



Planning

PLANNING FOR EMPLOYMENT

Your main choice from the options open to you may be employment. In this case be clear about the reasons for wanting to work and have a firm idea of what sort of job you would like. The student who is positively looking for employment as a first choice is in a far better position than a failed undergraduate looking for an alternative.

Those uncertain about the types of employment suitable for them should discuss their ideas with a Careers Adviser. There are also various careers guidance software programs such as Kudos, Odyssey and Adult Directions which can be used to assist with career choice. The majority of these packages are available in your school/college or local Career Development Centre.

When you have identified a possible range of careers, you should research them to ensure that they are a realistic prospect.

FACTORS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT:-

QUALIFICATIONS

What sort of qualifications are you likely to achieve and do they match those required by the job?

Certain jobs may demand the same grades as you would need to enter higher education, for example for accountancy training some companies demand B/C grades at 'A' level.

Also, some careers are only accessible to graduates, so you will need to check that there is an entry route with your qualifications. Find more information on this by using careers libraries or contacting a Careers Adviser.

THE LEVEL OF STUDY/TRAINING INVOLVED

Many jobs reserved for 'A' level or GNVQ Advanced/BTEC National students, including Modern Apprenticeships, will involve further study, often in the form of day or block release to college. Your employer may expect you to obtain

professional qualifications which will involve a lot of additional study on top of work commitments.

Whilst Modern Apprenticeships will include time to study within the working day, not all employers will provide time. You may find you are expected to attend a course or complete an open learning package, both involving study in your own time.

It is important to check out what sort of professional qualifications you will be expected to gain and, if possible, what arrangements an employer will make.

Don't forget, many part-time/open learning courses are available which you could access (even if not required by the employer). Part-time degree and certificate courses are available locally. The Open University is looking to attract younger students to their degree courses.

WHERE YOU ARE PREPARED TO WORK

A number of jobs will be available locally, but the number of potential employers will increase the further afield you are prepared to look. You may start work in a local company but find a move is necessary in order to progress.

Mobility is regarded as very important for certain jobs such as Hotel or Retail Management and employers will specifically request this.

WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS LIKELY TO LOOK FOR AND DO YOU HAVE SOME OF THE SKILLS AND QUALITIES TO MATCH?

Employers vary in what they look for in prospective applicants. The following are examples of what they may consider important. Many of these skills are 'transferable' and you may find that you can demonstrate competence from experiences gained from school/college or work experience.

Employers are also likely to take into account qualifications gained, the quality of your Curriculum Vitae (CV), application form, the National Record of Achievement, references and interview performance.

- Motivation to work in that specific career area and their company in particular
- Communication skills
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Leadership potential
- Organisational and planning skills
- Presentation skills
- Initiative
- Academic ability
- Work experience
- Good attendance record
- Reliability and responsibility



JOB search

JOB SEARCH

The key to successful job hunting is to plan ahead and to start your job search early. Once you know what career area you are interested in you need to be aware where vacancies are advertised and how to apply. When vacancies are advertised there is usually only a short time to the closing date. This means you will need to write a good application quickly. It will be made easier if you have drafted out letters beforehand.

Where to look for vacancies/useful contacts:

- Websites
- Local and regional newspapers
- Specialist magazines/publications
- Career Development Centres
- Job Centres
- Private Employment Agencies
- Friends
- Relatives
- Yellow pages
- Local company directories
- Shop/Post Office windows
- Newspaper stories about new or expanding firms
- Teletext
- Speculative applications

Any of these sources may be able to provide job leads. Remember that almost a third of vacancies are filled without being advertised.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO APPLY FOR JOB VACANCIES

- a. Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- b. Speculative letter
- c. Telephoning Employers
- d. Letter of Application
- e. Application form
- f. Via Company Websites

You may find that in order to get a job you will have to use more than one method, so you should be familiar with them all.

A - THE CURRICULUM VITAE (C.V.)

It is a good idea to produce a CV in plenty of time before starting to apply for jobs. A CV is a concise document that outlines facts about yourself and previous experience to an employer.

WHEN TO USE A CV

- In response to an advertised vacancy when the employer has requested a CV as part of the application.
- To send out to companies on a speculative basis. This should be accompanied by a short covering letter.
- To use as a personal reference to help you complete application forms.
- It is also possible to put your CV on the World Wide Web using an online CV Bank.

CONTENT OF A CV

The exact content, length and style of presentation are personal. The CV should be designed to meet your needs and present you in the best possible way. However, the following sections should be included.

■ Personal details

Name, address, telephone number and date of birth.

■ Education

Names of schools/colleges (from secondary level) with dates attended.

■ Qualifications

List all qualifications achieved with dates by subjects and level - if you failed a subject then miss out the details altogether.

■ Work Experience

Include details of any part-time jobs, work experience or voluntary work, starting with the most recent first. Include brief details of the skills and responsibilities involved.

■ Other Information

Include any other relevant information about particular skills you have e.g. language ability, driving licence or First Aid Certificate.

■ References

Names and addresses of two referees. One should be an academic referee, a teacher from your school/college. The other is your character reference, for example, a friend of the family or employer. They can comment on your suitability for a job and vouch for your character. Make sure you ask if they are happy to act as a referee for you.

HINTS AND TIPS

Aim to make the layout clear and easy to read. It should be typed and the information



presented in a concise way. Keep one copy of your CV as a master. Keep it up to date.

Remember your CV is an advertising document for yourself. Make sure you don't overlook your skills and experience - do make the most of yourself.

B - THE SPECULATIVE LETTER

Many vacancies are not formally advertised. Instead they go to people who contact the company at just the right time. Contacting employers who are not advertising for staff (applying on spec) could become part of your job hunting strategy.

GENERAL RULES:-

- Speculative letters should be concise and to the point and should be accompanied by your CV. Firstly, outline the reason why you are writing. Explain your interest in a particular job and why you are keen to work for the company. Include a paragraph on what skills and qualities you have to offer. These should match with what you think would be the requirements for the job.
- Aim to personalise each letter and try to find out the name of the person in the company to whom you should write. If you cannot find this out, address letters to the Personnel Manager.
- Don't go to the expense of enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. It will not make disinterested employers reply, nor will the lack of one deter interested employers.
- You will not hear from all employers contacted this way. Remember, you will probably only stand a chance of an interview if your letter coincides with a vacancy.

N.B. Keep a list of companies contacted and when.

C - TELEPHONING EMPLOYERS

Some vacancies require you to ring the organisation first. Alternatively, you may wish to telephone an employer to find out if they require staff (see also b. The Speculative Letter).

GENERAL RULES:-

- Use a private telephone wherever possible. If not, then try to select a quiet kiosk. (Have a Phonocard or lots of change ready).
- Prepare what you are going to say beforehand.
- Have a copy of your CV to hand in case you are asked about your employment history.
- Be prepared for the telephonist/receptionist "brush off" - so be persistent but polite.
- Speak clearly and do not be nervous of asking people to repeat things.
- Take notes (have paper and a pen nearby) to make sure you are clear about the next step if the contact has been successful.
- Prepare a message in case you encounter an answering machine and make sure it includes your name, address and telephone number.

D - THE LETTER OF APPLICATION

Some employers will state in the vacancy that they prefer a letter of application rather than an application form.

GENERAL RULES:-

- It will be easier to draft this letter if you enclose a CV to which you can refer.
- Again, try to keep the content of the letter concise. Your first paragraph should state the title of the job and the place and date the vacancy was advertised.
- Then refer to your CV and cover the highlights of your education and work experience. Try to analyse the job details and provide examples of the skills and qualities you have that match those required in the job.
- As with the speculative letter, state reasons why you are interested in the job and company.
- The final paragraph should provide the employer with details of two referees and also state whether you would be available for interview at the employer's convenience.

E - THE APPLICATION FORM

Read through the whole form before you start to fill it in. It is also a good idea to photocopy it and use that as a practice form.

GENERAL RULES:-

- Many employers use application forms designed for people who have been employed for several years and you may find that some sections are irrelevant. Don't worry about leaving these blank.



However, answer other sections as fully as possible, particularly those that ask about your reasons for applying and the 'Any other information section'; this is your opportunity to market yourself to the employer, so make sure you present this in a positive way. Keep a copy to refer to when you go for interview.

F - WEBSITE APPLICATIONS

Some companies now offer the opportunity to complete application forms on line.

The general rules still apply. Remember to check your application carefully before you send it.

THE INTERVIEW

All interviews are different in terms of content, style and length. However, if you have done some preparation the situation will be easier to deal with.

GENERAL RULES:-

- Make sure you know where the interview is and how to get there.
- Find out as much as possible about the job and the company.
- Try and anticipate the sort of questions which might be asked and give some thought as to how you would answer.

Typical interview questions:

Why do you want the job?

What do you know about the company?

What are your strong/weak points?

Why should we give you the job?

What did you enjoy at school/college and why?

Work out possible questions that you could ask.

- Sort out what you will wear for the interview and think what sort of impression it will create.
- Collect together any additional relevant information you might want to take e.g. Record of Achievement, Portfolio of Art work, references or certificates.
- Interviews could be conducted by one person or by a panel.
- An interview is a two-way process and it is your opportunity to "sell yourself".
- Try to avoid answering 'yes' or 'no' to questions, instead answer fully giving examples from your experiences in education or work as a back-up.
- Maintain eye contact with the person asking the questions. If it is a panel interview try to engage everyone in what you are saying.
- Try to be positive.
- When given the opportunity to ask questions, the first question should be something that shows enthusiasm and interest in the job. If you want to ask about pay and conditions make it the last question.
- Ask when you are likely to hear about the outcome of the interview.
- Remember to thank the interviewer(s).

SELECTION TESTS

Some employers may use selection tests in addition to interviews. Candidates are usually informed about them before hand. There are various different types of test.

GENERAL RULES:-

■ Intellectual Ability tests.

These are usually timed, multiple choice tests and gauge intellectual qualities such as verbal and numerical reasoning.

■ Personality tests.

These look at how you would respond to certain situations or roles.

■ Skills tests.

These test practical and problem solving abilities and are either performed individually or as a team.

■ Physical tests.

These are aimed to test a candidate's physical ability e.g. how fast you can run, what sort of weights can you carry.

■ Communication tests.

Usually administered to test performance in a group setting. Your ability to put across your point of view is assessed.

■ Medical tests.

A requirement for certain jobs particularly Armed Forces, Police and Fire Service.

