

## ADVICE ON FINDING THE BEST PLACEMENT OR JOB

How to start your job search

Transferable skills

CV writing advice

Cover letters

Interviewing tips

## How to start your job search

### Step 1 Assess Yourself

Evaluate your skills, interests and motivations

### Step 2 Make a list of available opportunities

Research a range of possible opportunities and jobs (internet, websites, and newspapers) and narrow it down to a shortlist of possible jobs and occupations related to your skills, interests and motivations

### Step 3 Evaluate your skills and experience and prepare your CV.

Based on the job description and requirements make evaluate your background, assets and skills. Prepare a CV tailored to the job description.

### Step 4 Send in your application

## Transferable Skills

### What are these?

Employers are looking for a range of skills which demonstrate that you can do the job well. Some of these are demonstrated from your degree or education, some from relevant work experience and some from other interests, hobbies, sports, other activities. These are skills you can 'transfer' into the role you are applying for.

There is no definitive list – but the skills mentioned on this sheet are the ones most employers mention frequently. When you look at application forms, you will often find questions like: 'Give an example of when you have been involved in a team. What was your role and what did you contribute?'

### 'Top Ten Skills'

#### *Communication – personal*

Can you present yourself clearly and articulately in both words and writing? Think of presentations, essay and report writing, sending emails, any telephone work you may have had.

#### *Communication – interpersonal*

As well as talking to friends, do you have experience of liaising with teachers? line managers within your job, people older and younger than you? Can you negotiate? Are you a good listener? Are you able to put forward an opinion assertively and influence others?

#### *Team Work*

Do you get on well with others? Good examples here would be sporting activities involving teams, doing things with a group of friends, succeeding in a work environment where you were working with a number of other people.

#### *Organisation skills*

Of course, employers want to know that you can work on your own too! Think about your time at University. How do you manage to combine assignment deadlines with work/home commitments? Do you plan with lists, charts etc? Are you a 'just in time' kind of person?

### *Problem solving*

Can you think of creative solutions? Do you see issues through to the end? Would you consider yourself to be a logical person? If so, how would you demonstrate this to an employer?

### *Information Technology skills*

Include any specific I.T. modules. Demonstrate your competence with computer packages, databases, spreadsheets and other Microsoft Office tools.

### *Numeracy*

Jobs where you are handling cash. Living within a budget(!). Any Modules that include statistical analysis or data handling.

### *Language skills*

You are often at an advantage if you have knowledge of one or more languages other than your first language. Identify level of ability, for example: fluent speaking and writing, basic knowledge.

### *Research skills/Project management skills*

Your dissertation/project demonstrates your ability to plan and progress your own research. Also think about research methodology – how did you go about getting material together for the dissertation/project?

### *Self Management*

A vital skill - this assumes you reflect on things – especially if they go wrong. A typical interview question is: 'How might you have done that differently?' How have you improved your time management skills over the last couple of years? Are you a more effective communicator now than you were in school or college? What skills do you feel you need to improve upon? Another typical interview question: 'Tell me about your weaknesses.'

## CV writing advice

### What is a CV?

A CV, curriculum vitae or resume acts as a sales document. Its job is to sell you to an employer. In its most basic form, it's a list of your achievements including your education, qualifications, work experience and skills. It can be a very powerful sales tool. Its function is to secure you an interview, but its form can take many shapes depending upon the level of your education, the breadth of your experience and the depth of your skills. The order in which you present this information on your CV will vary, and is crucial in bringing to the employer's attention, quickly and easily, the qualifications, experience and skills that are most relevant to them.

### What should a CV look like?

There are many different styles you can use when writing your CV. **The three most common styles of CV are: traditional (or chronological), skills-based, and academic.** You can create your own style which could be a hybrid of, say, a chronological CV and a skills-based CV. The main thing to remember is to ensure that any relevant information is placed on the first page. The **minimum** amount of information you should include on your CV is:

- name
- contact details
- profile
- education and qualifications
- work experience
- skills
- hobbies

## **4 quick steps to building a CV**

### **1. What should I put in it?**

Analysing the job information is crucial to knowing what the employer wants from you. For example, what sort of experience are they looking for? Which skills are most important to them? What personality traits do they want? These are some of the questions you need to ask yourself in order to write your CV in the most appropriate style. The answers to these questions are in the literature provided by the employer, in the job profile. Photos are optional.

### **2. Profile your USPs (Unique Selling Points)**

After reading your CV employers will summarize it in terms of the key points. They will not necessarily read the whole thing, but scan it to pick out the relevant points of interest. In their own mind this creates an image of the CV owner. If this image fits with what they are looking for then you'll be in with a good chance of an interview. Your profile must be short and to the point, no more than 4 lines. Briefly explain: your current situation and what post you are applying for, any relevant experience and/or skills, and a little about how your personality fits in with what they are looking for.

### **3. Target your CV**

Knowing the experience, skills, and personality traits the employer is looking for you can now start to "target" your CV. Make sure any experiences that match their requirements from University, employment, voluntary work, hobbies, etc. are on the front page. This is something you will have to do for each and every job you apply for!

### **4. Check your CV. Read it carefully and do the Spell check.**

Once written, read over your CV. Don't rely upon the spell checker as this won't deal with spelling mistakes such as "their" when you mean "there". Incorrect spelling, typographical errors and poor grammar are common so make sure you get someone to proof read it for you.

## Cover/motivation letter

### Introduction

Your cover letter is the first thing that an employer will read. It is your first opportunity to make an impact, to make the employer want to take a look at your application and possibly to meet you. With this in mind your cover letter needs to paint a picture in the reader's mind of how your experience, skills, personality, and motivations match their requirements. Whatever you write needs to be short, and to the point. So, the letter is a series of short statements with one or two examples and supported by evidence provided in your CV or application form. The statements and evidence should provide just enough information to make the employer want to read your CV or application form.

### Address it to a Particular Person by Name.

Send your letter to the person named in the job advert - if it doesn't give a specific name you'll need to find out whom to send your application to. This way it is more likely to get read.

### Convey enthusiasm

Employers want to read that the applicant is enthusiastic. Do this by using words such as "interested", "excited", "keen", "eager", etc. So one of the paragraphs could describe what it is that interests you about the job. By choosing two or three duties of the job and giving them as examples, you are able to convey what they mean to you, e.g. "enjoyment", "excitement", etc. This allows you to get across your enthusiasm for the job.

### "Closing"

Now you need a closing paragraph. Finish off saying something positive, like "I hope to meet you at interview", and tell them that you've attached your cv.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

### Research the Company

It may seem obvious, but one of the biggest complaints from employers is that candidates have not researched the company enough. Read the brochure; look at their website which gives background information about most businesses. You should also keep an eye on the business sections of newspapers to keep up-to-date with what's going on: if you are asked about the biggest challenge facing the company over the next 12 months, it would be useful to know about the recent merger with one of their competitors. If you miss something really basic, you will stand out for the wrong reason!

### Anticipate Questions

No one can predict the exact questions that an interviewer will ask; however, here are a few important questions that the employer is likely to ask. To prepare, think about how you would answer the following questions:

- "Tell me about yourself." Keep your answer in the professional realm only. Review your past positions, your education, and any other strength that pertain to the job.
- "What do you know about our organization?" If you've done your research correctly, you should have no problem answering this one. Be positive.
- "Why are you interested in this position?" Relate how you feel your qualifications really match the requirements of the job. Also, express your desire to work for that company.
- "What have been your most significant career accomplishments to date?" Select some recent accomplishments that relate to this position and its requirements.
- "Describe a situation in which your work was criticized." Focus on how you

solved the situation, and let the interviewer know how you became a better person because of it.

- "How would you describe your personality?"
- "How do you perform under pressure?"
- "What have you done to improve yourself over the past year?"
- "What is your ideal working environment?"
- "Are you creative?"
- "What are your goals in your career?"
- "Where do you see yourself in two years?"
- "Why should we hire you?"

### Dress properly

This may seem obvious, but first impressions count, so what you wear is important.

### Practise your interview techniques

It's always worth practising your interview skills before the big day itself. Obviously practising with friends and family is a good way of building up your confidence, but the Career Office can also help. We can simply sit down with you to discuss the type of questions that might come up at your interview and how you might go about answering them.

### Dos and Don'ts of interviewing

#### Do ...

- Arrive 15 minutes early. Being late is never excusable.
- Clarify questions. Be sure you answered the questions the employer really asked.
- Get the interviewer to describe the position and responsibilities early in the conversation so you can relate your skills and background to the position throughout the interview.
- Discuss your qualifications. Stress the accomplishments that are most pertinent

to the job.

- Conduct yourself professionally. Be aware of what your body language is saying. Smile, make eye contact, don't slouch, and maintain your composure.
- Anticipate difficult questions and prepare in advance so you can turn apparent weaknesses into strengths.
- Dress appropriately. Make your first impression a professional one.
- Ask questions throughout the interview. An interview should be a mutual exchange of information, not a one-sided conversation.
- Listen. This is probably the most important skill of all. By concentrating not only on the employer's words, but also on the tone of his or her voice and body language, you will be able to pick up on the employer's style. Once you understand how a hiring authority thinks, pattern your answers accordingly. You will be able to relate better to him or to her.

### **Don't...**

- Answer vague questions. Rather than answering questions you think you hear, get the employer to be more specific and then respond.
- Interrupt the employer. If you don't have time to listen, then neither does the employer.
- Smoke, chew gum, or place anything on the employer's desk.
- Be overly familiar, even if the employer is.
- Wear heavy perfume or cologne.
- Ramble. Long answers can make you sound apologetic or indecisive. On the other hand, don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain yourself in detail whenever possible.
- Lie. Answer questions as truthfully as possible.
- Make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies.

### **Closing the interview**

- Express thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration.
- Ask interviewer about selection process and timeline.