



The Gap Year

Making the gap year count

If you haven't been able to choose a career path as soon as you leave school, a gap year can be a great way to further explore the world of work. You can use this year to gain experience in fields that interest you or you just want to try. This gives you a break from study, but ensures you are still on the track to reaching your Career Dreams.

Finding a job

Once you have thought about the types of careers you would like to work in, you can start by looking at roles in the industry that you can do now. It is important to be realistic about the level of work that you are likely to get. Starting out you are probably going to have to consider more junior roles in an organisation. Use these to investigate whether you like the industry, and get to know the people that work for your organisation.

There are a number of ways you can look for a job. Try the following:

- Look online at job websites
- Check out the local paper for advertisements
- Talk to friends or family and see if you can get a job through someone you know
- Meet with a recruitment agent
- Make a list of companies you would like to work for, and contact them to see if they have any opportunities

Part-time work

You may decide to get a part-time job while at University. This again is a great way to explore the things you like to do at work, and gain contacts in your desired industry.

Try looking for work that relates to the type of field you want to eventually work in. If this is not possible, think about jobs that require similar skill sets (for example if you are studying to become a nurse, but are unable to work for a hospital, you may want to work in a café to have some experience with the public). Skills that you develop through this kind of work are called transferable skills. So using our nursing example, customer service skills with the public can be used in a wide range of industries, including nursing where you need to deal with the public everyday.

How do I start?

One of the first things you need to do is to write a CV. Your CV should tell your potential employer what skills and attributes you are able to bring to the role

How to write your CV

The following tools provide some guidelines as to how you may want to consider approaching your first CV. Please note that this section relates to first time CV's. Once you start to reach your Career Dreams you will need to change and update your CV to reflect your time in the workplace.

Personal Details

Personal details should be at the top of the first page of your CV. You need to detail:

Name
Address
Phone Number
Email Address

You should also number your pages and ensure your name and phone number are in the footer of each page.

Career Objective

A Career Objective lets the employer know the type of job that you want to obtain. This should match the job ad you are applying for and may need to be tailored for different roles. An example of a career objective is:

I am looking for my first role as a sales assistant in the clothing industry to help develop my customer service and organisational skills. I have had leadership roles and a high level of computer experience throughout my schooling and am looking to contribute these skills to a fun and dynamic workplace.

Career objectives should give the employer an idea of who you are, what you are hoping to get out of the role, and what you can provide to their organisation.

Key Skills

Think about the key skills that you have. How can these translate into good career skills?

For example, leadership and communication skills will make a good case toward customer service roles. If you have led a sports team, been on the debating team, or given speeches at school, these are all evidence of having great communication skills.

Computer classes at school will help with roles that have a data entry or administrative component. General interest in this area will also help. Do you have skills in particular programmes? Have you taken a typing course at school? Do you have design skills? Have you ever had to organise anything at school?

Examples of key skills that you might like to include in your CV are:

- Communication
- Planning and Organising
- Writing Skills
- Team Work Skills
- Computer Skills

Additional activities/work experience

If you have already had work, the dates, responsibilities and achievements need to be included in your CV to show how you have developed a particular competency.

If this is your first job think about other activities that you are involved in that could be considered work experience. Volunteer work, refereeing, or even work experience days can be used on your first CV (as you gain more experience in the working world you will need to remove these).

The key is show an activity that you have been involved with that highlights a particular skill or competency. Think about the key skills the employer is asking for in the job ad, and then match these to activities you have participated in at school.

References

Some employers will ask for a Referee. This is someone that can attest to your ability to do a particular job. If you have not had any work experience before you may like to use a character reference instead. A parent, teacher or sports coach (among others) can provide this for you. Try to get someone that has worked with you in one of the skills described above. For example if you have refereed for a sports team, ask the Sports Coach to provide the reference.

The next step is to do some preparation for your interview technique. Read our 'Interview Preparation' guide to assist with this.

