

Planning your career

Where do you want to get to?

Having a destination is the first and most important step of having a career instead of just having a job. This mission should be tailored to you and what you want to get out of a career. Some examples of career missions are:

- I will become a senior manager at a company
- I will be earning £45,000 per year
- I will own my house outright
- I will have over £100,000 invested

It doesn't matter how far away or potentially unobtainable this goal is, where you are now, or even what obstacles could be in your way, the important thing is to set a goal that you want to get to and are willing to work towards. **Write your goal down** and put it somewhere you can see it on a regular basis.

Plan to get there

Starting from where you want to be and working backwards to where you are now, set out a vague plan of how to reach your goal. This could be through gaining qualifications, taking on training courses, putting extra money aside each month, looking for side incomes, or even getting into a job in the first place.

This plan doesn't have to be fixed in stone as there may be multiple ways to reach your mission. If you feel your next goal is unobtainable, look for alternative ways to reach your mission and start working towards that. The important thing is you are always working towards your mission.

Hold yourself accountable

Make sure you are actively making progress. There is no point in putting a plan in place if you aren't going to work towards it. Set yourself timelines to hit certain milestones by and work towards achieving your short-term objectives. This is your plan and you should want to go and achieve it as no one will give it to you.

How to write a CV

This guide shows you how to write a good CV. It tells you what information to include, what to leave out, and how to set out each section clearly.

Contact details

- Include your **first and last name, phone number, email, town**, and the **first part of your postcode**.
- **Optional:** Add links to professional social media, like LinkedIn.
- **Do not include personal information** that isn't needed, such as date of birth, ethnicity, or disability. This information doesn't belong on a CV.
- You don't need to label your phone number as a "telephone number."

Personal profile

- This is the **most important section** of your CV.
- Make sure you cover all the **essential criteria** for the job you are applying for (check the job advert).
- Focus on your **experience** to show how you meet the job criteria.
- **Do not** use generic words like 'hard worker' or 'team player' unless they are specifically asked for in the job advert. Recruiters see these too often.

Professional accomplishments (preferred) / key skills

- Write down a few **professional accomplishments**—times you went above and beyond your job description to achieve something.
- If you don't have many accomplishments, focus on **key skills**.
- Focus on **hard skills** (skills you learned, like "I can write code in HTML5" or "high level of knowledge around health and safety") rather than soft skills (like "caring individual").

Work history

List your past jobs, including the **job title**, **dates** you worked there, and **company name**.

- Give a very brief job description, and focus on your **achievements** (things you did outside of the basic job role).
- Include your **last 3 jobs**, make sure you cover the **last 5 years** of employment, and don't go back more than 10 years.
- Jobs must be in **reverse-chronological order** (latest job first).

Education / training

- List your **qualifications** and any **in-date training courses**. Add the year you completed each.
- List these in **reverse-chronological order** (latest first).
- Highlight any courses or qualifications that are **relevant** to the job.

Additional notes

There's **no need** to include "References available on request" or "Hobbies and interests," unless a hobby is specific to the industry and adds professional value. Your CV should ideally be **two pages** long, but having one full page is better than a nearly empty second page.

Writing a Cover Letter

Applying for a job usually means submitting either an application or your CV. In both cases, you'll be asked for a cover letter or a space for additional information.

What information to include the Cover Letter?

It is important to put in the cover letter information that the employer is looking for. There is no point in putting what you think are your best skills when the employer isn't looking for those skills. Some things to consider when writing your cover letter:

- There is no formal layout in the Cover Letter and no need to lay it out like a letter.
- Address the hiring manager by name or even job title if you know it or just to the 'Hiring Manager' if you don't.
- Include an introductory paragraph stating your wish to apply for the job and you have attached your CV. Include that you fit all of the essential criteria for the role.
- Include 2-3 paragraphs where you take one of the essential or desirable criterion and explain how you fulfil that criterion.
- Close off the email with your contact information (optional as it's on your CV) and thanking them for their time.
- It is important to tailor each Cover Letter to the role you're going for. Make sure you include their terminology for their essential and desirable criteria.

Having a Cover Letter that is tailored to the job you're going for could be the difference between an employer looking at your CV properly and just skimming over it.

Interview tips

Successfully managing a job interview involves three key steps: thoughtful preparation beforehand, a confident performance during the meeting using real-life examples, and professional follow-up afterward.

Preparation

- **Prepare examples** from your work history to use in the interview.
- **Research the company**—find out what they do and how they do it.
- Plan what you will **wear**.
- **Plan your route** and aim to arrive **15 minutes early**.
- **Prepare questions** to ask the interviewer at the end.

Interviewing

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Post-interview

- You can't change the outcome now, so **forget about the interview** until you get a call.
- **Ask for feedback** whether you get the job or not. This information is essential for your next interview.
- **Review the questions** they asked you and research how you can improve your answers and fill any gaps in your knowledge.
- If you haven't heard back about the result after one week, **email the recruiting manager to ask for an update**.
- **Optional:** If you are offered the job, ask to start on a **higher salary point**.

Prepare examples

Prepare real-life examples from your professional career around topics they might ask about. These are some general topics to think about:

Health and safety in the workplace:

- When you kept your workplace clean and clear of hazards.
- When you reported a hazard to a senior member of staff.
- When you dealt with a stress management situation and did a debrief.
- When you have worked alone and the processes you used.
- Working closely with your **line manager**.

Other examples

- Working as part of a **team**.
- Where you have **gone above and beyond** for a customer.
- Where you have dealt with an **equality and diversity issue**.
- When you have **received recognition** from the company for your hard work (like 'employee of the month').
- A time when you had **lone working responsibilities**.

Example questions for the interviewer

- You should always ask the interviewer questions about the job at the end. Here are some you can use:
- Can you tell me more about the **team** I would be working in?
- Can you describe the working **culture** of the organisation?
- Who will I be **reporting into**?
- What **options are available to help me develop** in the role?
- What **opportunities are there for training and progression**?
- What are the **biggest challenges** someone in this position would face?
- What is the **performance review process** like here? How often would I be formally reviewed?
- What are the **performance expectations** for the first 12 months?
- What are the team's biggest **strengths and challenges**?
- Which other departments work most closely with this one, and how?

Volunteering

Why volunteer?

Volunteering is a great way to build your confidence, skills, and employability to build your toolkit to become work ready and give back to your local community. There are many reasons why people volunteer such as being proactive in their community, giving their time to give back, self-development, and because it's a positive thing to do.

Benefits of volunteering

There are many benefits to volunteering. Here are some of them:

- Building confidence.
- Connecting with others.
- Giving back to the community.
- Learning new skills and gaining experience.
- Develop your CV.
- Relationship building to see what roles are coming out soon.
- Access to training and personal development.
- Giving you a sense of purpose.

Top tips

Volunteering is about keeping things simple, it is not about overcommitting or overpromise what you can do. Here are some tips about volunteering:

- Do volunteering that you enjoy doing.
- Keep it local, walking or traveling distance.
- It doesn't have to be daily or weekly, do it when you have time to spare.
- Volunteer in a field that you may want to work in although skills can be transferable.
- A lot of companies may have volunteering days for you to use.
- Being open to opportunities.
- Think outside the box, look at local festivals, charity boards, local 10k runs.
- Use online resources such as Facebook groups and forums.

Volunteering is meant to be fun and enjoyable for all. Give it a try!