking Outside the Pizza Box by Jean Patterson
  • How to Cook Everything and How to Cook Everything Vegetarian by Mark Bittman

There is a website called yummly.com which allows you to search recipes based on ingredients (and further eliminate recipes if you don’t have supplementary ingredients such as eggs). Really useful if you have a main ingredient but don’t know how to prep it or if you need to make last minute muffins for your work potluck in the morning and need to find a recipe without eggs.

— Gabriella Puente ’13

When you find recipes online that you enjoy, make sure to bookmark them. Better yet, get your own collection of recipes started by copying them into a Google Doc; don’t forget to add notes to help you remember any changes or suggestions for next time.

Smart Shopping — Stocking Your Cupboards

Wandering into a grocery store can be overwhelming. There are so many choices and ingredients, some of which you may not have a clue what to do with. It can be tempting to grab only what you’re familiar with, such as a box of cereal, frozen dinners or mac and cheese. Its fine to gravitate towards the familiar staples in the beginning, but it’s important to also push yourself to learn how to prepare healthy, low-cost foods instead of exclusively relying on pre-packaged foods, which often are high in calories and sodium.

The Mayo Clinic advises shoppers to concentrate on the perimeter of the grocery store where the fresh produce section, the meat and seafood departments, and the dairy case are all located. Fresh foods are generally healthier than the ready-to-eat foods found in the middle aisles.
Stock your cupboards and refrigerator with basic ingredients that you can build upon, such as pasta, beans, rice, vegetables (fresh and frozen), cheese and chicken or tofu. Think about your favorite foods growing up and your current favorites; are there common ingredients that you can easily have on hand? Include those foods and ingredients in your list of basics that you build your meals around.

Also plan to purchase cooking necessities, such as olive oil and butter or margarine, and a few basic spices, such as salt, pepper, garlic and other similar spices that you’re drawn towards, such as curry powder or basil. Most grocery stores also stock spice blends tailored towards a specific culinary genre, such as Italian, Indian or Mexican, or for specific types of foods, such as seafood or chicken. Always check the sodium levels before you purchase spice blends; look for ones with lower sodium levels.

**Emergency Stash**

It’s a good idea to have at least a three-day emergency supply of water and ready-to-eat foods in your pantry. Blizzards, earthquakes, power outages, water main breaks and the like can limit your access to the grocery store, take-out and clean water, and may prevent you from cooking. As a precaution, pick up a few gallons of water, canned goods such as soup, tuna, crackers, granola bars, peanut butter and similar foods that can be eaten without any cooking or preparation. Don’t forget to periodically check the expiration dates on these items and refresh your supplies accordingly.
6. Entertainment on a Budget

Many new college graduates spend time socializing at restaurants, bars, and clubs. Some enjoy this scene, and others don’t, but everyone does agree on one thing: going out can really eat into your bank account, especially if you are in a city with a high cost of living. One alumnus asks “is it really worth the cool points to spend $10 on a drink or $20 on cover for a club?” Maybe not, so OCS asked recent Yale graduates about their favorite free or low-cost things to do in various cities where they live. While some of you still may enjoy a night on the town, don’t discount these fun activities when planning your weekends.

An alumnus recommends that you “find one or more groups of likeminded friends and take turns planning things — both going out and staying in.”

San Francisco, CA

A’s games—you can get in for as little as $2 on BART $2 Wednesday’s, and you can take the subway right there.

Cobb’s Comedy Club—at the end of Fisherman’s Wharf. Doesn’t cost too much and it’s usually pretty funny.

Hang out in Golden Gate Park.

Get half-price tickets at TIX Bay Area in Union Square and see a play.

Go hiking in the Marin headlands or in the Presidio.

Explore the Botanical Garden.

Check out the entertainment guides at www.sfgate.com and sfweekly.com to see what’s happening around the Bay Area.

Another resource is the Squid List, a frequent email detailing events going on in and around the SF Bay Area. They mostly stick to the interesting and odd
arts events and culture, but there is generally something for all interests. Find them at www.laughingsquid.com.

Some fun neighborhoods to live and play in: Marina/Cow Hollow, Pacific Heights, Duboce Triangle/Castro, the Mission, Haight, the theater district area between Nob Hill and the Tenderloin, North Beach. Don’t bother with a car unless you’re living in the Sunset, Richmond, or around Lake Merced. Parking’s a pain in most of the other neighborhoods, and you can get around easily by walking or Muni. Hike Angel Island, bike across the Golden Gate Bridge, go to a summer outdoor concert at Stern Grove, spend a lazy Sunday afternoon at Golden Gate Park.

New York, NY

Brooklyn Botanic Gardens Saturday mornings and the Brooklyn Museum are free the first Saturday night of the month.

Run or Rollerblade in Central Park or on the West Side Highway.

Take walking tours of different neighborhoods in Manhattan. Travel to other boroughs, Coney Island, Astoria, Queens.

Get TimeOut New York (weekly magazine) – it has different suggestions each week for free/low-cost activities. You can check it out online at www.timeout.com/newyork.

Go to Shakespeare in the Park and free concerts in Central Park (Metropolitan Opera, Philharmonic).

Check out free movies in parks in the summer (Bryant Park, Riverside Park, Prospect Park, Fulton Ferry, Empire State Park in Brooklyn).

See shows using TKTS discount tickets in Times Square. Check out www.tdf.org for more information on discount theater tickets.

Join the Yale Club!

Check out the Village Voice Events Calendar (www.villagevoice.com) and NY Mag’s event listings (www.nymag.com).
Los Angeles, CA

The planetarium and Griffith Park can be good date venues, and the beach (one alumnus recommended Zuma Beach, just north of Malibu) is always a great free option.

Exercise and play on the beach—it offers miles of boardwalks and bike paths, hundreds of volleyball nets, and an entire ocean at your door. In addition, hiking is amazing in the Pacific Palisades (just north of LA), and there are always plays and productions to see.

Check out www.lastagealliance.com for half-price theater tickets.

Many museums have free days. Check out golosangeles.about.com for a list.

Boston, MA

Watch out for Restaurant Weeks in March and August. Also sign up for zagat.com or bostonchefs.com so you can keep up with special events at restaurants that offer special wine and food evenings.

Do the freedom trail! Visit the historic sites.

Free movies/lectures at the Boston Public Library and Cambridge Public Library. Public libraries offer free passes to local museums if you reserve them in advance.

www.bostonmagazine.com has a great online entertainment guide.

Memorial Drive is closed to traffic every Sunday for biking, Rollerblading, etc. The Minuteman Bike Trail runs for 11 miles from the Alewife T Station to Bedford along a converted rail bed—it’s a nice, easy ride, and if you are ambitious you can continue another eight miles or so to Walden Pond.

There is Shakespeare on the Common and Free Friday Flicks at the Hatch Shell on the Charles River. The Boston Symphony has rush tickets to all Tuesday and Thursday night concerts that cost only $9—the only catch is that you need to be there at 5:00 to buy them. And if you’re free on a Friday afternoon, be there by 10 am for rush tickets to start off your weekend.

Go hiking in the Middlesex Fells/Blue Hills.

Check out local beaches accessible by local transit: Carson Beach (Blue Line) and Singing Beach in Manchester-by-the-Sea (Commuter Rail).
Rumor has it that the Museum of Fine Arts’ singles nights on Fridays are a great place to meet people! (They’re no longer officially for singles, but they’ve still got that vibe) www.mfa.org.

Running along the Esplanade, also free Boston morning workout groups: novemberproject.com.

The North End (Boston’s Little Italy) has a lot of traditional Italian festivals in August. It’s awesome to go and soak in the atmosphere even if you don’t indulge in some cannoli, clams, or pizza.

Subscribe to email updates from meetup.com (there is a free and cheap things around Boston panlist, a culture and arts panlist, etc.). Even if you never go to a Meetup event you get notified about what is going on around the city. Also try subscribing to yipit.com in Boston so you get info about deals around the city.

Sign up at the Boston Public Library. You can rent movies, video games, an of course books for free!

— Gabriella Puente ’13

Atlanta, GA

In your first month, get to know the city by looking to these venues: art and theater (the newly renovated High Museum of Art and the Fox Theatre), incredible restaurants (Mary Mac’s Tea Room, South City Kitchen, and Bacchanalia, if you can afford it), live music (Eddie’s Attic and Wild Bill’s), coffee shops (JavaMonkey in Decatur and the Starbucks at Emory Village), and clubbing (Eleven50, Shout!, Mako’s, and Hand in Hand/Neighbor’s, which are all worth the cover charge).

— Alumnus

Piedmont Park, various art and music festivals, which are offered free.

Creative Loafing is a good source for info regarding free events.

Chicago, IL

Cubs games at Wrigley Field should not be missed. Try to get bleacher seats—they sell out fast because they’re fairly cheap and attract a rowdy, young crowd.
One of Chicago’s best features is the lakefront. Picnic, jog, bike, sunbathe, play volleyball or Frisbee—it’s all free. In the winter you can “Skate on State” (Street that is). It’s kind of Chicago’s answer to Rockefeller Center.

The Museum of Contemporary Art (www.mcachicago.org) hosts “First Fridays” the first Friday of every month. “First Fridays” tickets cost $14 and include museum admission, live entertainment, and complimentary hors d’oeuvres.

Second City (corner of North and Wells) and Improv Olympic (3541 N. Clark) are the two institutions that started improvisational comedy in this country, and it would be almost criminal for a new Chicago resident not to see a show at one or both.

Philadelphia, PA

First Mondays—the first Monday of each month has cultural activities for free.

Check out www.phillyfunguide.com for low cost or free events.

Washington, DC

DC is filled with so many amazing museums that are always free.

Playing pick-up sports on the Mall during the weekends!

A well-kept secret is Great Falls Park on either side of the Potomac, about 30 minutes north of the city by car. Stunning views of cliffs and waterfalls. Lots of hiking trails. Swimming in the summer.

I love getting a chance to see my friends and meeting others I missed out on during my time at Yale whenever the Young Alumni of DC get together. We have monthly happy hours and events ranging from going to a hockey game to a moonlight booze cruise on the Potomac!

Other Great Ideas and General Resources

Most metro areas have daily deals on livingsocial.com and groupon.com which offer generous offers on food and discounted tickets to social activities. These are especially useful if you want to take advantage of a new city without breaking your wallet. Obviously, these fall under entertainment and discretionary expenses, but are a good tool nevertheless.
Time Out (www.timeout.com) has listings of events in major cities and the prices associated with them. Many of them are free and there are also city specific articles for places all over the world.

A lot of big cities have well known blogs that detail free cultural and social events worth checking out. They may be either independent or run through a local newspaper, but they give ideas for interesting events happening in metro areas around the country. Consult DCist (there is also an LA-ist, Londonist, etc.), the AfterHoursBlog, and Washington Post Going Out Guide to find great opportunities to take advantage of a new city.

Sign up for Daily Candy (www.dailycandy.com) for free e-mail newsletters on what’s happening in your city. They have newsletters for Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, London, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC.

Start a book reading group!

On www.meetup.com you can find out about special interest groups that are getting together in your area. There are always meet-ups going on in cities across the US and the world.

Getting involved in charities, churches, musical groups, or theater troupes is a good way to have cheap fun and meet people. Do it soon after you’re settled in—don’t stew in your apartment getting everything set up perfectly.

Check out the public library — in addition to the latest books, they have free DVD rentals and reduced cost or free tickets to local attractions, such as museums or aquariums.

Galleries, theaters, zoos and other attractions typically have discounted or free admission on certain days of the month.

Many places offer group discounts — get 10 or more of your friends together and make a day of it.

To create a social structure in your new town, pick a volunteer activity like working in a food bank or tutoring—whatever will bring you into contact with like-minded people.

Borrow museum passes from the library, most of the museums are free with the pass.
Don’t forget to mentor. We have a heck of a lot of talent we can share with others. Just because Dwight Hall isn’t around anymore is no excuse not to get involved and give back.

Take a class in something that interests you—don’t stop learning just because you’ve left Yale.

Find a hobby—play golf, tennis, rugby, pub quiz, join a choir, a book club, a church, mentor a child, help refugees find places to live—but do something that gets you out of the house and talking to new people.
7. The Real World: 2015

Life after Yale may be wonderful or intimidating or both at once. It will definitely be an adventure! You will continue to have many resources to assist with the transition, including your family, Yale friends, new coworkers, and Yale resources such as the Association of Yale Alumni (AYA) and Office of Career Strategy (OCS). Alumni have offered a range of practical advice to help you.

The Transition

Whether to celebrate a success or to help you through a lonely time, your Yale friends can continue to be an important part of your life. Whatever your situation, staying in touch with other Yale alumni will help ease the transition. Here’s what alumni have to say about maintaining connections.

It’s scary that graduation day is the last time you’ll see people until Harvard-Yale. Students should make an effort at the end of the year to accumulate phone numbers and email addresses of your friends.

— Alumnus

Schedule time to talk on the phone/Skype regularly with your far-flung friends. The real world can get lonely, now that everyone’s scattered around the globe.

— Meg Martinez ’10

You will soon realize that there are many amazing Yalies out there who you never met in college. Tap into the network with happy hours and AYA events and you’re bound to find some fast friends. Also don’t forget to stay in touch with your favorite professors. They’re still rooting for you, and they enjoy updates on your success.

— Jennifer Shelby ’13
One challenge that young alums experienced in the transition was the evaporation of an instant social network. In college, you are surrounded by intelligent and interesting people of a similar age who frequently share similar interests. There is a steady stream of extracurricular activities, parties, and social events to fill your social calendar and allow you to mingle with possible romantic partners and new friends. Some of you may find that after graduation, time and financial constraints make developing and maintaining social connections more difficult. The key is to get involved. Join book clubs, sports teams, and musical organizations. Become active in local politics, community theater, and the local university. Volunteer your time with children, students, the elderly, and the homeless.

Unfortunately, the real world is not like college. You won’t have dozens of friends within walking distance of your home. You may already know this, but what’s important to note is that grad school is also not like college. Your peers will be more consumed by their work and more invested in their own lives than were your friends at Yale. Your fellow students will be at varying life stages, so some may or may not even be looking for friendship beyond that of a friendly colleague. But try not to go visiting old friends every weekend at the expense of creating a new life where you are. Invest yourself in your new life and enjoy the freedom to add or discard elements of it in order to make it work for you.

—Courtney Sender ’10

For some, life after college can be a difficult time. Here’s what alumni had to say about their transition periods.

A surprising number of my friends have gone through at least a brief, mild bout of depression in the past year...I don’t mean to depress the graduating seniors, but I think if I had known that people had gone through it and felt the way I did before it all happened, it would’ve helped. I really missed Yale and had to sort of grieve for it.

—Alumna

The first year or so out of college will be a time of great change. People around you and people you stay in touch with will experience and express everything from utter joy at their new amazing job, to bottomless depression at their unemployment. Try to remember that things change quickly and the learning curve is steep. You will grow
up more in the first few months out of college than you did your four years at Yale.

—Shira Concool ‘10

Feeling adrift, slightly lonely and vaguely discouraged are common to a surprising number of recent graduates, and for good reason. Even those of us who graduated with a direction (I will be doing “x” next year.) were not necessarily sure that that was the correct direction, and many of the support mechanisms (friends in the dining hall, college dean, etc.) were far away.

—Alumna

Sometimes, quitting or leaving can be the strongest thing you can possibly do. I think a lot of Yalies have gone through life feeling pressure to see every commitment through to its end, which is often an admirable trait. But if you have inadvertently chosen a job or a program or a city that is making you completely miserable, it’s more important to investigate that misery and figure out how to fix it than to finish out your original plans. In all likelihood, whatever you find to replace the thing you quit will be closer to the path you actually want.

—Alumna ‘10

Outside of an academic environment, it’s all too easy to fall into the trap of defining oneself by one’s job, or by one’s relationship status, or by one’s income (just to list a few sources of uncertainty/angst for people starting out their young adult post-college life). It’s quite the challenge to set down new roots and find a new identity/sense of self in a new place you may be living in for the first time. Therefore, I think it’s extremely valuable to find a new community that can support you through the growing pains and period of transition—as quickly as possible. I found this through my church, but you can find it through any group that gathers for a shared interest: a book club, a cycling team, pickup soccer, a community violin quartet... really anything where people get together to do something they love. Otherwise, I’ve seen a lot of fellow post-grads have a very tough time trying to adjust to a world in which their friends are no longer just a few blocks away, and where you might not know who your neighbors are.

—Alumna ’13
Moving Back Home

Whether you’re saving money for graduate school, searching for a job, or just trying to get your finances in order, some of you may find yourselves heading back home to live with your family. Though you may have spent time at home during breaks, most of you haven’t lived at home for almost four years. Moving back home after four years of relative independence can be a bit of a shock for you and for your parents. Not only are you used to being independent, but your parents may be used to having the house to themselves, especially if you don’t have any younger siblings at home.

To avoid straining even the best of relationships, it is important to discuss expectations. Don’t wait until you arrive home at 3am and find Mom and Dad waiting up for you to learn that your parents are expecting you to follow the rules that were in place before you left for Yale. It’s also important to discuss length of intended stay. Your parents may be glad to welcome you back for a month or two, but may not be thrilled with your intention of living there for a longer period of time. Topics to discuss with your family include the following:

Finances: What financial contributions are you expected to make to the household expenses? Are you parents charging you rent?

Coming and Going: Do you need to call if you will be staying at a friend’s place? Are friends/significant others allowed to stay over? Do your parents expect you to be home by a certain hour?

Length of Stay: How long are you intending to stay? Is the situation temporary or long-term? It is possible to outstay your welcome. Discuss your goals and expected timeline with your family.

Household Contributions: What chores will you be responsible for? Will you be eating dinner with the family or cooking your own meals? If eating with the family, how much will you contribute to groceries?

Keeping the lines of communication open during the transition period will help you avoid uncomfortable conversations down the road.
8. The Job Search

If you are seeking a job, that will be your top priority. In most industries, jobs become available when someone leaves his/her position. Though you may want to find the perfect job right away, the reality is that it may not be there right now. Part of your job search should be thinking broadly about positions that may serve as a stepping stone to your perfect job. There is no magic formula for a guaranteed job in your field of interest, but there are ways to increase your chances of landing a great opportunity. What do we recommend? Read on. Even after you graduate, OCS services are still available to you.

Increase Your Visibility

So much of finding a job is connecting with others. Many job seekers spend 80% of their time looking for and applying to posted openings and 20% of their time actually connecting with people. We recommend the opposite. The majority of jobs never get advertised; even if they do, by the time you find the posting on a website, how many other people have also seen that posting and applied? The most successful job hunters actively seek out companies that interest them, and then connect with individuals in the company who are doing the type of work they want to do. The more people who know you, your goals, what you have to offer, and who have a vested interest in your success, the greater your chances of hearing about opportunities as soon as they become available. Developing and nurturing relationships with professionals in your field will yield greater results than passively waiting for openings to appear on a website.

Get yourself out there. Let people know who you are, what you are looking for, and what you have to offer. At the same time, get to know them, what worked and what didn’t when they were job searching, and any advice they have on looking for a position in the current economic climate. Talk with your professors, advisors, mentors, fellow Yalies, friends, relatives, neighbors, previous supervisors, and professionals in your fields of interest. Get involved
and start doing what you want to do in any way you can. Volunteer to develop a marketing campaign for a non-profit, oversee the finances and budgeting for a major fundraising event, or coordinate speakers for a conference. Continue to build your skills and experience, and gain greater insight into the industry or profession you want to enter. Read industry publications and attend related events, conferences, lectures or performances. Once at the events, don’t be a wallflower; get to know as many people as possible; you never know who is going to have a job lead or who is in a position to hire.

Become involved with the Yale Club in your area and attend events they organize. Connections from Yale can extend far beyond the students who were on campus when you were. Even if there is no Yale Club near you, it is still worth the effort to stay in touch with your friends from Yale. Friends in other cities may have interesting experiences and advice from their own job searches.

Check out Chapter 11: The Art of Networking for more advice on connecting with others.

Keep Moving

While you seek a permanent position, find an internship, part-time job, temporary job, or volunteer position. Even doing something a few hours a week can make a difference. Working or volunteering can help you expand your contacts in the field and develop valuable skills, and may even turn into a full-time permanent position, as many organizations look at past interns or volunteers for qualified candidates when positions become available, especially if you contribute in a way that makes you invaluable.

Be realistic about your financial situation. If you can take an unpaid internship, consider it. If you can’t then look for other industries in which you could still use the skills you cherish. For example, publishing is not done only in publishing houses; many non-profits, think tanks, government agencies, museums and corporations also have an in-house staff working on publications. Temporary opportunities may offer an entry point into a potentially fulfilling career, so don’t overlook short-term opportunities in the legal field, entertainment, arts, communications, teaching or non-profit. The important message is to keep moving and stay motivated. An alumnus says that “you might have to eat humble pie and take a job that doesn’t interest or excite you. There are millions of unromantic jobs out there. Have you really been applying to them?
And you never know; you might like that unromantic sounding job more than you would think.”

We are not advocating a career waiting tables, but we do recommend that you look at every angle in making decisions about your future. What we want to emphasize is that finding a fulfilling job takes work and time, and there are many different routes that can lead to a successful place. It may be helpful to find something on a temporary basis to ease the financial and emotional strain while you search for the job you really want. Continue to explore your options by knowing which professions best suit your skills and interest. And finally, don’t be hesitant about asking for advice or seeking support.

Here are a few additional pieces of advice from Yale alumni:

Remind your friends and yourself that this is a time where the unemployed can become employed in a snap. So if it feels like you aren’t having any luck, or everyone else somehow knows what they are doing, remember luck changes quickly.

—Shira Concool ’10

If you don’t have a job lined up by the time you graduate, don’t sweat it. Many of my friends who had no plans in May are now doing the most interesting and exciting work of everyone I know — they’ve found ways to go abroad, intern in DC, or even enjoy living at home while pursuing creative projects. Make sure that you keep looking for listings and talking to people (aka: networking), but remember that uncertainty in May has no bearing on happiness or success later on.

—Courtney Sender ’10

Some friends have jobs or travel plans even before graduating. Some get lucky or through connections get a job right away. Some move to Hawaii or China. Some find the jobs they have while “looking for a good job.” Figure out what you want, explore related opportunities from every angle, count on your friends, use networking connections, and keep trying — but by all means don’t give up.

—Alumna

Be willing to take whatever job you find, and do it while you look for something better. A college education is a privilege, and a Yale degree is something most people in the world never have the chance to obtain. Be thankful for what Yale has given you, but don’t view a degree as a
‘free pass’ or ‘entitlement’ to get a high-paying job. The world doesn’t think we ‘deserve’ anything for being Yale grads—you have to prove yourself again. Don’t compare yourself to friends who might be in more prestigious sectors or grad school. Life is long and mysterious, and even if you feel like you don’t know what you want to do with your life yet, it’s okay!

—Alumnus ’13

Like all things Yalies do, recent graduates put a lot of pressure on themselves to have everything figured out by September after graduation. I jumped into something without taking the time to evaluate where I was and what I wanted. Yale can do a number on your mind and body, so it’s important, if it is financially feasible for you, to take some time to recuperate, rest, or take a job that is less taxing. A lot of your friends will jump into high-pressure, high-stress environments. Avoid those if you can, at least for a little while—especially if you found your senior spring somewhat hectic and overwhelming.

—Shira Concool ’10

How OCS Can Help

The Yale Office of Career Strategy has many resources to support Yale College alumni. Yale is committed to assisting alumni throughout all stages of the career development process. Whether you are determining what you want to do, searching for a job opportunity, changing direction, or dealing with any number of other career-related issues that the real world has in ample supply, OCS can help.

Regardless of where you’re living, you can still schedule appointments with OCS advisers; if you’re out of the area you can schedule a phone or Skype appointment versus in-person. Use the online appointment scheduling system found on the OCS website—ocs.yale.edu—to find a time to talk with an adviser. In appointments, we can discuss your interests, how they translate into careers, and support you through the process of finding and landing opportunities.

On the OCS website you’ll find career tools, a list of external career coaches, executive recruiters’ directories, online workshops, the Yale Career Network and the Symplicity job database.
If you are considering graduate or professional school, OCS can assist you. Be sure to read the “OCS Graduate School Guide” if you haven’t already; this publication is available on the OCS website. Application procedures for law school and medical school can be confusing due to the variety of options, so check out the info provided on the OCS website and talk with OCS advisers. Additionally, medical school and law school surveys from other alumni who have attended our most popular destinations are available on our website.

Keep your OCS profile updated on the Yale Symplicity System — yale-csm.symplicity.com/students).

To continue to receive the OCS newsletter, go to http://ocs.yale.edu/content/connect-office-career-strategy on the OCS website.
9. Your New Job: The First 90 Days

So you’ve set up house, stepped into the real world, and found that new job, but you still need to tackle the activity that will take up most of your time: working itself. You may be in graduate school, at an office, teaching, conducting research, pursuing independent projects of your own—but all of you will encounter new challenges in the so-called “real world” post-college. This chapter will help you begin to navigate that world.

Leaving Yale’s system of structured grades, dean’s excuses, and spring breaks for an unknown work environment that features infrequent or unstructured feedback, high expectations, and an absence of excuses can be a shock to the system. As the new person, you are under a microscope; how you interact with others, contribute to the team, and express your attitude toward work will define how your colleagues view you. The first days, weeks, and months on the job are a time to prove yourself, earn responsibility and credibility, and demonstrate professional maturity. Sound like a tall order? You’re prepared for it—just make sure you follow the tips below.

Office Culture

Before you saunter into a board meeting the way you would a discussion section, it’s important to learn the rules and culture of your new work environment. The first thing to remember is that offices have both written and unwritten codes of conduct, and every office is different. You may have had an internship where the CEO wanted your input on day one; but at your new job, you might be expected to spend some time on the job before you discuss ideas with your immediate supervisor. The company handbook won’t tell you how your office works, so you will have to take the time to learn it for yourself.
Figuring out an office system may seem daunting, but you have spent four years learning how to learn. At the office, learn by observing. Pay attention to the protocol for speaking up at meetings—do you let the boss speak first? Are you expected to report on your projects? Can a new employee comment on other people’s suggestions? The office is not a seminar in which you should speak up as often and as loudly as possible. You can make your voice heard, but you need to know the right ways to go about it.

Your New Supervisor

Luckily for you, someone at the office is getting paid to help you understand your new role: your supervisor. During your first week on the job, it’s important to set up a regular schedule of supervisory meetings with your new boss. These meetings will give you the chance to ask questions about your role in the organization and projects you’re working on, get clarification on topics that come up in meetings that you may not be familiar with, and establish the specific expectations of your job. Use these meetings to get any help you may need right at the start.

Meetings with your supervisor are also a chance for you to receive feedback on your performance in those critical early weeks and months on the job. Feedback, both praise and constructive criticism, can help you gauge what you need to do in order to be professionally successful. These meetings might not always be pleasant, but they’re important; now that you’re not getting grades, talking with your supervisor is the best way to figure out where you stand. And just as you would follow a professor’s advice on an essay, it’s essential that you work to improve your areas of weakness in response to constructive criticism.

But your supervisor is not just a taskmaster. He or she should be on your side; after all, your strong performance reflects well on everyone you work with. For that reason, your supervisor can be a great resource to help you get a feel for office culture. After sitting in on staff and/or team meetings, you can debrief with your supervisor to help you figure out when it’s appropriate to speak up, when to keep quiet, and what kind of boundaries are in place. If you are polite, respectful, and attentive, understanding office culture with your supervisor’s help can be as easy as asking your dean about a deadline.
Starting Out

You’ve got your first assignment in hand—and it doesn’t involve a trip to Sterling, a lab report, or a problem set. There is a different set of requirements for success at your job, but one thing stays the same: your ability to communicate. They may seem obvious, but the quick tips below can help you acclimate.

Quick Tip 1: Ask Questions

When you begin a new job, you’re not expected to know everything. But people won’t know what you’re unsure of until you tell them. Whether you are looking for the supply closet or don’t know how to proceed with projects you’ve been assigned, ask! It doesn’t mean you are unqualified for the position; actually, asking questions shows that you are trying to make yourself as useful as possible by learning how the office works. And it’s always better to ask early than to find out later that you misunderstood what you needed to do.

Quick Tip 2: Speak Up

You may have spent the past four years at Yale asking your professors questions; or you may have avoided office hours like they were a dreaded sixth credit. Either way, you need to strike a balance at your job.

On the one hand, an intense level of questions and suggestions may be misinterpreted at the workplace, especially if you challenge decisions made by leadership. Decisions may not always be logical to you, as someone who doesn’t know the history or underlying politics of the office, but you can’t put people on the spot in an office the way you might try to trump an argument in class.

On the other hand, you are allowed and expected to contribute to the organization—that’s why you were hired! Your goal is to make your boss and your team look good by being an enthusiastic contributing member from the beginning. The office is not a lecture where you sit quietly and passively take notes; you can and should share ideas and progress in a thoughtful, respectful way.

Job v. College: The Times, They Are A’Changin…

At Yale, you may have rolled out of bed two minutes before class and run to lecture buttoning your pajamas with one hand and eating a bagel with the
other. But when you enter the workplace, you’ll need to change the lifestyle you’ve gotten used to over the past four years. You should focus on looking and acting like a professional--after all, you are one!

Procrastination

At Yale, it may be fine to wait until the last minute to work on projects, but in the workplace your supervisor may want weekly status updates. That’s not an invitation to slack off until those meetings, so if you’re the type of person who runs to the drop box sixty seconds before your paper is due, you need to change the way you budget your time. All-nighters in the workplace are a sign of someone who is not prepared or mature enough to act professionally.

This isn’t just an admonition; it’s an opportunity. A job gives you a boundary between work and home that did not exist at Yale. So take advantage of that separation, do your work while you’re actually at work, and use your home time for you.

Punctuality

Your job is not a student meeting that starts fifteen minutes late; arrive on time, if not a few minutes early, and work through the end of the workday. No one appreciates a clock-watcher who strolls in later than everyone else and says good-bye at five o’clock on the dot. If that means sticking around a little longer than you’d like, remember that supervisors consider your presence (and absence) direct reflections of your investment and enthusiasm.

Meg Martinez ’10 says: “Waking up early is hard. Practice before your job starts and don’t get out of practice on the weekends.”

Attendance

Maybe no one noticed if you skipped out on a lecture, but you’re expected to be at work every day. Calling in sick when you’d rather stay in bed or spend time with friends will not earn points with your boss and colleagues. Many employers don’t allow you to use paid vacation or sick time for the first 60-90 days on the job, so don’t be surprised if an unwarranted sick day shrinks your paycheck.

Facebook, Cell Phones, and Texting, Oh My!

Technology and social media are your friends, just not at work. Cell phones should be turned off or at the very least put on vibrate at the office. You’re
expected not to take personal calls unless necessary. The same goes for texting. Just because you think no one can hear you doesn’t mean no one will notice; holding your phone under the desk while you pretend to work does not look natural. Remember that, as the new person in the office, your supervisor and colleagues will be watching your behavior.

Internet use should be limited to your work projects. Unless monitoring Facebook is part of your duties, you should not be checking your wall. Many companies have policies that prohibit surfing the web or checking personal email while at work. Some even track what sites employees are visiting, so don’t make the mistake of assuming that no one will know. Quickly minimizing the window when you hear someone approach is an obvious clue that you’re looking at something you shouldn’t. That quick visit to YouTube during office hours can get you in trouble.

Language

You should know by now that you speak more formally in an office than a dorm room, but make sure to watch your language even in friendly conversation. Swears, slang, or offensive terminology can reflect poorly on you, and you never know how your audience (or the colleague walking past your desk) will respond.

The Office Social Scene

Be A Friendly Face

A simple “hello” or “good morning” accompanied by a smile for everyone you pass as you arrive at work can do wonders for your image around the office. In some workplaces, it may be common for staff to spend a few minutes in common areas first thing in the morning to catch up over coffee. If this is part of the company culture, then don’t be the antisocial new hire who never participates. Conversely, if the majority of co-workers get right down to business upon arriving, then it may be best to do the same. Follow the lead of those around you, at least until you’ve settled into your job.

Politics: Gossip and Alliances

We’ve all been around people who love to gossip. If you encounter one of these people in the workplace, try to keep your distance and avoid getting caught up in their talk. You want to remain open and neutral toward your fellow employees.
During the first weeks on the job, co-workers may invite you to lunch or to go out after work. It’s important to be friendly and accept offers if you are able and comfortable, but be wary of becoming BFFs too quickly. There are alliances and personality clashes that you won’t recognize at first; you would hate to be unfairly labeled based on your friends at the office. That said, forming professional friendships can go a long way toward easing your transition into the workforce.

As You Continue…

Attitude

Depending on your position, the projects you’re given in the early days of your new job may not be the most intellectually stimulating of tasks. But it’s important to pursue every assignment, from writing a brief to buying a coffee, with promptness and enthusiasm. A positive attitude can go a long way toward maintaining your happiness.

Don’t be afraid to advocate for yourself. Ask too many questions instead of too few, especially where you, the new employee, are concerned. Of course you try to pay attention, be aware, and learn what you can independently, but stand up for yourself. Before signing on, ask for a contract; read it carefully; and follow up on any aspects you do not understand. Ask about health insurance and other benefits. Negotiate a fair salary. You are only as small or as “new” and innocent as you decide to be. Listen to your gut and if an opportunity seems right, go for it. If it doesn’t, pinpoint why and opt to keep looking if possible.

-Alumna ‘14

Initiative

If you’re done with your assignments early, don’t sit at your desk waiting for something to do to drop from the heavens. Politely ask your supervisor how else you might contribute, and volunteer to assist with other projects. You’ll receive the most interesting work if your supervisor knows the amount of quality work you can perform in a given time period, so show him/her!

Progress Checks

There are no exam grades in the office; in fact, it’s not uncommon to receive formal feedback only once per year on an employee evaluation. To get a feel for
your progress, seek periodic feedback from your supervisor. That way you’ll know which areas you could improve—and work to improve them—before the yearly evaluation.

Chain of Command

If you have a problem, don’t go straight to the CEO (unless the CEO is your only boss.) Generally, your first stop should be your direct supervisor. For personal issues with a co-worker, try to resolve your concerns directly with that person if possible. In many companies, human resources can also help you settle problems.

Upward Mobility

Some of you may have taken an entry-level position intending to move up. Completing your work efficiently and well is the best way to prepare for that move. Project your enthusiasm for additional responsibilities, but don’t let your desire for a higher position diminish your attitude toward the work you have right now.

After some time on the job, you can politely express your aspirations to your supervisor in the context of asking how to prepare yourself now. This will plant the seed that you are interested in moving up, without forcing the issue.

You will not know everything. Always express your thanks to those who go out of their way to welcome you and get you on your feet.

— Jennifer Shelby ’13

Some Perspective

In the end, your first job is just that: your first job. It does not define you, and it is not a measure of your worth—it is a stepping stone to the really cool stuff you’ll do down the road. You’ve spent four years preparing to go out in the world. So enjoy the process, be open to self-discovery, and listen to Henry David Thoreau (even though he attended an unmentionable school in Massachusetts…):

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you’ve imagined.”
10. Professional Presentation

For those of you entering the workforce, it’s time to think about building your professional wardrobe. Gone are the days of rolling out of bed and tossing on a cozy sweatshirt, your favorite jeans and flip-flops any day of the week. You know how to dress professionally when the occasion warrants, such as an important job interview, but now that the interviews are over and the job is yours, what are you expected to wear every day? Before you start your new job, it is very important to find out what attire is appropriate in your new workplace. Ask some of the current employees or, better yet, visit before your start date to observe what others are wearing. When in doubt, look to your boss. Unless he/she is a complete fashion nightmare, try to emulate his/her level of formality in dress.

To get you started with this process, we’ve outlined some basic guidelines on business professional and business casual attire along with tips from alumni.

Business Professional

The number one rule of dressing in the workplace is neat and clean. Your clothes should be well kept and ironed. Don’t look like you just rolled out of bed. There is no need to go overboard on expensive purchases, especially when you’re just starting out. Focus on comfortable clothes that are durable, and most importantly, fit well. It’s better to spend money on going to a tailor to get your clothes properly fitted, rather than spending money on a more expensive brand. 99% of the time, people can’t tell the brand of the clothes you are wearing, they do however notice when your clothes fit well.

Shortly after you move to a new city, it helps to read Yelp reviews and find a good tailor close to your workplace or home. Whether you accidentally puncture a hole in a garment or you gain/lose weight, there will likely be times when you need rapid, quality, hassle-free alterations.

-Alumna ‘14
Choose a conservative suit color, such as charcoal grey and navy. Suits made of wool or wool blends tend to last longer and wrinkle less. Skirt and pant suits are both appropriate. If you choose a skirt suit, make sure the skirt is long enough to cover your thighs when seated.

Button-up dress shirts and ties or blouses should be worn with your suit. Choose conservative, neutral colors.

Dress shoes and dress socks should be worn with your suit. With pant suits, socks should act as a continuation of your suit and match the shade/color of the fabric as closely as possible. Your belt should match the color of your shoes. Shoes should be clean and shined. Footwear should match or complement the outfit. Choose a heel height that you are comfortable with and shoes that you can easily walk in.

**Business Casual**

While many companies still expect employees to don suits, casual Fridays, dress-down days, and events labeled “business casual” are commonplace. Keep in mind that some companies are simply “casual,” which is even more liberal and allows employees to wear almost anything they want. However, just because a company is “business casual” or “casual” does not mean that young professionals should look unkempt. Neatly pressed clothes and shined shoes will continue to be important when in the office.

When in doubt, dress up. Even a suit can be easily dressed down by removing your tie, jacket, undoing that top button and rolling up your sleeves. It is always better to be overdressed than underdressed, it conveys a sense of professionalism. Be wary that in some major cities, business casual actually means not black tie, and a suit or sport jacket is still expected. Again, the rule is, if in doubt, ask a colleague.

While it is sometimes more difficult to assemble a business casual outfit than to pull on a suit, most professionals welcome the freedom to dress a bit more comfortably in the office. Even though most business casual clothing is less expensive than suits are, it can still cost you a bundle. One way to save money is to buy basic styles and colors that can easily mix and match with each other. Buying a few high-quality classic items is usually better than buying lots of lower-quality or overly trendy pieces that don’t wear well or go out of style. These tips are equally applicable for those who are required to dress professionally in the workplace.
The suggestion “dress to impress” has been around for ages, and for good reason. By dressing neatly and appropriately in the workplace, you will look more professional. Professionalism begets respect, which could in turn mean more responsibility and opportunity for advancement.

Consider not buying all your work wardrobe before you start working. Watch and inquire about the “dress culture” and then slowly increase your wardrobe taking that culture into consideration.
11. The Art of Networking

Networking. Informational interviews. These concepts reduce some people to nervous explanations of why they can’t do them, or guilty admissions that they’ve never tried. Those who have developed professional and social networks, however, benefit from the relationships for years to come and sometimes even find the process enjoyable!

The Basics

Whether your goal is to find a job, explore career possibilities through informational interviews, take the next step in your career, make professional or social contacts in a new city, or change careers, networking can be one of the most effective tools available to you. Opportunities for networking range from contacting strangers who might have career information you need to asking the person who lived in your entryway your sophomore year where to find the best gym in town.

Social networking is something most of you are already very comfortable with. It’s how you stay connected to your friends, get to know new people, decided where and with whom to take spring breaks. Learning, researching, and developing relationships are all skills that each of you have utilized and developed while at Yale. Professional networking involves putting these skills to use to formally connect with individuals for career development.

For some, meeting people can be intimidating. If that describes you, think of networking as a research project. The answers, however, are not in the library or on the internet; they are known among the people working in the career area or social setting of your choice. Since you don’t know who has the most beneficial information, your task is to contact enough people to find the person who has the most appropriate answer for your situation. You can correspond with people through email, phone conversations, Skype or face-to-face meetings.
Networking for Career Advice

The first step in professional networking is to clarify your career goals or to focus on one or several obtainable goals (for example, finding a position with a public relations firm in Philadelphia). Be sure you do some preliminary reading and research to gain an understanding what a particular career field or specific position entails before you begin reaching out to people in that field.

Next, do plenty of research to identify organizations that hire people for such positions; and don’t forget, OCS staff and online resources can help you with this. Some of this research may result in finding actual job openings! Don’t forget to look beyond the obvious. For example, public-relations opportunities do not exist only with PR firms; in fact, many organizations have a PR department in house. Remember to look in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors.

As you prepare a list of organizations, try to identify specific people (including the spellings of their names and their job titles) who might be helpful to you. Look in the Yale Career Network and on LinkedIn for Yale alumni at the organizations you’re targeting. In addition to this research, ask everyone you know if they might know of someone who could provide advice. Sometimes the most helpful person is someone you see every day but didn’t know had a perfect connection for you!

As you compile a list of people to contact, prepare questions you’d like to ask each person. For an informational interview/meeting, keep the questions general to the career field and not specific to a job search. Include questions about the background and career path of the people you contact. (For example, “How did you learn about the best PR firms in Philadelphia?” “What would you do differently if you could do it again?” “Are there professional associations that I might join in town?”) You can find additional sample informational interview questions on the OCS website.

When you contact people to see if they might be able to offer advice in person or in a phone conversation, be gracious and diplomatic. And remember to be flexible regarding time and location. Some people will not be interested and may even be annoyed. Others may say they are willing to meet but don’t have the time. Others will be glad to meet but may want you to further define the purpose of the meeting. If you have made it clear that you are seeking general advice about a specific career field in a specific location, you may be able to avoid responses such as, “We don’t have any openings right now so please don’t bother me.” Yale alumni have too often been asked to provide job leads
by demanding students or recent graduates who don’t appreciate the etiquette of networking. Many alums are willing to assist as long as you make it clear that advice is what you’re seeking. It’s inappropriate to expect them to do your work for you as you seek job openings.

One of the most valuable parts of a Yale education is the community of hard-working and intelligent students and alumni with whom you have the chance to connect. Use the Yale Clubs and the online Yale Career Network, as well as networking resources such as LinkedIn, to connect with alums in your field of interest or in the city where you are planning to live. You may not hit it off with everyone you contact, but keep at it. Networking takes time and effort, but it can be extremely beneficial in helping you achieve your career goals, and it can be exciting to talk with interesting and dynamic professionals in your field(s) of interest.

Why would anyone agree to an informational interview or offer advice to a stranger? Networking benefits employers as well. Posting and advertising job openings, recruiting, reviewing résumés, and interviewing requires a great deal of time, energy, and money from employers. Those who provide informational interviews and assist newcomers to their career fields will often have a pool of talent at their fingertips. When an employee leaves, employers with files of people who have come in for informational interviews and/or sent letters of inquiry may be able to skip the time-consuming step of advertising the position and wading through large stacks of applications.

Networking Through Professional Associations

As you begin your first job or job search, explore the professional associations in your field. Every industry offers a wealth of such organizations. Some are broadly aligned with an industry or focused on specific types of jobs within an industry, others align with identity groups such as race, ethnicity, or gender. Many associations organize social and networking events, yearly conferences and professional development workshops. Some provide resources to members through websites, newsletters, or professional journals. Participate as often as you can and take time to cultivate relationships with the people you meet. Be sure not to be shy at receptions—if you see someone you want to meet, approach him/her, introduce yourself, and ask about his/her work. If you are still seeking a job, find out if you can attend as a newcomer or guest. Get involved by participating on a committee or volunteering at an event. The people you meet through your professional associations have the potential to help you begin or advance your career.
The Association of Yale Alumni provides similar networking organizations through the Yale Clubs found in most cities. (For information on Yale Clubs, see Chapter 1: Keeping the Bulldog Alive.) Almost every city or town also has organizations for newcomers, singles, or people with a shared interest in an art or sport, and there are many opportunities to get involved in religious organizations, cultural groups, and athletic leagues. Participating in these groups will help you explore your new location and continue to expand your professional and social networks.

Maintaining Your Professional Network

Some people in your network are or will become your friends and will continue to be in close contact with you. Others may talk with you only once. Regardless, it is important that you express your appreciation through thank-you notes; these will help to solidify your place in their memories. It is also essential that you respect the time someone made for you by refraining from sharing that person’s name inappropriately. You may find a reason or need to ask for further advice as you continue your career, and you want to assure that the door remains open for future communication.
12. Long-Term Financial Planning

You just graduated and are probably about twenty-two years old. Age sixty-five seems eons away, and retirement is something you’ll think about later. You have years to worry about that stuff, right? Wrong. The best time to think about retirement is now. Take a look at this example.

If a Yale graduate earns approximately $40,000 in his/her first job out of college and puts $400 per month into a retirement account beginning at age 22, by the time he/she reaches age 65 the investment of $206,400 ($4,800/year for 43 years) will have become $548,229 saved for retirement (numbers are based on the assumption that the investment will grow at a constant rate of 4% above inflation each year).* This growth in funds is the result of your investment compounding.

Now look at what happens when you wait until later to start saving. If you start the same retirement account at age 27, saving the same $400 each month, you’ll only have $427,282 saved by age 65.* That’s a loss of over 100 grand! Wait until you’re 35 to begin saving, and your retirement fund only has the chance to grow to $277,620.*

It’s hard to think about saving for retirement when you’re just out of college. Your income is usually just enough to cover expenses and repay loans, and you feel like you can wait until later. But as these examples show, even a small amount towards your retirement savings can add up enormously over decades. Opening a 401(k), IRA, or similar retirement account now is one of the most important steps you can take. You will thank yourself later.

How Your Job Can Help

The key is to start early, even if you are only putting away a small amount of money. Many companies and organizations will contribute a percentage of your salary or match a percentage of your monthly contributions to a
retirement fund—commonly referred to as a 401(k) or 403(b)—that you get to take with you when you leave if you meet vesting requirements.** When establishing a 401(k), make sure to talk with a financial advisor or company representative who specializes in retirement planning.

If your employer offers retirement contribution benefits, take advantage of it! Think of the money your employer contributes as an instant return on your investment. An added bonus is that money you contribute to any company-sponsored retirement fund is deducted from your paycheck on a pretax basis. That means that the salary you pay taxes on is lower, even though your salary remains the same, so your taxes are also lower.

Retirement benefits are a huge part of your total compensation package; be sure to find out what type of plan your company offers. Since many new grads don’t stay with the same company for more than a few years, there’s no guarantee that you can take all of your employer’s contributions with you if you leave, again depending on their vesting requirements**. But remember that whatever portion you personally contribute is always yours to keep.

Going It Alone

Perhaps you do not work for a company that contributes to your retirement, or you haven’t worked there long enough to participate in a plan (some businesses require a one- or two-year waiting period). Or maybe you are in graduate school and “401(k)” is not part of your vocabulary. You can still set up an Individual Retirement Fund (IRA) or a Roth IRA on your own through any commercial bank or Mutual Fund Company.

Like a 401(k), an IRA offers tax breaks. Traditional IRAs offer tax-deferred growth, which means that you only pay taxes on your investment gains when you withdraw money. Contributions to a traditional IRA also reduce your taxable income. In contrast, contributions to a Roth IRA are not tax deductible. With a Roth IRA, you do not pay taxes on the money when you withdraw your principal, or earnings. This type of IRA is limited to those who earn under a certain limit set by the IRS; check with your financial advisor for more information.

As of 2015, you may contribute a maximum of $5,500 per year to a traditional or Roth IRA (this number can change yearly). While it might be painful to write that $5,500 check each year, you will benefit later. Before you decide to set up an IRA, speak with a financial advisor to determine if an IRA is right for you and which type would be most beneficial.
“But what about social security?” you may ask. Anyone who has earned a paycheck feels some pain upon seeing that big chunk of change that gets deducted for social security on his/her pay stub. Social security was originally established to provide financial support for the nation’s retirees. The problem is that medical advancements and healthier lifestyles are extending the average life span. Therefore, more people will be drawing from the pot for longer periods of time. By the time you reach retirement, there’s no telling how much there will be to go around. Take matters into your own hands!

Yes, age 65 seems eons away – but if you play your cards right by investing now for retirement, you will be able to enjoy your golden years in comfort. Starting early is your key to success. Whether you plan to spend your retirement on the golf course, traveling the world, or on your porch reading good books, you are going to need money to do it. Failing to contribute to a retirement fund is only cheating yourself!

*Information obtained from the www.vanguard.com retirement calculator.

**Vesting is the period of time a person must remain employed by his/her employer before the company contributions to a retirement plan are the employee’s to keep. It’s not uncommon for companies to have a two- to five-year vesting period.