



SHREWSBURY
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Unlocking potential...Shaping futures



Employment

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Choosing a Job/Career

Whether you know what job you would like to do or not, it is a good idea to do as much research as possible into what jobs are there to suit your interests and skills as well as what qualifications they require.

If you are unsure about which career to pursue, the following websites have a wealth of information on hundreds of careers:

- <http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/>
- <http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/jobprofiles/>
- <http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk/>

Both the Job File and Careers Guide 2010 in the Careers library provide general careers information or alternatively make an appointment with the Student Guidance and Progression Manager (Sarah Jarrett) or the Personal Adviser from Shropshire Youth (Peter Morgan) to discuss your options.

There are a number of issues you should consider before you get started:

- What are your key strengths? Work is much more interesting when you are doing something you are good at. Take time to think about key skills and attributes and how you could use them at work.
- Where do you want to work? Make sure you consider how you are going to get to work. Think about transport links and how long you are prepared to travel to get to work.
- What kind of organisation do you want to work for? Do you want to work for a small, local company or a multinational corporation?
- Does the employer offer training?
- What opportunities are there for progression within the company?
- What is the initial salary? Obviously, you may be attracted to jobs that initially offer a high salary, but how much will you be earning in five years' time? Sometimes jobs that have a lower starting salary may, through increments/pay rises, pay more after training and offer better prospects.
- If you want a job that guarantees training, plus the opportunity to gain a NVQ (National Vocational Qualification), you may need to consider an apprenticeship.

Looking for a Job

Recruitment websites, employment agencies and local papers are just a few of the place you can look for vacancies. Casting your net wide and using as many sources as possible usually delivers the best results.

When job hunting online, it is a good idea to start with the bigger and widely recognised recruitment sites. These sites will give you the widest choice and they are constantly kept up-to-date. Recommended sites are:

- www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
- www.monster.co.uk
- www.reed.co.uk
- www.fish4jobs.co.uk
- www.adeco.co.uk

If you have a clear idea of the type of job you are looking for, sites that focus on a specific job area (eg engineering or nursing) can save you a lot of time trawling through the general sites. They may also list vacancies you would not find elsewhere.

If you know which organisation you want to work for, check their recruitment pages regularly and sign up for any news alerts on offer. If you want to find out who is recruiting in your area, sites like Reed can be an invaluable resource. Even if the vacancies they are advertising are not right for you, they will give you an idea of which organisations are hiring. You can then look at the employer's website for further opportunities and even send a speculative application.

You can find job adverts in a wide range of publications from national daily papers to local and regional daily or weekly papers. The Shropshire Star contains vacancies throughout Shropshire. The main job section appears on a Thursday and can be accessed via their website at www.shropshirestar.com. This website is updated every Thursday at 5.30 pm. The Jobcentre also advertises lots of local vacancies.

Work Experience

Work experience can help you make more informed decisions about which career you want to pursue. There is nothing like first-hand experience of a job to find out what it is really like and the College can often help you to arrange it. A candidate without any work experience on his or her CV will certainly be at a disadvantage when it comes to getting hired.

Completing an Application Form

Many employers produce their own application forms which you will need to fill in when applying for a job. If the application form is online, draft your application offline first and save it to your computer. This way you will be able to run a spell check before you copy the information into the online system. It also means you have a back-up copy if there is a problem with the form.

More and more sites offer the option of storing your application online and coming back to it. Make sure you that you keep a record of any usernames and passwords so that you can get back in.

If you are filling in a paper application form, write as neatly as you can in black ink and use block capitals if the form asks you to. A good way to avoid mistakes and crossings-out on the final form is to photocopy the original and practise filling in this copy first.

Whether your form is online or on paper you should:

- Read it over a few times to check for spelling and grammatical errors – these are one of the most common reasons applications are rejected.
- Ask someone else to proofread it for you.
- Check you have filled in all of the boxes that are relevant to you. If you leave an empty box, the employer may think your form is incomplete. If a box is not relevant, put 'N/A' (not applicable).
- Answer the questions fully, using sentences where possible. Include all relevant information and make sure you tell them all your achievements and interests. Employers are very interested in you as an individual and will want to know what you do in your spare time.
- Make sure you list all courses and qualifications.
- Read through any background information you may have received from the company before completing the form. Look at their website and make sure you know what the company offers and why you want to join it.
- On many application forms you have to complete a section at the end called 'additional information' or 'personal statement'. The purpose of this section is for you to show you are motivated to do the job and that you have carefully considered why you feel you would be good at it.
- Remember to sign and date the form.
- Photocopy or print out the finished form, so you have a record of what you have put. You will need to be able to refer back to it at the interview stage.
- Taking note of the closing date and send your application form to arrive in good time.

Writing a Letter of Application

Letters of application ('covering letters') are an accepted part of the application process, with most employers relying on these to quickly sift out unsuitable applicants. Your covering letter is a great opportunity for you to highlight that you have the skills and experience for a role, whilst ensuring that your application form/CV receives a proper viewing and to help you get through to the interview stage.

A covering letter should:

- Demonstrate to the employer your interest and knowledge of the company.
- Highlight particular parts of your application form/CV that are your unique selling points.
- Give additional information that does not fit easily into the application form/CV.
- Explain any personal circumstances or anomalies in your application.

Style

- Address your letter to a named person, even if this means you have to phone the company to ask for the name of the person who deals with job applications. This will ensure that it reaches the right person and it also gives you a contact name for a follow-up call or email.
- Think from the employer's perspective rather than your own. Tell them what you can contribute to the organisation rather than how it can benefit you. Do not send them a standard letter with only the key details changed. Tailor the letter to each different job.

- Your covering letter should be no more than one page of A4 long and should be as short and concise as possible – aim for no more than four paragraphs as a rule.

Content

Use the following format as a guide for your covering letter:

- Briefly introduce yourself, state the post you are applying for and where you saw it advertised. For a speculative letter, specify the type of work you are looking for.
- Explain why you are interested in this type of work.
- Explain why you are interested in working for this particular employer. Demonstrate enthusiasm and evidence of research.
- Highlight what makes you suitable for this position. Provide evidence of your key strengths by referring to experiences listed on your application form/CV. Show that your key strengths reflect their requirements.
- Take the opportunity, if necessary, to explain any anomalies in your background, such as time gaps or ways in which you do not match the selection criteria. Perhaps explain how any hurdles you have encountered have helped you develop in a positive way.
- Ensure there are no errors and spelling mistakes and that you have written the addressee's name correctly.
- Respectfully request an interview or an opportunity for an informal discussion.
- The letter should be typed.

Writing a CV

Writing a CV for the first time can seem like an impossible task. You just do not know what to put in or what to leave out. Getting started is the hardest part. However, by talking it through with someone they might be able to help you identify your achievements and skills.

Your CV is the first information an employer will receive about you when you apply for a role, so is fundamental to improving your chances of securing the job. An employer will potentially be looking at many other CVs, so your CV needs to make you stand out from the crowd to ensure you make it to interview. Your CV needs to demonstrate that you are the right person for the job by highlighting:

- Specific skills you have to offer the employer.
- The experience you have in the specific field.
- The appropriate personal qualities for the role.
- An understanding of the job requirements.

Your CV should be:

- Short enough to read quickly and ideally no more than two sides of A4.
- Clearly laid out in a logical order, with sufficient spacing and clear section headings.
- Relevant for the role, demonstrating that you can fulfil the job role and are the right sort of person.

Structuring your CV

Personal Details

Don't be tempted to go into too much detail here. Simply put down your email, telephone, home address and date of birth. It is up to you whether you include your age, marital status and nationality.

Personal Profile

Your Personal Profile should summarise your skills and qualities, work background and achievements, and career aims. It should only be a few lines and must grab the reader's attention. Be brief, you can highlight examples of your skills in later sections.

Education

Start with your most recent qualifications and work back to the ones you got at school. Using bullet points or a table and include:

- The university, college or school you went to.
- The dates the qualifications were awarded and any grades attained.
- Any work-related courses, if they are relevant.

Employment History and Work Experience

In this section you should start with your present or most recent job and work backwards. You should include employer, the dates you worked for them, job title and relevant duties. If you have little paid work experience, emphasise any relevant skills you have developed in work experience placements, voluntary work or through your own interests. Avoid any unexplained gaps in your employment history, if you have had time out travelling, job seeking, volunteering or caring for a relative, include this along with details of what you have learned. Be succinct – bullet points and sub-headings are ideal.

Skills & Qualifications/Additional Information

You can include other relevant skills and qualifications such as if you have a driving licence or can speak any foreign languages. Do you hold any positions of responsibility? Have you ever won any prizes or talent-based competitions?

Interests

You can include hobbies and interests that are relevant to the job. For example, if you are involved in any club or societies, this can show that you enjoy meeting new people. Try to avoid putting activities like cooking or reading as these activities are too general and widespread to be of interest to an employer.

References

At least one referee should be work-related or, if you have not worked for a while, some other responsible person who has known you for quite a while. You can list the contact details of your referees on your CV or just put 'references available on request'. If you decide to include their details, you should also state the relationship of each referee to you – eg 'John Turner, Line Manager'.

Interviews

All your prospective employer knows about you is the information presented in your application form/CV. An interview is an opportunity for you to really sell yourself. You will be asked to back up your application form/CV with hard evidence such as certificates, letters and references etc, so be prepared. Preparation is the key to performing well in interviews. Research the role and organisation, and prepare evidence and examples of your skills and competencies.

- Dress smartly, look bright and attentive, and speak clearly and confidently. Don't forget that only 7% of the interviewer's opinion is formed by what you say – the rest is judged on how you look, act and sound.
- Find out where the venue is beforehand, how to get there and how long it takes.
- Make sure you are punctual – try to arrive at least 15 minutes beforehand.
- Find out what kind of interview it will be so you can prepare.
- Examine the person specification and your application form/CV – think about what type of questions they will ask you.
- Prepare answers for the main questions – eg why do you want the job, what are your strengths and weaknesses, what are the main tasks in this job?
- Take your time when answering the questions. Make sure you understand the question and take your time if you need to think.
- Prepare some questions to ask at the end – use it as an opportunity to find out more about the role and the company.

The most common interview questions are about:

Your skills

Know your strengths and mention ones that are relevant to the job you are being interviewed for. It is important to quote examples of when you used the skills; it is not enough to just say you have the skills. If you are asked about weaknesses, just mention one! Choose a minor flaw that is not essential to the job and turn it into a positive, such as how you have improved on the weakness.

The employer

The interviewer will want to know that you have done your homework and that you know about the organisation and its aims. When talking about why you want to work for the employer, focus on what you can do for them, not on what they can do for you.

About the job

The interviewer will want to know if you fully understand what the job will involve and why you think you would be good at it.

Your ambitions

This is your chance to show how enthusiastic you are to get on, but try to avoid sounding too aggressive and over-ambitious. Talk in terms of short-term and long-term goals.

Your work history

When talking about previous jobs, focus on the positives. Focus on the skills and experience that are relevant to the job you are being interviewed for. Don't criticise previous employers.

Team working

Employers value team working very highly. They want to know that you can work effectively in a team.

Your personality and interests

How self-aware are you? Can you look at yourself critically and know what you are good at and where you could improve? When it comes to your interests, the employer wants to know if you try to get the most out of life. If you are to be driven and enthusiastic in work, you will probably also be like this in your personal life.

If you click on the link below, it will take you to a 'random interview question generator' established by the recruitment website www.reed.co.uk. You can use this to try to think about how you might answer questions in an interview situation.

<http://www.questionpro.com/akira/TakeSurvey?id=519999>

The most important thing to remember is that the interview is a two-way process. This is your chance to find out information that isn't in the job description and this can help you make an informed decision about whether you definitely want the job.

Rather than asking a question for the sake of it, try to show your enthusiasm and interest. There may be aspects of the training programme that you would like to discuss, or you might want to ask a few general questions about the working culture or opportunities for gaining further qualifications.

Alternatively, if the interview does not give an opportunity to discuss an aspect of your course, work or extra-curricular activities that you feel strongly supports your application, this is an appropriate time to mention it (briefly!).

Recommended Websites

- www.prospects.ac.uk
- <http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk>
- www.connexions-direct.com
- www.shropshireyouth.com
- www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
- www.monster.co.uk
- www.reed.co.uk
- www.fish4jobs.co.uk
- www.adecco.co.uk
- www.totaljobs.com
- www.notgoingtouni.co.uk