

# Employment Advice

This guide will tell you what employers expect from you as a candidate, how to write a CV and how you should prepare for a job interview.

# Looking for a job

The prospect of looking for employment can be incredibly daunting for anyone, and it's especially hard if you've never had a job before. How do you find out what employers expect from you as a candidate? How do you write a CV? And how should you get ready for a job interview

It includes information on:

How to apply for a job

Application forms

Covering letters

Interview Preparation

Speculative letters

Interview Questions

## How to Apply for a Job

Some employers will ask for a covering letter and CV, others will ask you to fill in an application, either online or in paper form. In most cases you will be required to provide some form of written documentation when applying for a job.

Your CV, short for Curriculum Vitae, this translates to “the course of one’s life”. It should be a short, easy to read document to give any prospective employer relevant facts about your academic achievements, work experience and your interests, hobbies and responsibility in the community. It should tell the employer what you are looking for and show that you have the right skills and abilities to do the job.

Overall, it is a marketing document for you to sell yourself to a potential employer and is often the first impression an employer will get of you. It’s important to make it a lasting impression for the right reasons.

A CV must be carefully planned, thoroughly checked and well presented. A good CV can be stored on your computer to be used again and again to accompany future job applications but tailored for each job you apply for. You may need to emphasise certain aspects of your skills and experience for different jobs and remember to keep your CV up-to-date.



There is no standard format for a CV but the following points might help you find the format that best suits your needs or the requirements of the job you are applying for.

## Hints and Tips

- Make sure your CV is well spaced out so that it is easy to read and understand.
- Ideally keep your CV to a maximum of 2 sides of A4 paper, if your CV is too long, the employer won't have time to read it.
- Keep the design simple, use a font size no smaller than 10 and use a normal font such as Arial or Times New Roman – if an employer can't read about you, they won't want to meet you.
- Make sure your CV is laid out in a way that is easy to read and nice to look at. Look at a standard CV template online and then add your own personal touches to make yours different.
- Use simple, plain and positive words, clear sentences, avoid exaggerations and do not go over the top. You can oversell yourself!
- Honesty is definitely the best policy. Do not make things up to make yourself sound better.
- Make sure that the CV you write conjures up the right image of you and your skills, capabilities and achievements. If you do not match the picture you have painted with your CV at the interview, then your application will not be taken further.
- Bullet points are useful to highlight relevant skills and experience and help break up continuous text.
- Don't mention things that you are bad at or say negative things about yourself in your CV.
- Explain any breaks in your CV from leaving school like travelling, maternity, home study, college, training or a gap year.
- If this is the first position you are applying for, stress any transferable skills you may have from hobbies, clubs or school activities to support your application. Playing football, for example, or other team sports shows that you can fit into a team and that you have discipline and commitment.
- "Socialising with friends" translates as hanging around whether this is true or not, if you socialise in team events or are a member of a club, be specific.
- Ensure all dates are accurate.
- Check for literal or spelling errors as these will not give a good impression of your accuracy / attention to detail.
- Don't include reference details unless specifically asked to - instead say reference available on request. (For your first role it is okay to give details of a teacher, or perhaps a volunteer leader or sports coach as a reference.)
- Use large envelopes so that the CV does not get spoiled with too much folding.
- Sell Yourself! They will not know what you can do if you do not tell them.
- Print your CV on quality paper, and save a copy electronically so that it is ready to use again in the future or refer to at a later date.

If you feel like you are struggling writing your CV don't worry we all do. Type up a draft copy and ask somebody to read through it for you. You will no doubt have to make changes and amendments to the first few copies, but it's better that somebody helped you spot the mistakes rather than a potential employer.

## CV Mistakes to Watch Out for

These are some of the common mistakes made when writing a CV. Check for mistakes again and again. This may seem boring but it's worth it.

- Misspellings. You may have GCSE's, but if the subject is spelt incorrectly you really aren't making the most of your education.
- Capitalisation. Job titles, names and places, companies and the first word of every sentence should start with a capital letter. **NOT EVERY LETTER!** This is possibly one of the most common CV mistakes.
- Reverse chronological order. Newest stuff should always go at the top.
- Wrong contact details. Changed your mobile? Changed your email address? Make sure you have the correct details on your CV
- Email addresses. Try to keep it sensible. iambatman@whatweryouthinking.com is unlikely to impress the manager at the business you want to work for. Get a new one for applications and make sure you check your email account regularly.

## General Facts

Around **50%**

of all CV's received by recruitment consultants contain spelling or grammatical errors.

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**88%**

is the rejection rate if you include a photo on your application.

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**18 Weeks**

The average job search lasts 18 weeks but is longer for candidates without a strong CV.

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**5-7 Seconds**

is the average time recruiters spends looking at a CV

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**92%**

of recruiters would reject candidates who made negative comments on social media.

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**118**

is the average number of applicants for any given role, 20% of those applicants get an interview.

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**71%**

of employers say they regularly see jargon or acronyms in CV's

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**54%**

of employers say they are regularly irritated by CV jargon

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# First Job Template for School Leavers

## YOUR NAME

## CONTACT DETAILS (Including Town and County)

## TELEPHONE NUMBERS (Including mobile contact details)

## EMAIL ADDRESS

Do not include any further personal details including marital status, gender, and nationality as this does not add any value and may impede your application. You should use Arial or similar business font and the size should be 11 or 12.

## PROFILE

This section should include a brief history of your school career and qualifications gained. This section should never be in bullet point format and should be no more than 8 to 10 sentences long. Don't forget that this is your opportunity to present your unique skill set and the value you can bring to an organisation; this will focus on what makes you stand out, your skills (excellent communication and organisational skills etc.) and the value you bring to potential employers.

Try to write your own rather than copy something else that you have seen.

A common complaint from employers is that some CVs are often identical!

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- This section should include a list of achievements and should be presented in bullet point format.
- Use this section to highlight any achievements you may have had in your life to date.
- You could include details of group projects that you completed.
- Example: Acted as school prefect from 2001- 2005. Captain of the school rugby team.
- Supported fundraising initiatives within the school including organising sponsored walk.

## EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Remember to include details of any employment (even if not in your current chosen field). You should also include details of voluntary work, including supporting fundraising activities or memberships of societies etc.

## TITLE HELD, NAME OF COMPANY, DATES OF EMPLOYMENT

- Insert further details of your key duties and responsibilities.
- Remember to use active verbs including sold, solved, performed etc.

## EDUCATION & TRAINING

List any qualifications gained including A levels, GCSEs or BTEC qualifications. University Name, dates (if applicable)

## CORE SKILLS

- Include details of all the skills you have to offer potential employers.
- Example: IT Skills: Microsoft Office: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Explorer.
- Example: Well developed analytical and numerical ability.

## INTERESTS

Include brief details of interests if you have the space on your document however avoid phrases including 'socialising', 'partying' etc.

## REFERENCES

References available on request

Employers don't need this information within the early stages of the recruitment process, but ensure that you have thought about whom you will ask for a reference and that they know their details will be given to a prospective employer.

# CV Template for an Unemployed Person

## YOUR NAME

## CONTACT DETAILS (Including Town and County)

## TELEPHONE NUMBERS (Including mobile contact details)

## EMAIL ADDRESS

Do not include any further personal details including marital status, gender, and nationality as this does not add any value and may impede your application. You should use Arial or similar business font and the size should be 11 or 12.

## PROFILE

This section should include a brief history of your career, it should include details of the sectors you worked in, and it should also include some of the skills you have used in your career to date. This section should never be in bullet point format and should be no more than 8 to 10 sentences long. This is your opportunity to present your unique skill set and the value you bring to a new organisation. Example of opening section: Accounts Assistant with experience demonstrated in the manufacturing sector.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- This section should include a list of 4-8 achievements and should be presented in bullet point format.
- You should include details of a situation you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome for your employer. You should describe the tasks involved in that situation, talk about the various actions taken and the results from those actions.
- Employers want to know that you have solved problems similar to theirs and that you have achieved the results that they are looking for.
- Example: Reduced debtor days from 60 to 45 with the implementation of formal credit control process.

## CORE SKILLS

- Include details of all the skills you have to offer potential employers.
- Example: IT Skills: Microsoft Office: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Explorer.
- Example: Well developed analytical and numerical ability.

## INTERESTS

Include brief details of interests if you have the space on your document, however, avoid phrases including 'socialising', 'partying' etc.

## EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Remember you should start with your most recent employment first and work backwards. If you have had a period of unemployment then you should include details of training voluntary work.

## TITLE HELD, NAME OF COMPANY, DATES OF EMPLOYMENT

- Insert further details of your key duties and responsibilities.
- Remember to use active verbs including sold, solved, performed etc.

## EDUCATION & TRAINING

- List any qualifications gained
- University/College/School Name, dates (if applicable)

Employers will always review the education section. Include details of the qualifications and training you do have. If you are concerned about your lack of qualifications don't worry, many highly regarded business professionals do not have academic qualifications. Employers value experience.

## REFERENCES

References available on request

Employers don't need this information within the early stages of the recruitment process, but ensure that you have thought about whom you will ask for a reference and that they know their details will be given to a prospective employer.

## Positive Words

Below are some words that may help you to get started but don't fall into the trap of having the same CV as everyone else.

Think about what you want to say, be honest in describing yourself, make it about you and surprise the employer with your originality. Most people use 'Hard working, enthusiastic individual' ... so avoid that completely!

Make sure that you clearly understand what the employer is looking for and create something that shows you are the one they should employ. You will get clues from the job advert, the job description or from the Company website, but think about what else an employer may be looking for.

### These are usually:

- Positive 'can do' attitude
- Motivated
- Reliable and punctual
- Fit in well with the existing employees and teams
- Pick the job up quickly and do it well
- Smart appearance that will fit with the image of the Company
- Can you bring in some new ideas or skills to benefit the Company?



## Be Positive

Describe yourself with words such as:

- Able
- Creative
- Dependable
- Energetic
- Experienced
- Flexible
- Honest
- Imaginative
- Innovative
- Motivated
- Organised
- Reliable
- Sense of humour



## Don't Be Negative

Avoid words such as:

- Awful
- Bad
- Fault
- Hate
- Mistake
- Nothing
- Problem

Research has shown there are terms and phrases to avoid using, even in a positive context:

“I have an aggressive passion for what I do”

## Speculative Letters

Not all letters of application need to be sent in response to a specific job advert. If there's an organisation you really want to work for you may want to write them a speculative letter. This is a letter to see if they have any intention of recruiting now or in the near future.

This works best when you include a copy of your CV and have done a bit of research into the Company. This could be as simple as calling the Company and asking the name of a manager who would deal with the recruitment and checking the address for the manager is the same as the one you have.

Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for their reply and ask if they would keep your letter and CV on file in order to contact you if a position should arise.

## Speculative Letter Examples

**Your Name and Address**

**Date**  
**Manager's Name,**  
**Company Name and Address**

Dear (enter name),

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is (enter your name) and I have recently left ..... College / School, where I took a range of GCSE/ A Levels exams in which I received / expect to receive good results.

I am writing to you as I have a particular interest in working for (enter Company name) and would be grateful if you would consider me for any employment or training opportunities in the (enter the department you are interested in) department you currently have or any that arise in the future.

1, (Although I currently don't have any experience working within this sector I believe that I have transferable skills and with the right training and support I will develop into a loyal valued member of staff and will fit in well with your Company.)

2, (I have experience of working in this sector from my time working at/ training at ..... and believe I have the relevant skills to develop and become a loyal valued member of the of staff and will fit in well with your Company.)

I have enclosed a copy of my CV for your attention and a stamped addressed envelope for your response. I can offer my Record of Achievement / certificates as further evidence of my academic success and personal development.

I would welcome the chance to meet and discuss further any opportunities you may have.

I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely (only if you know the recipient's name, 'Yours faithfully' if you don't.)

Your name

This is a letter to see if they have any intention of recruiting now or in the near future.



**Your Name and Address**

**Date**  
**Manager's Name,**  
**Company Name and Address**

Dear (enter name),

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself.

My name is (enter your name) and I am writing to you as I have a particular interest in working for (enter Company name). I would be grateful if you would consider me for any employment or training opportunities in the (enter the department you are interested in) department you currently have or any that arise in the future.

1, (Although I currently don't have any experience working within this sector I believe that I have transferable skills and with the right training and support I will develop into a loyal valued member of staff and will fit in well with your Company.)

2, (I have experience of working in this sector from my time working at/ training at ..... and believe I have the relevant skills to develop and become a loyal valued member of the of staff and will fit in well with your Company.)

I have enclosed a copy of my CV for your attention and a stamped addressed envelope for your response.

I would welcome the chance to meet and discuss further any opportunities you may have.

I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely (only if you know the recipient's name, 'Yours faithfully' if you don't.)

Your name

## Cover Letters

The letter you send with your CV is your opportunity to grab the attention of the employer and get them interested in reading more about you. Here are some things you should consider when writing an effective letter:

- The focus of the letter should be on what you can bring to the organisation that you are applying to and how you can help them achieve their goals.
- This is your chance to tell the employer what specific skills / experience / interest you have that could be useful to them. Show the employer what value you can add to their business.
- Have a 'draft' copy saved on your computer so you can tailor it each time you apply for a job.
- Don't just copy generic paragraphs from another covering letter – the employer will spot this. You need to tailor it to the role you are applying for as much as possible.
- Remember to begin by telling them why you are writing to them – and include the specific role you are applying for if there is one.
- You should also look to explain what interests you about the job and the company – show you have done your research – more information on how to research an organisation can be found in the next section.
- Point out your key skills, experience and/or qualifications that are relevant to that particular job.
- Expand on the points that you have highlighted in your CV.
- End the letter in a positive way, expressing your willingness to discuss your application at interview.

## Cover Letter Examples

**Your Name and Address**

**RE: (enter job title or vacancy reference number)**

Dear Sir or Madam, (enter name if known),

I am writing in response to your recent advert for a (enter job title) advertised in the (enter publication) on (date). I have been looking for opportunity like this, in a growing organisation, to build upon the skills and experience I have gained to date.

I have recently left ..... College /School, where I took a range of GCSE / A Levels exams in which I received / expect to receive good results. (I have experience of this job role from my time working at / training at ..... and wish to develop my skills and experience further with your Company.)

As requested please find enclosed a copy of my CV for your perusal. In addition to this I can offer my Record of Achievement / certificates as further evidence of my academic success and personal development.

I believe that I have transferable skills to fulfil the (enter job title) vacancy and with the right training and support I can develop into a loyal valued member of staff and will fit into your Company well.

I would welcome the chance to meet and discuss further any opportunities you may have.

I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely (only if you know the recipient's name, 'Yours faithfully' if you don't.)

Your name

The focus of the letter should be on what you can bring to the organisation that you are applying to and how you can help them achieve their goals.



**Your name and Address**

**RE: (enter job title or vacancy reference number)**

Dear Sir or Madam, (enter name if known)

I am writing in response to your recent advert for a (enter job title) advertised in the (enter publication) on (date). I have been looking for opportunity like this, in a growing organisation, to build upon the skills and experience I have gained to date.

I have recently (add details of what you have most recently done in terms of employment / training)

As requested please find enclosed a copy of my CV for your perusal.

I believe that I have transferable skills to fulfil the (enter job title) vacancy and with the right training and support I can develop into a loyal valued member of staff and will fit into your Company well.

I would welcome the chance to meet and discuss further any opportunities you may have.

I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely (only if you know the recipient's name, 'Yours faithfully' if you don't.)

Your name

## Application Forms

Companies may ask you to register yourself on their website and apply for their vacancy via an online application form, others may have a paper form that they want you to complete and send back.

Application forms can seem daunting and off-putting, but by filling it in and returning the application form you will already be one step closer to securing the job. Out of every 100 applications sent out on average only 20 get returned to the employer.

A lot of the information you pulled together for your CV – such as your education, skills and experience, will also be useful for your application.

Generally application forms are very similar and you will notice a lot have the same format and questions. When you have completed an application form that you are happy with and it has been checked for errors, it is a good idea to keep a copy to use as a point of reference for future applications. You will need to tailor the content of the application to the position you're applying for, but a lot of the information requested will be the same.



## Some hints and tips on filling out an application form:

- Research both the job and the Company to learn more about the role.
- Read the application instructions and questions thoroughly and follow them through (for example whether you have to use a black pen or have to write in capitals).
- Complete all the relevant sections – name, address, education & training, employment history, details of referees (always ensure referees are aware that you have used their details), etc.
- Do not submit an application form which contains alterations / crossing out and check the spelling of words which you are unsure of.
- Make a copy of the application form before you start so you can make a rough draft of your application before completing the original form.
- Check and double-check how the finished form looks.
- Do not use the same application form for every post – you will need to ensure that your application ‘fits’ the post for which you are applying – this might mean just making small changes, but this could make all the difference!
- Include skills you have developed outside work, in clubs or voluntary work.
- If there are gaps in your work or education history say what you were doing at the time.
- Read over the advert and make sure the information you are entering is relevant to the job.
- Ask someone to read and check the application form over for you.
- Keep a copy of the application form and the contact details of who you sent it to (this will help if you don’t get through the selection process you can call and ask for feedback).

## When it comes to online forms, remember:

- Make sure you have filled in all the sections before clicking the ‘send button’.
- Many organisations filter by grades (GCSEs or UCAS points) during the first stage of the application – make sure you meet the minimum requirements, otherwise you might waste your time by filling in the rest of the application.
- Remember not all sites will have a spell-check facility – use a dictionary if you’re not sure.
- If you are having problems submitting your application, don’t just hope for the best. There is always a helpline number or email address to contact. This will ensure that your application is received properly and on time.
- The company will probably have a lot of online applications to sift through, so you need to make sure that yours will stand out from the other applicants.

We have all sent application forms off and never heard back from some of the companies we applied to. Don’t worry it isn’t personal and you won’t be the only one who hasn’t heard back. Sometimes if a company has received a huge response to an advert for one vacancy it often isn’t possible to respond to all applicants.



## Interviews

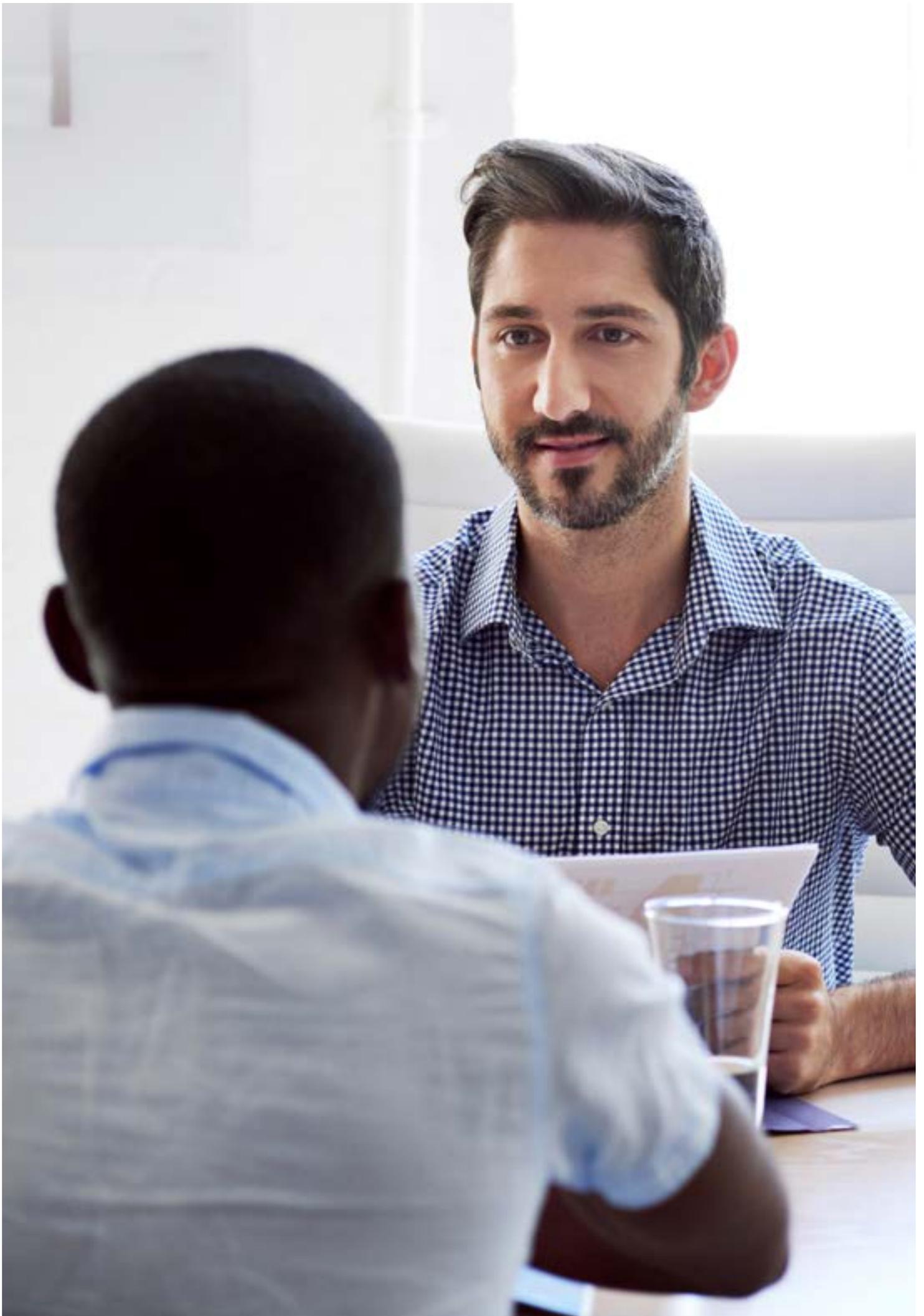
So, you have passed the application form stage, well done! Now here comes the scary part, the interview. There are many different types of interviews employers use but they will usually let you know the procedures used if you ask them in advance. Unless you are applying for a very specific kind of employment, generally the employer will use one or a combination of the styles listed below.

Remember an interview is a chance for you to shine and an opportunity to meet your future work colleagues. An interview is a two way meeting, for the interviewer to find out if you are the right person for the job and also an opportunity for you to ask questions to see if the job is for right you.

An interviewer isn't an ogre trying to trip you up and make you feel bad, it's their job to find the best candidate for the role by asking the right questions. If you research the Company and job role, plan your day and travel in advance, relax and enjoy yourself you will see an interview can often be fun and interesting.

**Remember an interview is a chance for you to shine and an opportunity to meet your future work colleagues.**





## Competency Based Interviews

Competency based interviews are conducted to allow you to showcase the experience and skills that you possess in relation to the position you have applied for. These are usually a series of questions that ask you for examples of a time you have demonstrated a particular skill. This could be questions along the lines of “tell me about a time you have had to deal with an angry customer”. The interviewer will be looking for an answer that:

1. Sets the scene (tell them where you were and the reason the customer was angry)
2. What you did (let them know what you said and how you dealt with the customer)
3. The end result (explain how the situation was left and the customer's reaction)

If you research the job you are applying for you can often work out some of the questions you might be asked and prepare your answers before the big day.

## Group Interviews / Exercises

You may be asked to attend an interview as part of a group for an assessment centre day. This is to see how you work as part of a team and interact with others around you. Often the employer will have set tasks for you all to undertake, this could be group discussions or more active things like working as a team to solve a problem, anything from building a bridge from newspaper to deciding who to throw out of a hot air balloon. Be prepared to take an active part in the discussions or tasks and put forward your ideas. Remember be positive and confident but not aggressive.

## Telephone / Skype Interviews

If you are applying for a position where you will be expected to work on a phone or if the employer is in a different location and travel may be an issue the employer may conduct a Telephone Interview in the first instance. This is a popular method for Contact Centres, Telesales and Customer Service positions and helps the interviewer assess your telephone manner.

If you are having this type of interview it is best to arrange it for when you can be sitting down with no disturbances. Have a pen and paper handy and also a copy of the job advert and application form or CV you sent as a reference. If you have given your mobile number as a contact, remember to answer the phone politely and change your greeting to something suitable. Some voice mail messages may not encourage the employer to call back so think about that in advance.

## Skills Test

This kind of interview is generally used to test your suitability for a role by testing essential skills needed. If you were applying for data entry you would be expected to demonstrate your computer or typing skills, this is often done with a computer program. For positions more hands on like a hairdresser you may have to go in and cut hair. If this is the interview method the best thing you can do is practice, practice and more practice.

## Personality Testing

This is a method that is becoming more and more popular among employers and is often run alongside other interview techniques. The personality test is a series of questions often multiple choice designed to measure your suitability for the job in question. There is no right or wrong answers in this process. The end result is a personality profile used to see if you match the job profile.

## Aptitude Test

These allow employers to see how candidates perform on tasks or react to different situations. They are often computer-based (although sometimes done on paper) and are used to assess a range of things including numerical and verbal reasoning. If you know in advance that you have one of these as part of the interview process, try to get information on what kind. There are various free online practice tests you can take that could help you prepare and get used to taking the same sorts of test.

## General Advice



### Dos:

- Turn up in good time and be polite to everyone you meet - you can never be sure who may have input into the selection process.
- When meeting your interviewer, be polite, give an enthusiastic greeting, and smile.
- During the interview, make eye contact and smile.
- Dress appropriately for the job you are applying for, try to follow the dress code if you know what it is beforehand.
- Think about your appearance in terms of your hair style, make up, jewellery, piercings and tattoos. The employer will be looking at you and be thinking about how you will be representing their Company to customers.
- Be aware of your body language - don't slouch, cross your arms or look uninterested.
- Make the most of your research - mention some of the facts about the organisation that you have found out from the internet, papers or media.
- If it is a panel interview make sure you talk to everyone rather than directing your answers at one or two people only.
- Listen to the information and questions carefully. It will make a bad impression if the interviewer is required to repeat something again and again.
- Find out as much as you can about the job. There may be some questions that you want to ask the employer, it's OK to ask to take notes.
- Think before you speak. Concentrate on what you want to communicate in your answer and speak with confidence.
- If you do go completely blank and are struggling to answer a question, ask the interviewer if you can come back to that question at the end. That will give you more thinking time.



### Don'ts:

- Sit down until the interviewer asks you to.
- Fidget or slouch in the chair or fold your arms.
- Swear – ever, even mild swearing isn't excusable.
- Criticise your school, college or last place of work.
- Talk too much, waffle or interrupt.
- Smoke before the interview or chew gum during.
- Lie and make up answers, you will get found out.



### Ask:

- What will be my main responsibilities?
- Where does this position fit into the Company structure?
- What training or work experience will I do in the first 6 months?
- Who will I directly report to?
- What is your commitment to training and development?
- When will you decide on the appointment?
- What is the next step?

An interview is a chance for you to meet new people, see the Company surroundings and ask questions. Make the most of it and enjoy the experience.

## Researching a Company

In order to impress an employer you need to go out of your way to research the organisation before an interview – its purpose, its products, even its history.

This sounds like a huge task, but fortunately there are lots of resources you can turn to that will help you in your search. In your search for information this step by step guide might help:

### Step 1

Call or send an email to people in your 'network' you think may be able to help. Perhaps a relative or friend knows someone who works for the organisation – you never know so it's worth asking around.

### Step 2

Search on the Internet – enter the company name into Google (or a search engine of your choice) to see whether they have a website or LinkedIn/Twitter page.

### Step 3

Look for the relevant pages on their website: 'About us' 'Our people', 'Careers' or 'Working With Us' sections might be particularly useful. The organisation might also have its Twitter feed or LinkedIn page – have a look to see if any information on there might be of use.

### Step 4

You want to find out what the company culture is like – what is really important to them – so, if they have one, make sure you look at the 'Mission Statement' or 'Values' page on their website. If they have a 'News' page this might also be helpful as it will give you an idea of the current issues that are relevant to the company.

### Step 5

Make a note of useful words and phrases that you come across in relation to the organisation, and think about how you can link these to your knowledge, skills, and attitude within your application or interview.

**'Take time before an interview to thoroughly research the company you're applying to. Your level of knowledge, however small, shows your commitment. Try the company's website as a starting point.'**

– (Liz McGivern, Red Carnation Hotels)





## What to Wear

As a rule you should always dress smartly for interviews. Your dress sense is clearly very personal and individual to you, however, these guidelines might help:

- Go for a formal look, even if you think the job will not need you to dress that way or provides a uniform. Jeans, leggings or sportswear are not appropriate.
- Wear clean, fresh and ironed clothes; make sure your shoes are smart and clean too – trainers or flip flops aren't a good option.
- Clean hair, nails and breath is vital - remember, some jobs may mean that long nails and nail varnish are not allowed, for example nurse / carer / caterer.
- Whatever the fashion, please keep underwear under clothes; plunging necklines, visible bra straps or visible boxers can give the wrong impression.
- Keep make-up and jewellery at a minimum (unfortunately some people are still negative about piercings so take them out).

**“I like to see candidates who are dressed smartly – you don't have to spend a fortune but looking your best for an interview is really important – it shows you are motivated and professional – this creates a good impression and I am more likely to want to recruit a person who has those qualities – even if the day to day job doesn't always require them to wear a suit every day.”**

– (Jackie, HR Assistant, CIPD)



### Men

- 2 piece suit – light grey to dark colours, shirt with collar and tie, proper shoes and socks.
- Or smart dark plain trousers, plain sweater / pullover or contrasting jacket and shirt with collar and tie, shoes and socks.
- You could substitute collar and tie for smart plain polo shirt or short- sleeved shirt.



### Women

- Skirt or trouser suit (any colour) with blouse / shirt and proper shoes and tights (very high heels are a bad idea).
- Or a plain, smart dress with proper shoes / sandals and tights (if wearing a skirt).
- Or skirt/trousers, sweater/pullover, shirt / blouse and shoes.

## During the interview

Arrive ten minutes early: Smile, and be polite to everyone. Remember to look people in the eye. Speak clearly and always say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. Never use rude, offensive or swear words. If a bad word pops out by mistake, apologise immediately.

**“Motivation and passion are the key ingredient we look for. Make sure you show it throughout the recruitment process.”**

– (Shaun Meekins, Barclays)

Having the right attitude can make all the difference between flying and flunking your interview. Above all, employers are looking for candidates who show a willingness to learn and enthusiasm.

Don’t let nerves get the better of you: Everyone suffers from nerves in one form or another, but learning to keep them in check will really help when it comes to interviewing. Try and ensure you appear interested in what is said at all times.

Remember – first impressions count!

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**“Explaining your skills and experience can be tricky. Try talking about a project or hobby and explain the things you’ve learnt through doing them, such as organising others – remember, any example is better than no example.”**

– (Martin Hottass, Siemens)

Be yourself: Employers want to see the real you – but remember you’re there to be assessed on your suitability for a particular role, so it’s important to remain professional, polite and engaged at all times.

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**“Before your interview think of real life examples which highlight your experience. Practice with a friend or parent in advance so you have time to prepare unique answers which show you’ve truly thought about what you’re going to say.”**

– (Jo Ward, Nestle)

Employers are looking for people who not only have the qualifications they need, but also have strong personal skills, including an ability to communicate, positive attitude and a good work ethic. Companies are looking for someone who is the ‘right fit’, with personality and motivation. Therefore, being able to show an employer that you have these skills will boost your chances of successful.

When the interview is over: thank the interviewer for their time and shake their hand. Leave them with an impression that will make them want to call you back!

## Interview Questions

Interview questions will vary according to organisation, but essentially all interviews are designed to find out:

- Your suitability for the job or apprenticeship – skills, knowledge, experience (this could be voluntary rather than paid work experience)
- Your enthusiasm for and interest in the company/role – including why you want the role and what you already know about the organisation.
- Whether you will fit in with the rest of the team and organisation.

Think about these questions in advance, using real-life examples to illustrate your points.

### Tell me about yourself...?

This is a standard opening question used in many interviews. When you answer this question, think about the following:

- Don't be tempted to give a short response – use this time to introduce yourself to the employer in the best possible light.
- Your response to this should be well rehearsed, confident and relevant. Don't reel off your life history – instead, focus on things that relate to the job you're going for.
- Include some impressive achievements – awards you have received, competitions won, leading a school club or society, volunteering activities or charity fundraising.
- Talk about how enthusiastic you are about the job and the organisation – do your research beforehand so you know what to say.

### Q. What do you know about the company/organisation?

Many employers want to test whether you have researched the company you are applying to. For those that have, it shows that you are interested in the role and are someone that prepares for things. However, when you don't, you look unprepared and like you might not really want the job. Use the tips on page 41 before your interview so you can be prepared for this question and practice what you will say if you are asked it.

### Q. Why do you want this job?

Your answer should reinforce why you are a good fit for the job and convey your enthusiasm for the role. You should mention:

- The good match between your skills and what the job requires – including what you will bring to the company
- Your interest in the organisation's area of business/products, for example, if you are going for a role at New Look and you always shop there – say so!
- The job being an exciting challenge for you.

### Q. What are your key skills/strengths?

Focus on what you know they are looking for, even if it has only been a small part of what you have done to date. Take another look at the job advert and download the job description from the company website, work through it carefully and think about how your experience and skills meet their requirements.

## Q. What are your weaknesses?

Nobody is perfect and everyone can identify areas for improvement. However, when thinking about yours, make sure they are relevant to a professional context:

- Think about areas that you know you need to develop, or that teachers / tutors or even your parents have singled out for improvement.
- Don't tell your interviewer that you watch too much TV or you're bad at time – even though it relates to your spare time, this will create a bad impression of you that will be hard to shake off.
- Remember to acknowledge that improving on your 'weaknesses' is important to you and, where possible, show how you are working to develop them. For example, you might be someone who is shy, but you purposefully make an effort to talk to people as you recognise this is an issue.

## Q. Where do you see yourself in five years'?

Your interviewer might want to know how the job or apprenticeship you are going for fits in with your long-term plans. It's okay if you haven't worked out the next 20 years in your head – very few people have. However, you should have a general idea about what your interests are, what kind of areas you would like to work in and even perhaps where you see yourself in the next few years.

Tell the interviewer how the job and how their organisation fits in with these ideas – perhaps the organisation offers lots of opportunities for training and development, which in time will help you progress.

## Q. Do you have any questions?

Most interviews will end with the interviewer asking you this. As a rule, it is good to ask your interviewers a question or two as it shows an interest. Here are some questions you might consider asking:

- How many people are in the team I may be working in?
- What's the best thing about working here?
- When can I expect to hear from you?

Our vision statement is

“Helping to create places where people want to live.”

We aim to invest in neighbourhoods and communities offering a wide range of homes and services that meet the requirements of our residents and customers.

We have strategic objectives that we will be working to deliver between now and March 2018. Meeting these will help us to respond and adapt to political, economic and social change, which influences our business.

The 9 strategic objectives fall within one of our 3 strategic outcomes relating to our services, homes & estates and our organisation:

### 1. Create and Deliver Relevant Services

- Understand what matters to our customers
- Deliver quality, reliable services that provide Value for Money

### 2. Great Property and Places

- Keep properties and estates in good condition
- Engage with our customers, community stakeholders and key partners
- Invest in and support people and communities
- Deliver a variety of quality home options

### 3. Build a Fantastic Organisation

- Enhance financial capacity and safeguard business viability
- Invest in our people, culture and organisation
- Grow our business in a responsible way

All our publications can be made available on request in large print, braille, or audio and in other languages.

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