

Making Successful Applications

Whatever age you are, gaining experience can help you succeed in your future, by building your skills and knowledge.

This can be work experience organised by your school or college, experience you organise yourself, but it also includes a range of other things you might not think are important. Things like:

- Volunteering in your community
- Playing sport and helping to coach younger students

- Doing dance or drama
- Being part of a club or society at school
- Mentoring younger students at your school
- Looking after your younger siblings
- Helping older members of your family
- Hobbies and interests, such as music, photography or computers

Look at pages 24 and 25 to find out more about skills and ideas to help you develop your strengths.

While you're at school you'll get chance to visit employers, colleges and universities, plus representatives will come to school to talk about their jobs and industries.

Make the most of these opportunities to think about what sort of career you are interested in.

Do your research into what sort of qualifications are needed. What sort of person do you need to be to make a success of your ideas?

So, where's the best place to start to gain work experience?

Volunteering with an organisation in the field in which you would like to work is a great place to start.

You might be able to get experience through your family and friends (always check with school that this is appropriate).

All relevant experience looks good on your CV, and good references from voluntary work can make the difference to you being successful.

For some future career areas, you need to have relevant work experience. This includes many health careers such as nursing, medicine and dentistry. Start your research here:

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/improving-your-chances/gaining-experience>

Remember that as well as the work experience itself, what you learn and the skills you develop are equally important to record and talk about.

Don't be afraid to explore the unusual. Famous writers, artists, musicians and actors all started somewhere. Make the most of all your experiences.

Recruitment

There are several ways that employers recruit, so make sure you read the instructions carefully. Is a CV acceptable or do you need to complete a separate application?

Will there be an assessment centre? This could be a group task or an aptitude test. Read all the information carefully so you know what to take with you and what to expect.

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CV

CV stands for 'Curriculum Vitae' which means 'story of my life'. This is a short document completed by you, about you.

Along with your CV you should send a short cover letter to your potential employer to introduce yourself and say why you would be suitable for the job. This is your opportunity to sell your skills and to grab the employers' attention.

A CV is usually a maximum of two pages A4.

Keep the design simple and use either 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font. Black text on white paper is standard. CV templates are available online.

Photographs are not usually added to a CV in the UK but if this is asked for include a professional looking passport style head shot.

Use plain and positive language and clear, concise content. Be factual, honest and grammatically correct. Check for spelling mistakes and ask a friend or family member to check your CV for mistakes and to give feedback.

Your CV is the first and only chance you have to sell yourself to an employer. Start with a personal profile, which is a few concise lines to sum up your skills and experience. Then list your paid work or voluntary work experience. Usually you put your most recent work experience and qualifications first and work backwards.

After your work experience, list your qualifications. Include both academic qualifications and any professional development achievements.

Save your CVs on your computer so you are ready to apply when you see an interesting job opportunity.

Application forms

Sometimes you need to complete an application form too. It's vital to complete the Supporting/Personal Statement section of the form as fully as possible; this is your opportunity to outline all the skills you hold that are relevant to the job/apprenticeship or course.

If the application form is hand written, be neat and remember to check your spelling and grammar (whatever the format). The document, like your CV represents you and must give a good impression!

If you are applying to Higher Education, your school or college will help you through the process. <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-to-university>

Interviews – Your chance to shine.

There are several types of interview, and you may go through two or three interviews for each job before being made an offer.

Sometimes an initial interview might be done through Skype or by telephone before proceeding to a face-to-face meeting.

When attending a face-to-face interview:

- Dress appropriately and be on time.

- Smile, be professional. Ask questions, be interesting and interested and learn from each interview experience.

- Be prepared. Read about the company/organisation online and think about what you would like to ask them. Think of the interview as a two-way process. You are learning about the people and organisation you will be spending a lot of your time with, just as much as they are finding out about you. Thinking about the experience in this way helps to calm any interview nerves.

- Here are a few things an employer might talk about ...

- Your skills and strengths.
- What you know about the company or role.
- Your ambitions and motivation.
- Your work history and education/qualifications.
- Points covered in the 'person specification' of the job description and how your background might fit with this.
- Your experience of working in a team or of being able to work on your own initiative. People will often ask for examples so it's wise to think these things through in advance.

- Enjoy the experience and good luck!

Find out more:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/get-a-job/top-10-interview-questions>

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/get-a-job> <https://www.cv-library.co.uk/cvtemplates>

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/assessment-centres>