

How do I make it to Goldman Sachs?

Investment Banking › Interview Preparation



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One of the most common questions that gets asked here is this: "How do I make it into Goldman Sachs?" Goldman Sachs is consistently ranked at the top of the investment banking league tables, attracts top talent, and pays the highest bonuses, so no wonder students and bankers all want to get a job at the prestigious investment banking firm.

These are the tips we gathered from a "Goldmanite", who spent 16 years at the firm:

No magic list of courses, study, deals, or anything else will guarantee you to get hired by Goldman Sachs.

Let me explain how this works:

1. Work like crazy to get into a great university.

In the U.S., it takes a REALLY top-tier Ivy League school in the UK, a "red brick / Oxbridge" school, a Grande Ecole in France, etc. This is because thousands of super-smart, aggressive, very hardworking young folks from around the world are constantly banging on the doors of firms like Goldman Sachs trying to get jobs. If your education doesn't compare favourably, you won't be considered. If you are not already enrolled at Harvard or Cambridge though, don't worry, you can overcome that; just read the remaining things on this list and be sure that you blow them away.

2. Get very, very serious about your schoolwork.

Firms like Goldman can afford to be very picky, and they hire only the best and brightest. Your transcript had better prove you are one of them, [or you won't even get an interview](#). You don't have to be Einstein; you can get top grades by simply working your tail off.

3. Become a well-rounded person.

Good grades from a top school aren't enough. Keep current on world events. Understand the economy. Play sports. Play in a band. Act in a play. Learn about wine. Be involved in a variety of activities beyond academics. When you get that interview with Goldman, they will want to see that you are a fascinating, engaging person. You should be someone who has interesting stories to tell, maybe has something to teach them; someone they will want to hang out with. The boss wants to know that if he takes you to lunch with a wealthy client, you'll be able to participate in the conversation and speak intelligently on a wide variety of topics.

4. Understand how business works.

Subscribe to the Wall Street Journal or Financial Times, and read at least the front page every day. Understand how companies market, sell, and produce goods; [understand finance and accounting](#). Find out how companies buy raw materials, find employees, borrow money, go public, manage their cash, etc. If you want to work for an investment banking firm like Goldman, you must understand exactly what those companies do for their clients. Also, an MBA will really help.

5. Find a mentor.

Within your extended network, there is someone who has been successful in business: a family member, a professor, a former employer, etc. Maybe they even worked in one of the big firms like Goldman. Call them and ask for advice. Tell them what you are trying to achieve and ask for their guidance. If they are well-connected, they might even provide the most valuable help of all: an introduction to someone at a big firm. This is the absolute best way to get your foot in the door.

Finally, if you don't get a job at Goldman, RELAX! Each of the steps above will lead you to money, even if it's not at Goldman. For example, if you work hard and get into a top school, many of your fellow students will have rich parents, CEO fathers, Senator uncles, etc. By the time you graduate, you will be "connected", and you will personally know influential people who can do favours for you and help you on the way to greatness.

However, this is the most important part. DO NOT CONFUSE MONEY WITH HAPPINESS. I personally followed all of the steps above; I worked for the big firms, and I am financially secure. But I'm also 40, unmarried, burnt out on work, and probably a little boring because I spent all those years focusing on dry work stuff. I decided that I wanted money, so I set a course to get it. But if I could do it over again, first I'd figure out what I love most; then I'd go do it with a vengeance regardless of the money. If you sincerely have a passion for investment banking, go for it. But if you simply lust for money, think carefully. Would you marry someone you didn't love? No, you'd become miserable and regretful. The same thing will happen if you choose a career you don't love. Good luck finding the answer and making it happen!

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