

# CV's, Applications and Job Interviews

HINTS AND TIPS

NICHAELA PERRY

## Job Hunting

Ask yourself: Am I clear about what I want? Am I being realistic?

Put regular time aside to make it happen. Treat it like a job, don't dither or overthink. Apply and see what happens.

Don't rely on the internet alone – consider newspapers, word of mouth, recruitment agencies, apprenticeship training providers and speculative applications.

Does the company where you currently work part-time offer apprenticeships? Companies like Savers, Lidl and many others offer apprenticeships that can take you from customer service roles into store manager roles and beyond.

Let your family, friends and neighbours know that you are looking and consider work experience or voluntary experiences rather than sitting at home doing nothing, you never know this might help you clarify your ideas or it might lead to a job offer.

### Some useful websites:

<a href="http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk">www.notgoingtouni.co.uk</a>	General information and opportunities plus links
<a href="http://www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk">www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk</a>	Variety of opportunities
<a href="http://www.studentladder.co.uk">www.studentladder.co.uk</a>	Variety of opportunities
<a href="http://www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk">www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk</a>	Employer information
<a href="http://www.schoolleavers.milkround.com">www.schoolleavers.milkround.com</a>	School Leaver opportunities
<a href="http://www.futurefinder.yourlife.org.uk">www.futurefinder.yourlife.org.uk</a>	General information
<a href="http://www.indeed.co.uk">www.indeed.co.uk</a>	Job search engine
<a href="http://www.gov.uk/jobsearch">www.gov.uk/jobsearch</a>	Job Centre vacancies
<a href="http://www.yell.com">www.yell.com</a>	Good way to find local employers

## Covering Letters

In the past covering letters and CV were always sent by post but now the majority are sent electronically via email or via a jobsite. If sending via email you can write your covering letter in the "body" of your email and attach your CV as a word document. If applying on a jobsite you need to read the instructions carefully. Each site will be different, read the instructions on the website carefully. Different amounts of space may be available, typeface and layout can be changed when sending this way so ensure you check carefully before hitting "submit". Make sure you have a copy of *what* you sent and *when* you sent it.

Your covering letter introduces your CV and highlights the aspects you really want the employer to notice. Your covering letter can make you stand out from the other applicants. It should highlight why you are right for the position you want. A good covering letter takes time and thought. Don't send a CV without a covering letter.

It goes without saying (or it should!) that you need to check your spelling and grammar, this is the first impression you are giving to your potential employer. You need no more than 4 or 5 short paragraphs.

There are 2 types of covering letter:

A letter *responding* to a job advert where the method they want you to use to apply is a CV. Ensure your skills match up to the job description or person specification. This is probably less common now as many employers prefer an application form. Read the job advertisement carefully so you apply using the method they require.

A *speculative* letter where there has not been any job advertised but you really like the idea of working for that company. Some companies may rely on this method for a steady stream of applicants. Some companies state clearly that they do not accept speculative applications. Check before you send. You need to demonstrate that you have researched the company you are applying to and you know the sort of job role that would suit your skills. For example if you have seen a role in the past at x company that you think would be ideal but they aren't currently advertising you could send in a speculative application aimed at that sort of role. It could be that someone is about to leave or get promoted and they might be delighted to hear from you. Some employers are impressed by young people who take the initiative to apply in this way. If they have nothing currently available they may keep your application on file for a period of time.

## Covering Letters

Below is a way of setting out a cover letter if you are **responding** to a job advert:

	Address
	Contact telephone numbers
	Email
	Date
Name of contact	
Address of company	
Dear [specify person to whom the letter should be addressed]	
Quote job title and / or reference number	
Paragraph 1	
What you are applying for, where you saw the advert, when you can start	
<i>I enclose my CV in response to the advertisement for the above post, which appeared in [state publication / website] on [date].</i>	
Paragraph 2/3	
Why the job interests you,	
Why you would like to work for the company?	
What skills, capabilities and experience you have that are relevant to this position and how you believe you can contribute to the success of the company.	
Final Paragraph	
Thank the employer and say you look forward to hearing from them soon.	
Yours sincerely	
Sign	
Print your name	

NB: If you start with a name (e.g. "Dear Mr Bloggs") you should end with "**Yours sincerely**". If you start with "Dear Sir or Madam" you should end with "**Yours faithfully**".

## Covering Letters

Below is a way of setting out a **speculative** cover letter (i.e. introducing yourself without a job having been advertised):

Address

Contact telephone numbers

Email

Date

Name of contact

Address of company

Dear [specify person to whom the letter should be addressed try to find this out even if it means phoning the company to ask first]

Paragraph 1

Give the reason you are writing. Refer to a job title or area of interest; you can use the word 'opportunities' (for example 'apprenticeship opportunities')

Paragraph 2/3

Outline of your relevant background: *'from my enclosed CV, you will see that'...* or *'I have recently completed my [state what you have been studying] and would like to put this into practice by developing a career in [state the area in which you wish to work]'.*

Outline your skills and capabilities, with examples or how you have successfully used them. *Expand* on your CV don't just repeat content

Indicate why you would like to work for the company how you would be a valuable employee

Final Paragraph

Thank the employer and say you look forward to hearing from them soon. For example: "I would be most grateful if you could consider me for any suitable positions available within your company. I am available for interview at any time and look forward to hearing for you."

Yours sincerely

Sign

Print your name

## Helpful Hints for Your CV

- Your CV is your first step to getting a job; it describes the qualifications, skills and experiences you have to offer
- You need to change your CV to fit the job that you are applying for
- You need to regularly update your CV as you progress through education and your working life
- A CV should really be no more than two pages especially for a school leaver. If you go onto a second page consider adding a footer with your name and contact details so that the 2 pages don't get separated
- Make sure you keep a record of where you apply and which copy of your CV you send out
- Make sure your email address is one you will *check regularly* and is something appropriate
- Stick to a clear font and make it no smaller than .11
- Layout is up to you as long as it is clear, logical and easy to read
- Headings are also up to you although employers will expect to see something about your education, training and experience

## Profile/Personal Profile

This is your chance to say a little about yourself and the role you are interested in. It isn't essential to have one on your CV, you can use your covering letter for this but it can be useful to have a couple of lines to grab attention and make you stand out from other applicants.

Consider the following questions when thinking about what to write:

- Why do you want to work in this sector?
- What skills/interests do you have that make you suitable for the role?
- What are your ambitions for your career?

Here is an example:

*"A hardworking and reliable sixth former with good GCSEs, I am expected to gain C or D grades in my A levels this year and am seeking the opportunity to develop a career in accountancy. Keen to learn and gain qualifications, I always strive to achieve success."*

Can you improve on this? It takes time to work on your own profile, but avoid "buzzwords" and try to put something of yourself into what you write.

## Education

- List most recent information first and work your way backwards. You only need college/6<sup>th</sup> form and secondary school *not* primary level education.

## Employment History

- Anything can be helpful, a paper round shows you can be reliable and a good timekeeper. Working in a fish and chip shop shows customer service, cash handling and teamwork skills.
- If you lack work experience refer to other aspects of your life e.g. clubs, work experience, voluntary / charity work, etc.
- List your employment from most recent first and work your way backwards.
- Briefly explain your roles and responsibilities within your work to show off the skills you have gained. Try to link to the job you are applying for.

## Interests and Achievements

- Try to be specific; for example, rather than 'my hobbies include football' consider, 'I play for a Sunday league football team which includes a commitment to training twice a week as well as organising team social events'.
- If you are working towards anything e.g. Duke of Edinburgh this can be included here. Again be specific about what it involves don't assume that they will know.
- Focus on interests that reflect your different skills e.g. being part of a team (football, hockey, etc.) and individual activities (reading, photography etc.).
- These can help a prospective employer to get a rounded picture of you and see how well you might fit into the team. They can also offer a way for the employer to break the ice with you in the interview.

## References

- You have a choice between stating 'references are available upon request' or detailing the names and contact details of two referees (one academic and one personal / employment). Usually at least one will be a teacher if you are just leaving school. You cannot use family members. Consider that your references may not like their contact details being passed around to lots of employers or posted online, and for this reason it may be better to keep their details private until requested by an interested employer.

NB: Your CV contains personal information so be aware of who you are sending it to or where you are posting it online. For more information see:

[www.safer-jobs.com/articles/Creating-an-internet-safe-CV](http://www.safer-jobs.com/articles/Creating-an-internet-safe-CV)

Smith's Hill, SS5 7CV  
[jbloggs@smithsmail.co.uk](mailto:jbloggs@smithsmail.co.uk)

*A friendly and well-organised student coming to the end of year 13. I have a range of excellent GCSE grades and am predicted BBC at A-level. While studying I have been working part-time at a fast food shop locally and volunteering as a student mentor. Having recently completed work experience in a local private practice accountants I am keen to gain an apprenticeship, my ambition is to gain chartered status.*

### Education:

<b>Green Hill 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, Green Valley, SS3 3CV</b>	September 2016 to June 2018
A-Levels:	Predicted Grades:
English Literature	B
Economics	B
Geography	C

<b>Green Hill Academy, Green Lane, Green Valley SS5 3CV</b>	September 2012 to June 2016
GCSE's:	Grades:
English Language	A
English Literature	A
Maths	B
Science Double Award	BB
History	A
Geography	B
French	B
Business Studies	A

### Employment/Work Experience:

<b>Frank's Fish &amp; Chips</b>	September 2016 to present
Duties include taking orders both face to face and over the phone, handling cash and card payments and helping with the general running of the shop	
<b>Volunteer Student Mentor</b>	September 2016 to present
Role includes encouraging year 7 students who are struggling to settle into school.	
<b>Work Experience at ABC Accountancy</b>	June 2018
Observing the day to day functions, helping with administration of the office, data input and answering the phone.	

### Interests:

A keen member of my local gym I enjoy netball, basketball and football. I play for Green Valley every Saturday.

**References Available on Request**

Before the Interview

Research the company and the role you are applying for. Look back over your application. Get your clothes ready in advance. Even for the most casual of companies you should be smart for your interview. It's better to be overdressed than underdressed. Shine your shoes. First impressions count. Have you got a smart folder for any documents you need to bring? Make sure you know the route to the interview. How long will the journey take? Consider doing a practice journey. Allow yourself plenty of time to arrive early. Be nice to everyone you meet in the organisation as they may be asked to give feedback on you later.

## During the Interview

Don't be surprised if there are 2 or more people present. This is often the case and can help to ensure candidates are treated fairly. Remember it is a 2 way process. Speak clearly and more slowly than you think you need to. Use eye contact but don't stare, try to be natural. If the interviewers take turns asking questions look at the person who asked you the question but glance at the others from time to time. Remember to smile. If you get flustered or don't understand a question just ask them politely if they can repeat the question. Interviewers are human and should understand you are nervous.

## Common Interview Questions

1. **Tell me about yourself?** This is often used as an ice-breaker question to get things started off. Your nerves might make you waffle or clam up, so be prepared. Consider 4 or 5 points you would like to make about yourself that help to explain why you want this role.
2. **Why are you interested in working for us?** This is your chance to show that you have researched the company. Is it a good place to work? Why? Does it make great products, offer a wonderful service, and have a great reputation? Is the training excellent?
3. **Why should we hire you?** Your chance to say why your strengths meet the requirements of the role.
4. **What are your strengths?** Back up your answer with examples.
5. **What are your weaknesses?** Think of areas you want to develop and explain how you feel you think this role will help.
6. **Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years' time?**
7. **Tell me about an accomplishment you are proud of?** It's ideal here if you can think of a challenge you have faced and talk about the struggle you overcame and what this has helped you to learn.
8. **Describe a situation where you solved a problem?** Bit similar to the one above.
9. **Describe a situation where you led a team?** Could be within school, in sports etc. Be ready with examples of what was tricky and what you learnt.
10. **Do you have any questions?**

## Questions for them?

Avoid talking about money and hours at this point, if they offer you the job this can be discussed then. Instead consider asking:

**Can you tell me about the team I will be part of?**

**How will the apprenticeship training work?**

**Once I complete my apprenticeship could there be a future for me within the company?**

**What sort of opportunities for training will there be?**

## After the interview

Consider sending a brief email thanking them for their time.

If you are offered the position you can have time to think if you need it and you can turn it down if you don't think it's quite right for you.

If you are not successful at interview consider asking for feedback so you know what the reasons were. You could also ask them to keep you in mind if they feel a more suitable position comes up in the future.

Don't be disheartened if you don't get an offer straightaway.