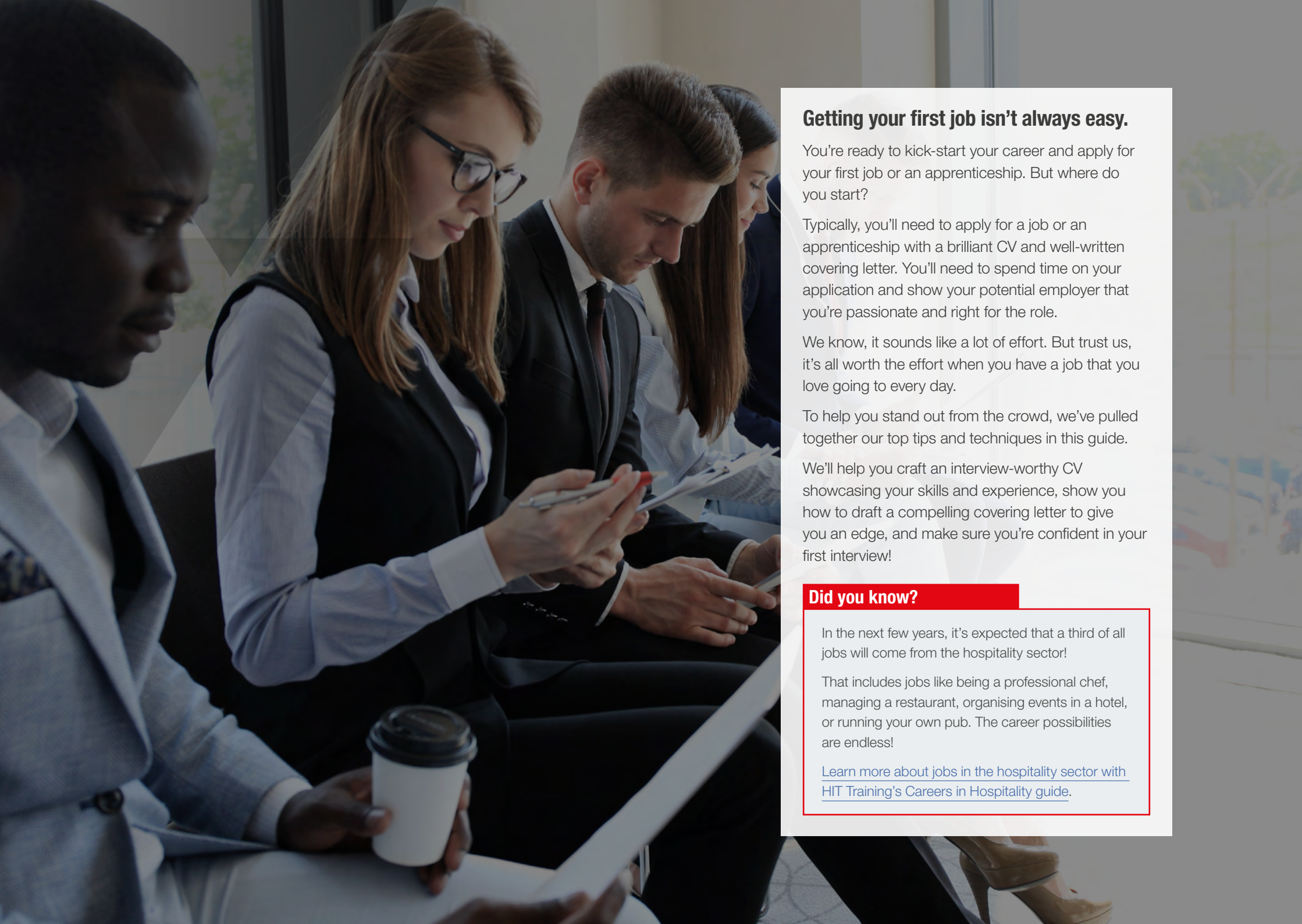


Getting your first job masterclass



In partnership with:



Getting your first job isn't always easy.

You're ready to kick-start your career and apply for your first job or an apprenticeship. But where do you start?

Typically, you'll need to apply for a job or an apprenticeship with a brilliant CV and well-written covering letter. You'll need to spend time on your application and show your potential employer that you're passionate and right for the role.

We know, it sounds like a lot of effort. But trust us, it's all worth the effort when you have a job that you love going to every day.

To help you stand out from the crowd, we've pulled together our top tips and techniques in this guide.

We'll help you craft an interview-worthy CV showcasing your skills and experience, show you how to draft a compelling covering letter to give you an edge, and make sure you're confident in your first interview!

Did you know?

In the next few years, it's expected that a third of all jobs will come from the hospitality sector!

That includes jobs like being a professional chef, managing a restaurant, organising events in a hotel, or running your own pub. The career possibilities are endless!

[Learn more about jobs in the hospitality sector with HIT Training's Careers in Hospitality guide.](#)



What is a CV?

So, you're looking for your first job and you've been told that you need to write a CV. But what exactly is a CV?

A CV, short for curriculum vitae, is a written document that contains lots of information about you to show an employer why you'd be great for a job. It includes details about things like your education, qualifications, skills and work experience.

After writing your CV, you can then start applying for jobs by sending your CV to potential employers. The employer will then read your CV and decide whether or not you're suitable to be invited to an interview.

Why do I need a CV?

When you leave school, finding a job can be tough, especially if you don't have a lot of work experience. But don't be worried! Below are some tips to help you create a CV that will make you stand out from the crowd and impress potential new employers.

A good CV is all about what you write and how you present it. It all comes together to reflect you as a worker and a person. Ultimately, a tailored and professional CV is essential to getting a job.

Before applying for a job, have a quick look through our CV tips. Some of these ideas are common sense, whilst others a little less obvious but in no way less important.

Where to start?

Get yourself comfortable and away we go!

So how do we do this?

- Keep your CV short and tidy – one side of A4 paper is fine if you don't have too much work experience, but increase this to two pages if you have some work experience to add.
- Make the text clear – use a simple font like Arial or Tahoma and use black text on white paper.
- Break text up as much as possible – keep sentences short and list skills with bullet points (this makes it easy for readers to digest the info on the page).
- Divide the CV sections clearly – bold headings and borders will make navigation easy.

We'd recommend presenting your CV in the following order:

1. Name and contact details
2. Introductory profile
3. Key achievements
4. Education, qualifications and skills
5. Work experience
6. Hobbies and interests
7. References.

What should I write on my CV?

It can be difficult knowing where to start and what to write for each section of your CV. So here's a rundown of the key things you should include for the seven different CV sections. [We've also created a simple CV template for you to download and edit.](#)

Name and contact details

Thankfully, this bit is as simple as it sounds.

You'll need to include your name – preferably your full first name and last name. Along with your address. There's no need to add your full address. Simply writing your town, county and postcode is fine.

It's also important that you include the best contact details for a potential employer to get hold of you. As standard, this would include your mobile number and email address. However, you could also include your home telephone number too.



COMPOSE

Inbox (1)

Remember

Look at your email address!

When you created it, you may have been 11 or 12 Years old, so you might want to create a new, appropriate and professional one for your CV. Although sillyskater19 at hotmail.com was cool at the time, this may not come across as professional to an employer.

Sent Mail

Introductory profile

Before you start writing your introductory profile piece, you'll need to think about what kind of job you want to do as this will need to be taken into account when writing.

If you've seen a job advertised that you'd like to apply for, carefully look through the job advert. Pull out any keywords or job requirements they've specifically asked for. This will help you to tailor your profile to meet what the employer is looking for.

A profile is a short, snappy paragraph about yourself. It's the first impression an employer will have of your CV, so your opening paragraph has to be as strong as possible. Ideally, your profile should be no more than five or six lines long or around 70 to 100 words.

It's important to create a positive first impression and the language you use plays a huge role in this. Add positive and upbeat words and phrases like: 'creative', 'flexible', 'reliable', 'team player', 'proactive', 'keen to take on challenges' and 'have excellent written and verbal communication skills'.



creative

flexible

reliable

team player

proactive

keen to take on challenges

Key achievements

This is another key part of any CV – a great opportunity for you to showcase your achievements.

Adding key achievements to your CV helps you stand out compared to everyone else's CV that a recruiter might be looking at.

You might worry that you don't have any achievements to speak of, especially if you are still at school or college. But when we dig a little deeper, we can always find examples of things we're particularly proud of.

Some key achievements that you can show on your CV include:

- ▶ Took part in an organised sports event to raise money for charity
- ▶ Sports team captain at school
- ▶ Took part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award
- ▶ Able to play the piano or another musical instrument
- ▶ Can speak a second (or third!) language.

All of the above demonstrate an achievement, a commitment and how structured and organised you can be. Which is exactly what employers are looking for!

For example – Whilst waiting on tables, I would always offer and explain the special dishes of the day to our customers. This increased the number of special dishes being served (ideally if you know how many this increased by, you'd state this as well).

If you already had a previous job role, think about what you achieved in this role. This section of your CV is where you can quote before and after figures of what you've achieved. Give an example of what things were like before you started the job and the results since you have been in your job. This can be demonstrated by showing any cost savings or any revenue, customer or business increases.

Remember

Key achievements can really show off your personality.

For example, if you have run a half marathon, this shows motivation; if you have been part of a sports team this shows teamwork and flexibility.

Education, qualifications and skills

When applying for your first job, it's unlikely that you'll have a lot of work experience to focus on. This is where your education, qualifications and skills will really shine!

To structure this, we'd recommend putting your most recent school, college or university first. And include the following information:

- ▶ Name of your school/college
- ▶ Location
- ▶ Start date and end date of study
- ▶ What qualifications and/or grades you achieved - if you don't have your results yet, feel free to use your predicted grades.

Don't just focus on your school or college results! Include any other courses that you've completed, such as any NVQ, BTEC or IT courses.

Some of you may not feel comfortable sharing your exam results, that is fine. If that's the case, simply put the subjects you took your exams in and leave off the results.

Once you've had one or two jobs, the education section will shift lower down on your CV as your work-based skills become much more important than your exam grades. Additionally, add any other certificates you may have received. This can include:

- ▶ Awards
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Gym
- ▶ Or any other activities.
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Dancing
- ▶ Culinary

This is also the best place to include any additional skills you have which could be useful to your potential new job. These can include experience of using social media, having strong computer skills or knowledge of key IT programmes like Photoshop, Excel or PowerPoint.



Work experience

Your work experience isn't just based on having a full-time job with an employer. You should also include any professional experience you've gained such as internships, summer/weekend jobs, childminding or work experience placements you completed at school.

The best way to show this on your CV is to start with the company name and the dates that you worked there. You should then include a description of your main roles and responsibilities. Make sure you highlight anything which you're proud of or have been told you were great at.

For example

Work experience:

The Old Mill Hotel – Trainee Chef

July 2019 to September 2019 (summer placement)

Helping with the daily preparation of food by weighing and preparing vegetables for lunch and dinner.

Helping the Sous Chef with chopping and assembling food, ensuring a neat presentation and food is ready to serve.

General cleaning and maintenance of work stations and equipment, ensuring Health & Safety regulations have been applied.

Don't worry if you don't have any work experience! You can always remove this section and focus your attention on highlighting the key employability and work-based skills in the previous section.

If the jobs you want to apply for require you to have work experience, you can always volunteer with a charity or ask an employer for an unpaid work experience placement. This will help you build up your work experience skills, and help you to start building a good relationship with potential employers for when you're ready to apply for jobs in future.

Hobbies and interests

This is where you include your interests, hobbies or clubs that you're interested in. This will show your potential employer a bit of your true personality - helping set you apart from other candidates. It also gives you something different to talk about during a job interview - especially if you have a hobby that is a little bit out of the ordinary.

When including your interests, think about the role you are applying for. If you're applying for a weekend job role, we wouldn't recommend writing 'every Saturday I do a sporting activity' or 'I attend rugby or football matches at the weekends'.

You don't want to give an employer any excuse not to interview you!



References

Your references are really important, especially if you don't have a lot of work experience. References allow your employer to check that you are who you say you are and have achieved what you say you've achieved.

It's best to include any previous employers here if you've had a job, internship or work experience placement in the past. However, if you don't have any work experience, you can include anyone of authority in your references. For example a school teacher, sports coach or a friend of the family who holds a senior role in a business.

You'll need to include their name, job title, the company they work for and a contact telephone number or email address.

Always double-check before you send!

Before you apply for a job, ask a friend or relative to read and review your CV. They'll be able to offer constructive advice, while also checking for any errors.

Remember a great well-presented CV can be the difference between getting an interview and being overlooked.

And finally – always remember to spell and grammar check!

CV top tips summary

- ✓ Do make sure your introductory profile is professional using creative and positive words, and relevant to the job you're applying for.
- ✓ Add your key achievements! They'll make you stand out from the other candidates who have applied for the job.
- ✓ Don't forget to include any skills or certificates under the 'education' section.
- ✓ If you've had more than one job, always list your most recent job first.
- ✓ Always include your hobbies and interests. But be careful, you'll need to think about how the employer will interpret these.
- ✓ Keep it tidy! Use a clear font, black text on white paper, and include bullet points to separate the text.
- ✓ Always review your CV before you apply for a job, checking for any errors, spelling or grammar mistakes.
- ✓ Make sure you review your social media accounts. Employers will often review your social media profiles to get an understanding of what you're like as a person. So always make sure they represent you as being positive and professional (or, make sure they're completely private!).



Should I write a covering letter?

Including a covering letter with your application will greatly increase your chances of getting an interview.

A covering letter is a personalised letter sent to an employer along with your CV, typically as the front cover of your application. Unlike your CV, which may be a little generic, your covering letter allows you to explain why your skills, experience and personality are right for the job you're applying for.

This is your chance to display your passion for the job and include the reasons why and how you're best suited for the role. Some candidates may not consider writing and attaching a covering letter, so you'll automatically stand out from other applicants if you include one.

Make sure to read the job description carefully and pick out the keywords and skills mentioned to use in your covering letter. This will show that you've taken note of what the employer is looking for and demonstrate that you're right for the job. It can be hard to know where to start when you're writing a covering letter for the first time. **To help you out, we've created a helpful guide to help you draft a covering letter.**

Where do you find your next job?

There are so many jobs out there in the world, it can be a little overwhelming when you're first searching for the right one. Here are the first places we'd recommend you look:

Your school or college

Some schools or colleges have a careers portal on their website where local business advertise job vacancies. Some may also have a careers tutor or support service which can guide you and help you find a suitable job.

Employers' websites

If you have an idea of where you might like to work, then the best place to look for job opportunities would be on the careers section of that company's website.

If they are not currently advertising for any suitable career opportunities, you can always send a speculative application. This will include sending over your CV with a covering letter detailing your skills and asking for them to get in touch if any jobs do come up.

Search engines

Through search engines like Google, you can look for a job by typing in the 'job title' and the 'area' you live. For example: 'waiter job in Plymouth' or 'bar job in London' or 'chef job in St Albans'. The search engine then lists relevant jobs currently advertised online for you to review and apply for.



Online job boards

Most industries will have their own specific online job boards. This will allow you to look through the most relevant jobs for the industry you want to work in, rather than trawling through lots of jobs that aren't related.

For example

If you wanted to work in the hospitality industry, you'll need to look for jobs on one of the hospitality-specific job boards, such as **Hospitalityjobsuk.com** or **Caterer.com**.

Another advantage is that you can set up job alerts so you'll be sent an email as soon as a vacancy is advertised. Basically letting the job board do all the hard work for you!

Apprenticeship training providers

Apprenticeships are a great way to kick-start your career! They allow you to learn, earn and gain valuable experience all at once.

A lot of apprenticeship training providers will advertise vacancies on behalf of the employers that they're working with. So it's important to check the vacancies listed here too.

If you're considering an apprenticeship within hospitality, then [HITtraining.co.uk](https://hittraining.co.uk) is the first place to look for jobs and support. Not only do they advertise apprenticeship vacancies, but they also provide a lot of advice on choosing the right apprenticeship, how apprenticeships work and what support you'll receive.



How do I prepare for a job interview?

Interviews can be daunting and it's natural to be nervous, especially if this is your first interview.

The best way to reduce your nervousness and make sure the interview goes well is to be extremely well prepared!

There are several steps to ensure you're fully prepared! We've included some useful information, advice and interview techniques to help you leave a lasting positive impression on your potential new employer.



Preparing for your interview questions

Many companies now interview in a more structured way. Not only will they be asking you about your CV, but they'll also likely ask you about your skills and experience. So be prepared to talk about yourself and try to give examples.

Some examples of questions you might be asked include:

- ▶ What motivates you?
- ▶ How would you best describe yourself?
- ▶ What do you like to do in your spare time?
- ▶ What work activities do you enjoy doing?
- ▶ What work activities do you not like doing?
- ▶ Describe a time when you've stayed calm under pressure.
- ▶ What are your strengths and weaknesses?

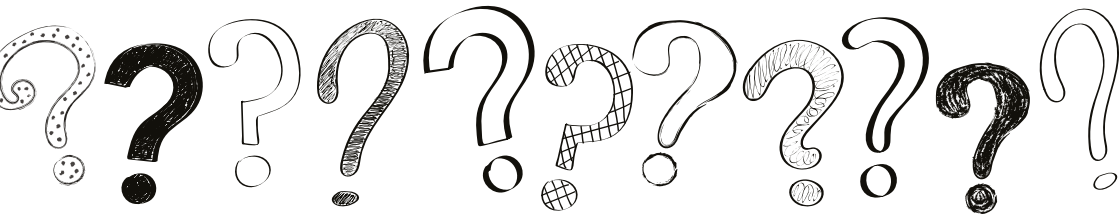
You'll need to take some time before the interview to think about your answers. And consider what kind of answer the employer would most like to hear you give.

And remember interviews are a two-way street! Use the interview to decide whether you would like to work for that company or not. You'll have the opportunity to ask questions in the interview, so have a think about what would you like to know and prepare some questions to ask them. Make sure that you have enough information to make up your mind whether you want the job.

Questions you could ask include:

- ▶ What will my responsibilities be on a daily basis?
- ▶ What training and development do you provide?
- ▶ Does this role offer career progression opportunities?
- ▶ What are the next steps in this process?

Write your questions down and take them with you into your interview. The interviewer won't have a problem if you say, 'I've written some questions down to ask you', this again will make you look organised.

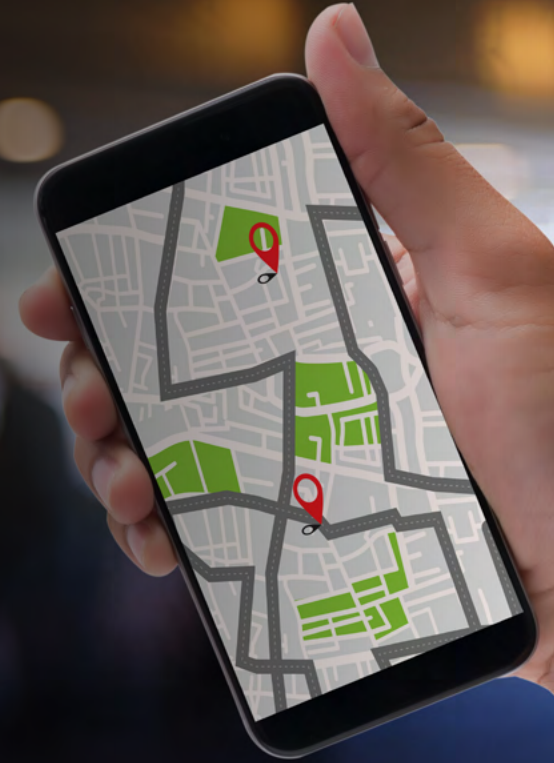


Getting to the interview

It's an obvious one, but make sure you know the best way to get to your interview ahead of time. You don't want to be late!

If you're travelling by car, plan your route in advance and find out where you can park.

Alternatively, if you're going by bus or train, make sure you plan your route, check travel times and allow plenty of time to get there just in case there is a cancellation. Make sure you check how far the train station or bus route is from your interview location.



Dress code

The traditional dress code for a job interview is to be both smart and presentable.

If you're unsure, you can always contact your prospective employer to understand what their company's dress code is when being interviewed. Some companies do enjoy a more relaxed dress code, but many don't. If in doubt, the best advice is to dress smartly.



Research the company

Ahead of the interview, find out as much as possible about the company.

The best way to do this is to visit their company website and social media profiles. It's likely that you'll be asked what you know about the company as part of your interview.

Try to memorise a handful of notes which might be relevant to the department you're hoping to work in, this will show you are keen and that you have done your research.

To do list

Checklist for the day of your interview

Make sure you're fully prepared and have the below information ready for the day of your interview:

- ✓ **A copy of your CV and covering letter.**
- ✓ **The letter or email inviting you to attend the interview.**
- ✓ **Any notes you may have made about the company or points you're keen to get across. It's better not to refer to these in the interview, but keep them handy just in case you need a refresher.**
- ✓ **Examples of your work, for example, a portfolio of work or project you completed.**
- ✓ **A list of questions you'd like to ask the interviewer.**

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new job





Contact Us

HIT Training Ltd
24a Cecil Pashley Way
Shoreham by Sea
West Sussex BN43 5FF

0800 093 5892
hittraining.co.uk

Registered company number: 05765857
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