Find your way back to work

Job Kit Practical help and advice when applying for jobs

jobcentreplus

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions

Jobcentre Plus wants to help you get back into work quickly. Each section of this booklet has been designed to help you take a step on the way back to work. No matter where you are on your journey, we can offer help and support.

Step 1 (pages 3–8) helps you plan your job hunt and provides advice about finding your way back to work.

Step 2 (pages 9–18) helps you to identify the skills you already have and offers information if you want or need to retrain.

Step 3 (pages 19–38) offers practical advice and information to help you to apply for jobs, and prepare for interviews.

Jobcentre Plus has many current job vacancies across Britain. Each vacancy tells you how to apply.

You can search for a job in a number of ways

- Log on to **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk** at any time and search by area and job type.
- Call us on **0845 6060 234***. (Textphone number is **0845 6055 255***). Lines are open 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm Saturday.
- For more information see page 12.

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Step 1 Planning your job hunt

Planning your job-hunting

How good is my job-hunting?

The checklist below should help you see if you are doing everything possible to find work.

Answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the following questions.

Are you clear about what skills and experience you have?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you know what skills, abilities and qualifications are needed for the types of jobs you are looking for?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you have an up-to-date CV?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Does your CV make the most of your skills and experience?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Are you confident about filling in application forms?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Are you confident about applying for jobs over the phone?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Are you confident about applying for jobs online?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you use **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk** to look for jobs regularly?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Have you used the internet to search for jobs (many companies now advertise online)?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you know which days jobs are advertised in your local papers?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you read local papers regularly to find out which companies are expanding and which new companies are coming to the area?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Have you considered contacting these companies to see if they have any jobs?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Have you registered with any recruitment agencies?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Have you been to any Jobs Fairs?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Check if your friends and family know about any jobs.	Yes ☐	No ☐

If you have answered 'No' to any of the questions shown above, this will show you what other things you need to do to help you find work. This Job Kit will give you some help in the areas you have identified.

Help finding your way back to work

Resources to help you find a job

There are many ways Jobcentre Plus can help you with your search for work.

- We advertise jobs.
- We can support you to get a job.
- We can tell you about benefits you can get while you are working, such as Tax Credits.

Looking for jobs

We have Britain's largest database of job vacancies. There are many jobs available at any time. There are a number of ways in which you can search the database for jobs.

- Log on to **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**
- Phone us on **0845 6060 234***.
  (Textphone number is **0845 6055 255***).
- Use the Jobpoints when you're visiting a Jobcentre. A Jobpoint is an easy to use touch screen that offers access to thousands of different jobs and other useful information. You can print out any details you want to keep.
- Log onto **www.direct.gov.uk** if you prefer to search using free text, e.g. I want to be a plumber in Barnsley. You can also look for local jobs through Directgov Digital Television, available on Sky and Virgin Media.

For more information see page 12.

Redundancy

If you are facing redundancy this section will provide you with information and advice about where to go for further help.

Redundancy can be a worrying time. This section aims to provide information on what to expect from your employer and what effects redundancy has on making a claim for benefit. It also gives you details about where you can find extra information on redundancy, making a claim for benefit and help finding a new job.

If you have been told you are being made redundant because demand for your work has reduced, the business or your job has moved, or the business has transferred to a new owner, help is at hand. You can find more information including:

- redundancy entitlement statutory rights: a guide for employees
- a ready reckoner calculator to calculate the amount of redundancy pay you are entitled to,

and more through the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform at **www.berr.gov.uk/employment/redundancy**

There is a strict time limit to make a claim for unfair dismissal or redundancy pay to an employment tribunal, so it is important you find out about this early on.

Checklist when you leave your job

On your last day at work you should receive all the wages you are entitled to, plus payment for any outstanding period of notice that you have not worked. You should also receive:

- accrued holiday pay (payment for holiday owed which has not been taken)
- details of pension arrangements
- income tax form P45
- job references from your employer, to help you find another job
- redundancy pay, and
- a letter stating the date of redundancy.

Redundancy and claiming benefits

You may be asked about any payments you've had from your employer as part of your benefit claim, and we will explain if these payments might have any effect on your claim.

If you or your partner get a payment from your employer when your job ends (such as final pay, wages if you worked a week in hand, or holiday pay), these payments are not taken into account when considering your claim to Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support.

Even if you aren't entitled to benefit, you may still get National Insurance contributions credited to you while you look for another job.

How to contact Jobcentre Plus to claim benefits

To make a claim

Phone: **0800 055 66 88***

(Textphone: **0800 023 48 88***)

Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm

During the call we will ask you to provide information including:

- your National Insurance number
- details about your rent or mortgage
- details of your past or present employer, and
- details of other income and savings.

The operator will tell you what will happen next with your claim. For example, they may make you an appointment to see an adviser at your nearest Jobcentre to help with your search for work. They can also tell you who to contact if you have a question about your benefit.

Or you can claim online at **www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice**

Supporting you to get a job

If you are already claiming benefits, Jobcentre Plus can offer you support to get a job.

Work Trials

Work Trials are an opportunity to show an employer that you're the right person for the job. They are a trial period for an actual job, which we set up and monitor. As long as you are still looking for work, you will continue to receive your benefits while you are taking part in the trial. If the trial doesn't work out, this won't affect your benefit. Whether you are suitable for a Work Trial depends on your personal circumstances and how long you've been unemployed. For more information, please visit **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

Travel to Interview Scheme

If you are offered a job interview away from home, the Travel to Interview Scheme may be able to help you with the cost of travel. We can normally pay for travel from your home to the interview by the cheapest method of transport as long as the interview is beyond a normal daily travelling distance. If this involves travelling by train, we will give you a voucher to exchange for a ticket. For more information, please visit **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

Working out how much better off you would be in a job

If you've found a job that you're interested in and know what the wage is, your adviser can work out how much better off the job would make you. For more information, contact your nearest Jobcentre to arrange an appointment.

Other support

Housing problems

If you have a mortgage and can no longer afford your mortgage payments, or you are renting your home and in difficulty, we may be able to help you meet your housing costs. For more information, please visit **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

For more information about whether you are able to get help with your council tax visit **www.direct.gov.uk**

Advice on debt

If you are experiencing problems with debt, one of our advisers will be able to tell you about organisations which can help (for example, Citizens Advice Bureau). Or, you can contact National Debtline on **0800 731 7973*** or at **www.national-uk-debtline.co.uk**

Help with childcare or other caring responsibilities

If you need help finding childcare, one of our advisers can help. If you have other caring responsibilities, our disability employment advisers may be able to help. For more information, please visit **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

If you have a health problem or disability

Jobcentre Plus personal advisers help you if you are disabled, have a health problem or are a carer and you are looking for work through us. They can provide details of suitable vacancies and explain more about the range of programmes available to help you. For more information about help for disabled people, please visit **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

If you have a criminal record

Having a criminal record can make it harder to find work. For more information, please visit **www.nacro.org.uk** or call **0800 0181 259*** or **020 7840 6464.**

Coping with drug or alcohol problems

If you need to discuss drug or alcohol problems, your Jobcentre Plus adviser can tell you about local organisations which offer help. Or, you can contact Alcoholics Anonymous by phoning **0845 769 7555*** or visiting their website **www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk** or Turning Point **www.turning-point.co.uk** for help and support.

Find your way back to work

Step 2 Identifying your strengths and skills

What have I got to offer?

Start by asking yourself honestly what skills and experience you have.

Think about the skills you developed in jobs you had before and in your life outside of work.

The job market has changed in recent years. It is less common for people to have the same job with the same employer for the whole of their working life. It pays to be flexible and adaptable when it comes to a change in your career, recognising your transferable skills can help you to move into a new job and into new types of work.

What are transferable skills?

These are the skills that you have built up during any job or activity that you can apply to other jobs. You can build up skills through all sorts of activities – jobs, projects, volunteer work, hobbies, sports, virtually anything. These skills can include the following.

- **Communication** – being able to communicate by speaking, in writing, or by e-mail, in the right way for the audience.
- **Teamwork** – being a constructive team member, contributing practically to the success of the team.
- **Leadership** – motivating and encouraging others, while taking the lead.
- **Initiative** – seeing opportunities and setting and achieving goals.
- **Solving problems** – thinking things through in a logical way, to work out the most important problems. Solving problems often also includes creative thinking.
- **Flexibility and being able to adapt** – changing and adapting to new situations.
- **Being self-aware** – knowing your strengths and skills and having the confidence to put these across.
- **Commitment and motivation** – having energy and enthusiasm when carrying out projects.
- **Interpersonal skills** – relating well to others and building up good working relationships.
- **Numeracy** – understanding and using information such as numbers, statistics and graphs.

Identifying the skills you have now

You probably already have valuable transferable skills that could make you a good candidate for a job. Think back through the jobs you have done, your hobbies and the other things you're involved in and, using the list above, write down the skills that you have. Here is an example:

You have always worked in administrative jobs in offices as part of a team, so you have good teamwork and communication skills. In your spare time, you also help to run a Brownie pack. This means that you have other skills that you can transfer to a job – initiative and leadership skills to name 2.

However, it can sometimes be difficult to identify your own strengths. This is where your interviews with your Jobcentre Plus adviser can help. Your adviser will know about other organisations that may be able to help you identify and gain the skills you need. Friends and relatives may also be able to help you work out your strengths that are also your transferable skills.

Identifying skills you will need in future

When you're looking at the skills you have, you may also identify areas where you're not so strong. There's no need to worry about this, there are ways to develop the skills you need so you can get where you want to be.

First you need to decide what kind of job you want, for example hospitality. Once you know what type of job you'd really like, do some research into the skills and experience that these jobs normally need. Compare these to the list you have made of your transferable skills and find any gaps. Then use the list below for suggestions on how to develop the skills you need.

How to develop new transferable skills

You can develop new skills in a variety of ways. You may want to consider:

- doing some voluntary work
- taking part in a hobby, committee or group
- doing some part-time work
- registering with a recruitment agency and doing some temporary work; or
- going on a training course.

All of these activities can help you develop new skills and experience and they'll boost your self-confidence and social life too! Remember that developing your skills helps you to find work, stay in work and get further in your career. Many employers are working with Jobcentre Plus to recruit through Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) and help people get back into work. Employers recruiting through LEPs have made a commitment to recruit from the local community and, if you meet the job requirements, they will welcome your interest. Many of the LEP employers also want to help you develop your skills for work and they may be able to offer you opportunities such as coaching from their employees and training before you start work. Your Jobcentre Plus adviser will be able to tell you what opportunities there are near you.

What if I need to retrain?

Refreshing your skills or learning new ones can increase your chances of finding a new job. Jobcentre Plus can advise you on your options. Depending on your age and qualifications you may be able to get free courses.

You can find out what's available in:

England

- The Careers Advice Service provides free information and advice on learning and work. A confidential helpline is available from 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week on **0800 100 900*** or visit **www.direct.gov.uk/careersadvice**
- Nextstep face-to-face services give information and advice on learning, training and getting qualifications at **www.direct.gov.uk/nextstep**
- If you are not sure where to start with skills, you can call the In Our Hands Helpline on **0800 011 30 30*** or visit **www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands**

Scotland

- Skills Development Scotland delivers skills, careers and learning support. Visit **www.careers-scotland.org.uk** or call **0845 8 502 502***.
- For more on free and low-cost learning options, visit **www.learndirectscotland.com** or call **0808 100 9000**.
- More about learning support is available at **www.ilascotland.org.uk**

Wales

- **www.careerswales.com** has more on jobs, careers advice and learning choices. It also gives details of the ReAct programme to help you retrain and find work after redundancy. Call **0800 101 901*** or visit **www.learndirect.co.uk/wales-cym/**
- For help with funding for training, visit **www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills/**

Where to look for a job

There are a number of ways you can search for jobs:

- through Jobcentre Plus
- through newspapers
- on the internet
- registering with recruitment agencies, and
- through friends and other people you know.

We have given you a bit more information about each of these below.

Through Jobcentre Plus

We have Britain's largest database of job vacancies, which you can find online or over the phone.

Our website **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk** is the UK's most visited jobs website and has many jobs advertised at any time. You can search by choosing:

- where you want to work
- what sort of job you want to do
- what group of jobs this falls into, and
- what job title you are looking for.

You can widen your search by choosing more than one group and type of job.

Once you have entered all the information you want to search by, a list of available jobs that meet your needs will appear. You can select individual jobs to find out more about them and to find out how to apply. Remember to write down the job reference number. You will need it when you apply for the job or ask for an application form.

The website also includes jobs from other organisations, for example, recruitment agencies and electronic newspapers (these are known as Job Boards).

You can also search for jobs in Europe and around the world. You can find these jobs by selecting the 'more jobs here' link on the search results page.

We also offer a quick and easy phone service to search our database. Our advisers can tell you about jobs in your local area and in other places if you want. Once you find a job you're interested in, they will tell you how to apply. If possible, they will ring the employer there and then to arrange an interview, or send you an application form.

To use the phone service, ring **0845 6060 234***.

Lines are open between 8am and 6pm from Monday to Friday, and between 9am and 1pm on Saturdays.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, or have speech difficulties, you can use our textphone. Dial **0845 6055 255***.

If you speak Welsh, you can phone **0845 6067 890***. (If you speak Welsh and you are deaf or hard of hearing, or have speech difficulties, dial our textphone **0845 6044 022***.)

If you prefer to search using free text, e.g. I want to be a plumber in Barnsley, you can find the same jobs at **www.direct.gov.uk**

You can also look for local jobs through Directgov Digital Television, available on Sky and Virgin Media.

Newspapers

Local newspapers are a good source of information about job-hunting. It's a good idea to find out what day the local paper comes out and which days it advertises jobs. Newspapers also keep you up to date on which companies are moving into the area and which are expanding.

You can use this information to apply to those companies before they advertise, to see if there are any jobs available.

You may want to contact a company for more details about a job after reading an article in the local press. For example, see the **Letters and application forms** section on page 20.

Applying for jobs online

Many employers are now advertising their vacancies online, and ask you to apply online. They will often tell you whether or not you have been successful by e-mail. In some cases, this is now the only way that some employers fill their vacancies.

- 78% of recruitment companies advertise job vacancies online.
- There are currently around 1000 online Job Boards in the UK.

To make sure you keep up with the latest vacancies, you will need to:

- find ways of having access to the internet
- have your own e-mail address, and
- know how to find vacancies and fill in applications online.

This leaflet provides some advice.

Finding internet access

If you have access to the internet at home, then it's easy. If not, here are a few suggestions.

- You can use UK online centres which are based in your community. They could be in an internet café on the high street, in a public library, in a college, in a community centre or in a village hall. Some even move around from place to place to give more people the chance to go online. You can find your nearest UK online centre in England by phoning **0800 77 1234*** or visiting **www.ukonlinecentres.com**
  For Scotland learndirect, ring **0808 100 9000***
  For Wales learndirect, ring **0800 101 901***.
- Your local library may have computers that are connected to the internet.
- You may have friends or relatives who are happy to let you use their computer to go online.
- Some of our partners offer our customers access to computers and the internet – check with your nearest Jobcentre to see what's available in your local area.

Getting an e-mail address

To set up a personal e-mail address, try the search engines (for example Google or Yahoo) as many offer a free e-mail account. Or, put 'free e-mail address' into a search engine and look through the results. Follow the instructions to set up a free e-mail address.

If you need to improve your IT skills, UK online centres will be able to help. Their contact details are listed above.

Using the internet to find Job Boards

Once you've found your internet access, your next step is to find the types of jobs you're looking for. Jobs are usually advertised on Job Boards which are like electronic newspapers. Generally, there are 3 types of Job Boards.

- 'Niche' Job Boards are dedicated to particular professions or industries.
- General Job Boards advertise all types of vacancies.
- Local Job Boards advertise all types of jobs in the area they cover.

You can search for the right Job Boards by using a search engine (for example Google or Yahoo). Try putting in 'Job Boards' or 'jobs in retail' and so on, until you find the Job Boards that are most suitable for you. If you are using your own computer, you can save the Job Boards as favourites.

Applying online

There are 2 main ways to apply online.

- By filling in an application form online. Fill in the details in the same way as you would with a normal application form. Make sure you check you have filled in all the information the form asks for and that the information is correct before you select 'send' to send the form to the employer.
- By e-mailing your CV. Some employers will ask you to send your CV by e-mail. You will need to have saved your CV so you can attach it to the e-mail. You may also want to include a covering letter. You can find information on how to write a covering letter in **Step 3 – Letters and application forms** on page 20.

Monitoring responses to your applications

Employers may choose to reply to your application by e-mail, so make sure you check your e-mail regularly.

Registering with recruitment agencies

Jobcentre Plus offers a wide range of job opportunities. To increase your chances of getting a job or to improve your skills, you could join a recruitment agency.

What are the benefits of registering with a recruitment agency?

Recruitment agencies work closely with employers. They will match you to a job if you have what an employer is looking for.

Some agencies will give you training to make sure that you have the skills you need to get the jobs available. Training is often run because there are jobs available that need this training. So if you are willing to take the training, it is likely that there will be a job at the end of it.

Agencies are always looking for new people and they want to work with you. If you work with a recruitment consultant and build up a relationship with them, they will know what type of job you want and will help you find it.

Agencies offer temporary jobs as well as permanent full-time jobs. A temporary job could help you get back into full-time work. This would be helpful if you have not worked for many years or you do not have recent work experience.

Temporary work could also give you the chance to get the skills and confidence you need to get back into a permanent full-time job. Agencies also offer jobs that have flexible working hours which may suit your situation and needs.

Some agencies specialise in certain types of jobs. This means they may be able to offer you extra support so you can get a job in a particular area of work. You can get paid holidays in temporary work.

What should I look for in a recruitment agency?

Recruitment agencies must meet the standards set by the Employment Agencies Act 1973.

If you are looking for temporary work, the agency must agree with you:

- the terms and conditions of the work you will do
- the type of work you will do
- how much you will be paid
- how and when you will be paid
- how much notice you will have to give (if any), and
- details of any paid holiday.

An agency must not:

- refuse to pay you because they have not been paid by the person you work for, or
- charge you for finding or trying to find you work (there are some exceptions, mainly with entertainment and modelling jobs).

You do not have to use any of the services that an agency charges for, for example training courses and getting help to write your CV.

See Step 3 for help writing your CV on page 27.

Agencies must give you all the information they have about:

- the employer you are working for
- the type of work you will do
- the hours you will work, and
- how much you will be paid.

The agency will make sure that you have the skills and qualifications you need for the job. They will also make sure that you are not breaking any laws by doing this work.

They must tell you in writing about any changes to your agreement.

When you register with an agency they will ask you for information about yourself so they can find you a suitable placement or job. Information may include proof of your identity (such as your birth certificate or driving licence), your experience and any training or qualifications you have. They will also make sure that you are willing to do the job before putting you in it.

An agency will not give your information to any other organisations unless they are trying to find you work or they need to for legal reasons. They must get your permission before they do this.

An agency can offer you a job at short notice. They can also finish temporary work at short notice without being responsible for any unfair dismissal or redundancy pay. Always make sure you understand your contract.

How do I get the most out of a recruitment agency?

To get the most out of a recruitment agency, it is important that you think about how you can best work with them. Remember, you are telling them about your skills and they will help you find a job. You are working together.

So, to make the most out of your recruitment agency, make sure you:

- keep in regular contact with them
- give them all the information they need (including all your contact details and references)
- are honest
- keep your CV accurate and up to date
- tell them if there is a particular type of job you don't want (be up-front and save time)
- listen to any advice from your consultant about improving your CV (remember they are professionals and they want to help you get a job), and
- talk to your agency if they are not finding you work. It may be because there is not enough of the type of work you want and you might want to think about other types of work you are willing to do. Or, you could register with another agency that offers the type of work you are looking for.

Where can I get more information or advice about recruitment agencies?

If you need more advice about recruitment agencies in your area, please contact your nearest Jobcentre.

The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) is an organisation that supports and represents recruitment agencies. The REC can give you more advice and a list of some recruitment agencies. All REC members must follow their code of professional practice. Visit their website at **www.rec.uk.com**

This section only tells you about some of the rules that agencies have to follow. If you would like to know more, please phone the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) helpline or read 'Employment Agencies Act 1973: Guidance on the Act and regulations'.

You can also write to or e-mail BERR.

Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate
Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
Bay 488
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET
Helpline: **0845 955 5105***

E-mail: **eas@berr.gsi.gov.uk** (for questions about employment agencies only).

Other ways of looking for a job

Friends and other people you know

People you know can give you useful information about job-hunting. They may know about jobs available where they work, or may have heard that a company is recruiting or know someone who is looking for some help. People you know may tell you about a job before it's advertised and they may even be able to put in a good word for you at the company. It's worth talking to people you know about the type of work you're looking for and your experience and skills, so they think of you when they hear of something.

Approaching employers

A large number of jobs are never advertised. So, it is worthwhile contacting companies to ask if they have any vacancies. One of the benefits of doing this is that you are not competing against a large group of people, as you would be doing if you were responding to a job that was advertised. Employers are used to people asking questions about jobs – after all, if they can find somebody to do the job like this it saves them time and money.

Keeping track of your progress

Keeping track of your job search is a good idea for 2 reasons.

- First, it helps you remember which companies you have approached and what their response was (for example, if they tell you they are going to be advertising in 3 months, keeping a record of this will remind you to contact them again). You can also record which day local papers advertise jobs, which recruitment agencies you have contacted, when trade journals come out and which friends have provided useful information.
- Second, if you are receiving Jobseeker's Allowance while you're out of work, then you have to prove that you are 'actively seeking work'. Keeping a record of what you've done to find work will help you show staff at your nearest Jobcentre that you are doing all you can to find work.

Find your way back to work

Step 3 Support for applications and interviews

Letters and application forms

Applying for a job that has been advertised

If you want to apply for a job and you are asked to apply in writing, have a look at the following example. It shows the vacancy, the points to look for and a suggested letter.

If you need to provide your application form in an alternative format i.e. audio because you have a visual impairment, contact the company beforehand so they expect your application in an alternative format and have made preparations to review it.

The vacancy

In this example, you have seen the following job advertised and you want to apply.

WESTFORDS Ltd.

Require IT Support Officers
40 hours per week – 8:45am–5:15pm.

Photo ID personalisation and smart card encoding company are seeking IT support officers.

Responsibilities include upkeep of computers and in-house software and quality assurance of products.

Must have experience with computers. Knowledge of printers preferred but not essential as full training given.

Apply in writing with a covering letter and CV to Mr Knight, Westfords Ltd, 500 Sample Street, Sample Town, LZX 1XX

www.westfordssample.com.uk

The important information in the advert

The following table shows the important information contained in the advert.

The company	Westfords Ltd. You could look at their website to learn more about the company, which might help you to write your application.
Job title and duties	IT Support Officer • Upkeep of computers and in-house software • Checking consumables and in-house software • Quality assurance of finished products
Qualifications and skills needed	Must have experience with computers. Printer experience preferred but not essential as full training will be given.
Pay	No rate given – ring to check.
Hours	40 hours per week–Monday to Friday 8:45am–5:15pm.
How to apply	In writing – with a covering letter and CV.

What do I need to think about when writing a covering letter?

1 What to include	2 What to say
Underline the skills in the advert. Write a rough copy of your letter and include the skills underlined.	Be clear. Don't use a long word if a short one will do.
Be positive and emphasise why you are perfect for the job.	If you have been unemployed for a while, say how you spend your spare time (for example, by doing voluntary work, study and so on).
Suggested layout. First, give a summary of your skills and experience. Keep it brief and to the point. Then, say when you will be free for an interview. Remember to include your name, address and phone number (if you have one) and the date.	Be honest – don't say you enjoy bungee jumping if you get dizzy standing on a kitchen stool – you will get caught out at an interview.
Enclose a copy of your CV.	Keep to the facts and try not to oversell yourself.
Include your previous experience, and focus on your switchboard and typing skills.	Describe how you developed your skills and any qualifications you have got.
Include how you have developed your communication skills as a Christmas club representative.	Describe how you answer questions in person and on the phone, and include how you deal with complaints and handle difficult customers.

3 How to say it	4 How the letter looks
Include the job reference number if there is one in the job details. Enter it below the opening line. For example: Dear Mrs…… Re: Job reference 345	Be neat – whether your letter is handwritten or typed. Leave plenty of space around the edges and a clear space between each paragraph.
Try to find out the name of the person you need to write to.	If your application is in audio format, check the content is clear, to the point and easy to understand.
If you start with 'Dear Sir/Madam', end with 'Yours faithfully'.	Use good quality plain paper and envelopes.
If you start with the person's name (for example, 'Dear Mrs Smith'), end with 'Yours sincerely'.	Check against your rough copy to make sure you have not missed anything.
Finally, double-check your spelling and grammar before sending the letter.	Sign the letter and print your name underneath to make sure it can be read easily. Ask a friend or relative to check over your letter before you send it. Finally, make sure your application arrives on time. If you are posting it, allow for delays. If your application is late, the company might not even consider it and your time will have been wasted.

The letter

The following letter is an example of a cover letter you could send in response to the job Westfords Ltd had advertised.

Mr Knight
Westfords Ltd
500 Sample Street
Sample Town
LZX 1XX

Your address

Phone number

Date

Dear Mr Knight

I would like to apply for the job of IT Support Officer which was advertised in today's Journal.

For the past 4 years I have worked in IT with Brown's. Because they are moving to another part of the country, I will be made redundant in 2 weeks' time.

My present job involves various IT duties in person and by phone. I also:

- deal with IT queries
- handle incoming calls
- handle incoming and outgoing post
- order printer consumables.

Before this job I was a trainee with Brightson's (Solicitors) in North Street, Invertown and completed RSA I and II in Business Administration and have various Microsoft package experience.

I have always enjoyed working with people and think my previous experience will allow me to work as part of the team and to be an effective representative of your company.

I am available for interview at any time and could start work immediately. You can ask for references from my present and previous employers.

Please find enclosed a copy of my CV for more information.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Your signature
Your name

Filling in application forms

Some job adverts will ask you to fill in an application form. You may need to contact the employer to get a copy of the application form. If you need to fill in a Jobcentre Plus application form to apply for the job, you can get this from your nearest office or you can download it from **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

How to apply your transferable skills

If you're applying for a type of job that you haven't done before, transferable skills can help you show an employer that you have the right skills for the job.

Let's assume that you have switchboard and typing skills, but that you haven't had contact with customers in your previous jobs. For the last 3 years, you have been a representative for a local Christmas club (where you help people to save up over the year, so that they can pay for the extra costs at Christmas). This means that you've become confident in talking to customers face to face, answering questions by phone and handling complaints.

Other tips on completing an application form

- Always check the instructions for filling in the application form (for example, whether you have to write in capitals, or fill in the form in black ink only).
- Spell the name of the company correctly!
- Prepare a draft of the application form and then transfer the information to the actual form (if you're filling it in by hand).
- Read over the job advert again and make sure the information you include on the form is relevant.
- Answer all questions and fill in all the boxes.
- If there are gaps in your employment history, say what you were doing during that time (for example, bringing up your children, or working as a volunteer for a charity).
- Include skills that you have developed outside work.
- Ask a friend or relative to check your application form before you send it.

Application form

(For more information on filling in application forms, please see page 25.)

Where you list your previous employment on an application form, include where you developed transferable skills. In this example, include the Christmas club and list your main duties, highlighting the skills you have developed.

Dates	Employment
January 2005 to present	Representative – Christmas club I manage the local Christmas club, helping my neighbours to save regularly and budget for Christmas. My main duties include answering questions from customers in person and by phone. I have developed my communication skills by handling difficult customers and complaints.

If much of your previous employment has been in a different type of job to the job you're applying for, don't expect the employer to work out for themselves what transferable skills you have!

Where you're listing your previous employment, highlight your transferable skills, using the list on page 10 and your own list of skills to guide you.

Example application form

Dates	Employment
January 2005 to present	I have been secretary for the Smalltown Cricket Club for a number of years. My duties have included drafting the minutes of meetings and putting together the club newsletter. These duties improved my written communication skills. The newsletter was well received by members.
October 2003 to November 2005	Warehouse operative – Farm Feeds My duties included stock control, organising deliveries and operating a forklift truck.

What is a CV?

A CV is a short list of facts about you and your work history, skills and experience. A good CV is essential when looking for work and it is worth spending time getting it right so it sells you to an employer.

Your CV should:

- be neat – typed if possible and to the best standard you can achieve in content and layout
- be short – 2 sides of a sheet of A4 paper is normally enough
- be positive – it should emphasise your achievements, strengths, successes and how you have contributed to your employers making a profit (add figures to support facts whenever you can and use positive action words, for example 'consulting', 'negotiating', 'managing' and so on), and
- make a good impression. This means presenting the facts about yourself in a clear and positive way.

How to use your CV

- **To apply to companies to see if they have any jobs available** – you can send your CV with a covering letter or e-mail asking if they have any current or future vacancies in your trade. You can find names and addresses of companies in newspapers or in trade or telephone directories.
- **To remind you what you've done** – you can use your CV to help you remember all the dates and information each time you have to fill in a different application form.
- **To help with applications by phone** – having your CV handy when applying for jobs by phone can help if you are asked to give more information about previous jobs. If you have hearing or speech difficulties and use textphone or Typetalk, having a copy of your CV can cut down the length of time you spend making a call.
- **At interviews** – having your CV with you while you're waiting to be called in can help you refresh your memory. It is also handy to leave a copy with the interviewer if they do not already have one.
- **Registering with recruitment agencies** – agencies may sometimes ask to see your CV before you can register with them.

What to include

There is no set format – how you present your CV is up to you. However, you should include at least the following:

- your name
- your address
- your phone number
- your e-mail address (if you have one), and
- your career history – put your most recent job first and include dates. Employers will be more interested in what you have done recently. Don't leave gaps between dates, because employers will want to know what you did during those periods. If you don't have much work experience, you could include temporary, holiday, part-time or voluntary jobs too. If you've had many different jobs, emphasise the skills and experience you have gained across those jobs (for example, skills in dealing with customers, or communication skills).

New laws on age discrimination mean that you do not need to put your age or date of birth on your CV.

Here are some examples you may want to include.

- **A personal profile** – this is a short statement at the beginning of your CV to sell yourself – your skills, experience and personal qualities. You could include positive words such as 'competent', 'adaptable', and 'conscientious'. You should also tailor the statement to the requirements of each job that you apply for, so that you make it clear to the employer that you're the right person for the job.
- **Achievements** – mention things you did well in your past jobs which could be relevant to the job you're applying for.
- **Qualifications and training** – include any qualifications and training from previous jobs (for example, training in health and safety or a certificate in food hygiene). Again, put the most recent first. You can also include qualifications you got from school or college.
- **Interests** – these can support your application if your hobbies and leisure activities highlight responsibilities and skills that are relevant to the job you're applying for. Perhaps you belong to a club or society which you organise activities for, or you use leadership skills or teamwork as part of the activity.
- **Other information** – it is up to you whether to include this, but it can be helpful if there are gaps in your CV. If you had a career break because you were caring for children or elderly relatives, make this a positive thing and think about the skills you used doing this. If the job you are applying for is different from what you have done in the past, explain why you are interested in the new type of work. If the gaps are because of time in prison or hospital, please see the **Other support** section on page 7 for help on what to say about this.
- **References** – you may not want to include these details on your CV but it's good to have 2 or more people who can provide a work or personal reference. Ideally, one should be your most recent employer but if you haven't worked for a while it could be someone who has known you for a long time who can comment on your qualities in relation to the job. You should ask the person to agree to this beforehand.

Tip – ask a friend or relative to read through your CV to make sure it is accurate and that it shows your skills in a positive way.

Here are 2 example CVs as a guide and a template to help you write your own CV.

Curriculum Vitae

Mark Sample
51 Sample Close
Samplewell
Sampleshire
SA21 5SA

Tel: 01000 123456

Profile

I am a keen, conscientious, hard-working and reliable person. I am a good timekeeper and enjoy meeting people. I get on well with people and can work well either on my own or as part of a team. I can adapt to any environment and would like to use my skills to contribute positively to any work situation.

Achievements

- I set up my own fish-and-chip shop business, and recruited people to work for me.
- I became competent in dealing with accounts, paying wages and handling cash.
- I became a skilled machine operator in a printing firm.

Work history

(Dates) **Self-employed**. Ran a fish-and-chip shop in Harton. Duties included running the shop every day, serving customers, handling cash, operating the till, paying wages and banking money.

(Dates) **Halley's Printers**, Liddon Street, Harton. Machine operator. Duties included changing rollers on printing machines. Responsible for ordering paper and keeping records of stock.

(Dates) **Birkton Boiler Foundry**, Birkton, Leicestershire. Boiler grinder. General duties included grinding boilers, which is a responsible job that involves checking for leaks. Operated a grinding machine.

Education

Attended Pemborough Secondary School and gained qualifications in English and maths.

Spare time activities

I enjoy reading, gardening, listening to music and spending time with my family.

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	Melanie Sample
Address:	5 Sample Street Samplewell SA9 4SA
E-mail address:	melaniesample@hotmail.com.uk
Telephone:	000 0000 0000

Education

(Date)	Trinity School Sample Town LZX 1XX	GCSEs: English, maths, art, geography, domestic science

Employment

(Dates)	Popular Pizzas Sample Town LZX 2XX	Senior assistant In charge of 7 staff, organising work rotas, ordering stock, cashing up, recruiting and training staff, dealing with sales representatives.
(Dates)	Popular Pizzas Sample Town LZX 2XX	Catering assistant Helping to prepare fast food, general kitchen work, waitressing and handling cash.
(Dates)	Newgate Inn Sample Town LZX 3XX	Kitchen supervisor In charge of a busy kitchen, planning menus, cooking, cleaning, controlling stock, bookkeeping, banking and supervising staff.
(Dates)	Newgate Inn Sample Town LZX 3XX	Kitchen assistant Helping out with serving, preparing food and running special events.

Qualifications and training

GCSE maths and English, Certificate in food hygiene.

Interests

Entertaining, playing pool and darts. I arrange darts and pool matches to raise funds for the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Other information

I am punctual, reliable and work well under pressure, either as part of a team or alone. I am straightforward and positive with a friendly manner and a good sense of humour. This has helped me supervise staff and deal with clients and the public.

I have been in positions of trust, handling money on behalf of others. My aim is to find employment in an environment with high standards and productivity.

References

Dick Nye, Manager
The Newgate Inn
Sample Street
Sample Town
LZX 3XX
Phone: 000 0000 0000

Desmond Cook, Area Manager
Popular Pizzas
Sample Street
Sample Town
LZX 2XX
Phone: 000 0000 0000

CV template

Use this template as a guide for writing your own CV.

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	

Profile

[Put in a summary of your skills, experience and personal qualities (pages 25–28 will help you).]

Achievements

- [First achievement]
- [Second achievement]
- [Third achievement]

Work history

[List the dates here]	[Employment – include the details of your previous employment with the most recent first. Include your job title, your role and responsibilities and any achievements.]

Education

[List your school, college or university qualifications here.]

Hobbies and interests

[Include hobbies and interests that are relevant to the job you're applying for.]

Preparing for an interview

Getting invited to an interview means you've passed the first test – your application must have made a good impression.

Now you need to prepare yourself for the interview to make sure you make the best impression.

Before the day

Find out about the employer and the job – you could ask the employer if they have an information pack or you could look at their website.

It's helpful to find out the following things about the employer.

- What they do, make or sell?
- Who are their customers?
- What sort of organisation are they?
- What is the job likely to involve?
- How can you best fit your skills to match the job?

Plan for the interview

Find out about what the interview will involve to make sure you're prepared.

- If you have a disability, all employers must make reasonable adjustments for you so it is possible for you to have an interview. So, if you need the employer to make particular arrangements (for example, to help you get into the building), contact them before your interview to make sure they can make these arrangements.
- Think about who will be interviewing you. If it is the person who would be your manager if you got the job, the interview may be more detailed. If it's the personnel manager, the interview may be less detailed but could still be as testing.
- Find out how many people will be interviewing you and what their positions in the company are. This will help you prepare for the kinds of questions they may ask.
- Find out how long the interview is likely to last. This will give you an idea of how detailed it's likely to be.
- Find out whether you will have to take a test or make a presentation.

Plan your journey

- Consider travelling to the company the day before the interview to check how long the journey will take.
- If necessary, ask the employer for directions, bus routes or details of where you can park your car.
- Plan another way of getting there in case something unexpected happens (such as an accident blocking the road, or if your train is cancelled).
- If you have a disability, let the employer know so they can make any special arrangements (for example, arrangements for you to get into the building).

Creating the right image

This will depend on what sort of work you will be doing.

- Decide what to wear and get your clothes ready the day before.
- You don't have to buy a new outfit! Aim for a neat, clean and tidy appearance – if you look good it will help you feel good.

Gather together the information you'll need at the interview

- Take a copy of your CV or application form to refer to.
- Prepare notes or cue cards to help you if you think you might need a prompt during the interview.
- Bring items the employer has asked for (for example, references, certificates or your driving licence).
- Reread the job advert to refresh your memory – make sure you haven't missed anything.

Prepare for the questions you might be asked

The following is a list of 20 popular interview questions and some suggested answers to help you prepare.

1. Why do you want to work here?

Mention the following:

- the good reputation of the firm
- any other positive information you have about them (for example, their training record, or their equal opportunities policy), and
- that the job will give you the opportunity to do work that interests you.

2. Why did you leave your last job?

Be positive. Don't use this as an opportunity to criticise your previous company. For example, if you left for health reasons, point out that you are now able to carry out all the duties for the job you are applying for. If you were dismissed, say that you take responsibility for your actions and have learnt from the experience.

3. Have you done this kind of work before?

- If you have, tell them the skills and experience you have and how you can use them in this job.
- If you haven't, describe other work experience that is relevant to this job or which will help you learn this job quickly. Emphasise your interest and your enthusiasm to learn.

4. What did you do in your last job?

Describe the following things:

- skills and duties relevant to the new job
- your responsibilities
- how you worked with others
- if you worked with customers and, if so, how you worked with them
- how long you were there
- whether you were promoted, and
- responsibilities you volunteered to take on.

5. What kinds of equipment can you use?

- Name the types of equipment you can use that are relevant to the new job.
- Mention any relevant qualifications or training you have had.
- Tell them the length of time you have used this equipment.

6. How long have you been out of work and how do you spend your time?

Describe the following:

- what you have done to look for a job
- mention any voluntary work you have done
- mention any further education, study or training you have taken part in, and
- mention your hobbies and leisure activities – if appropriate!

Try to link what you did to the skills and experience the employer is looking for.

7. What makes you think you are the right person for this job?

Tell the interviewer about the following:

- the skills and experience you have which are relevant to the job, and
- the personal qualities that you bring to the job.

8. Why have you had so many jobs?

You could say the following things:

- you wanted to widen your experience in different types of work or in different companies
- many of the jobs were temporary, and
- you would rather be in work than out of work.

9. Why have you only had one job?

You could say the following things:

- you had several jobs within your last company
- the job offered you the opportunity to develop, and
- you enjoyed the work.

10. Why should I take you on?

Be ready for this question and answer confidently and positively:

- describe your skills and experience and how relevant they are to this job
- tell them you are enthusiastic and willing to learn, and
- tell them you are hard-working, reliable and capable.

11. Aren't you over-qualified?

Emphasise the following:

- you are looking for something different, and
- you can take as well as give instructions.

12. How do you get on with people?

- Describe how you have worked as a team in the past.
- Give examples of your ability to get on with people at all levels.
- Give examples of how you have provided good customer service, if this is relevant.

13. What makes a good team member?

Describe the skills needed, for example:

- good communication skills
- flexibility
- the ability to adapt to change
- the ability to co-operate with other people, and
- having a good sense of humour and so on.

Give examples of how you showed these in previous work situations or leisure activities.

14. How do you cope with pressure?

Describe pressures in previous jobs using a recent example (for example, how you coped with a deadline that had been brought forward, how you completed a rush order or dealt with staff shortages).

15. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- Strengths – the employer should already know your strengths from your application but you may want to emphasise particular skills relevant to the job by giving examples.
- Weaknesses – start by describing parts of your last job which you found difficult and then explain how you overcame these difficulties or be brief but honest (for example, 'I can sometimes be a little too enthusiastic').

Remember: Employers value people who can admit their mistakes rather than blaming their failings on others.

16. What would you like to be doing in 5 years' time?

Explain that you would ideally like to be working for the same company but to have developed within it.

17. What wage do you expect to earn?

If the wage level is negotiable, be prepared to negotiate. The difficult thing to decide is where to start. If you tell them a wage that is too high, you could price yourself out of the job, but if you give an amount that is too low you could lose out. Before going to the interview, try to find out about wage levels in your area (for example, look at similar jobs advertised with your Jobcentre, in newspapers or on the internet). You might be able to use this information in your negotiations. If you are really not sure, then say you would expect to receive the going rate for the job.

18. How often were you absent from your last job?

- If you were hardly ever off work, say so.
- If sick leave has been a problem, explain why and reassure the employer that you have sorted out the problem.
- If you have had time off because of a disability, discuss this openly, including the possible solutions – be positive.

19. When would you be available to start?

As soon as possible! Do not put any barriers in the way.

20. Do you have any questions?

You may like to prepare for this, as it is almost always asked at an interview. Asking some questions (but not too many) can show you are interested. One or 2 of these may be appropriate.

- Do you offer ongoing training and development?
- What will my first job be?
- How soon will I hear the result of my application?
- Does the company carry out performance reviews and if so, how often?

Finally

- Try to get a good night's sleep.

On the day

Before you leave

- Give yourself plenty of time to get ready.
- Make sure you've got all the relevant paperwork with you.
- If you are delayed, contact the employer as soon as possible to explain, apologise and arrange another appointment.

When you arrive

- Aim to arrive about 10 minutes before the interview time.
- Give your name to the receptionist or whoever is there to greet you.
- Try to relax and keep calm.
- Chat to the receptionist, or whoever greets you before going into the interview. It will help calm you.
- Remember that the interviewer can be just as nervous as you!

At the interview

First, accept that it is natural to be nervous, and you may have a fast heartbeat, clammy hands and 'butterflies' in your stomach. These are your body's natural way of meeting a challenge, and in small doses it can help you.

You will make an impression in the first few minutes. It takes this time for people to assess you and store this information. Once you have made a first impression, it's hardly ever changed. It's important to make a good first impression.

If you are nervous, your voice may sound shaky and squeaky. Practise deep, slow breathing before you get to the interview. This will slow down your heart rate and help you avoid taking quick, shallow breaths if you are nervous.

Here are some general tips which may help you. Not all of these will be appropriate to you – use the ones which are suitable to your situation or style.

Do

- Enter the room confidently.
- Shake hands firmly and introduce yourself.
- Smile!
- Be polite and friendly – look the interviewer in the eye as soon as you enter the room.
- Check that it's OK to use cue cards or notes during the interview.
- Try to maintain eye contact with the person or people you are talking to.
- Look interested, and ask questions as well as answering.
- Answer questions as fully as you can, avoid just saying 'yes' or 'no'.
- Provide examples to prove your skills and achievements.
- Tell the truth.
- Ask if you don't understand a question.
- Speak clearly.
- Sell yourself – get your good points across and be positive.

Don't

- Sit down until the interviewer asks you to.
- Fidget, slouch in the chair or fold your arms.
- Swear (even mildly).
- Criticise your past employers.
- Interrupt.
- Draw attention to your weaknesses.
- Lie or be too enthusiastic. Stay calm and stick to the facts.

Remember, most employers like people who:

- listen
- answer questions with examples
- are brief and keep to the point
- come prepared, and
- appear confident.

Other types of interviews

Competency-based interviews

Competency-based interviews are designed to allow you to show your skills and experience in the main areas of the job. You may be asked to discuss examples of your previous work and achievements. The examples you give should expand on or be different from those on your original application form. Before the interview, you will need to list the skills and experience needed for the job and think about what you have done that you could use as an example for each one.

Group interviews

You may be invited to be assessed as part of a group. This is to test how you might work as part of a team. Be prepared to take an active part in the discussion or task and put forward your ideas. Be confident but not aggressive.

Telephone interviews

Some employers may carry out a first interview over the phone. Be prepared for this when phoning employers by having your CV handy and reading through the sample questions in this booklet.

Skills tests or work sample tests

These tests are designed to measure the level of your knowledge or understanding of the job (for example, typing tests and so on). Find out what the test will involve and try to practise before the interview.

Personality tests

You could be asked questions about your thoughts, feelings and behaviour in certain situations. There is no such thing as a right or wrong answer, as the overall picture is what is important. The end result is a personality rating used to see if the person fits the job advertised. Analysing these tests is a highly-skilled process and larger organisations may use these tests along with other methods.

Aptitude tests

Aptitude tests are designed to predict how well you might do certain tasks. They test abilities such as:

- reasoning with words, numbers or diagrams
- problem-solving, or
- following instructions.

These are usually set as a test paper which you have to finish within a set time. You can do practice tests to try to improve your ability.

Once you get a job you can find out if you are eligible for tax credits or other benefits by visiting www.direct.gov.uk

Important information about this leaflet This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure the leaflet is correct as of November 2008. Some of the information may be oversimplified, or may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

***Call charges** Calls to 0800 numbers are free from BT land lines, but you may have to pay if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad. As at September 2008, calls to 0845 numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 4p a minute with a 7p call set-up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you call from abroad. Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p a minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.
Textphones Our textphone numbers are for people who cannot speak or hear clearly. If you don't have a textphone, you could check if your local library or Citizens Advice Bureau has one. Textphones don't receive text messages from mobile phones.

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