

jobcentreplus

Department for  
Work and Pensions



# Get more from your job search



*How to stay positive  
and get results*

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**I'm just  
going around  
in circles**

*I feel like I'm  
getting stuck  
in a rut*

*I need some  
fresh ideas*

Should I have found a job by now?

*What can I do differently?*



# Improving your chances

Looking for a job can be hard work. However determined you are, it's easy to feel discouraged sometimes.

But there are small changes you can make to your approach to help you stay confident and continue to do well in your job search.

A positive attitude will keep you motivated, so you can find better opportunities and make a strong first impression with employers.

## This booklet will give you:

- ✓ tips to help you find jobs and improve applications
- ✓ ideas to increase your motivation
- ✓ places to go for more information and support.





## Ideas for job search goals:

- How much time will you spend doing job searches?
- How many jobs do you want to apply for each week?
- How many companies will you make contact with?
- What new things do you want to learn to help your job search?
- Do you want to get training or find a volunteer position?

Use the ideas in this booklet to think of specific tasks you want to achieve.

***“I feel better knowing what I’ve achieved at the end of each day”***

# Set yourself job search goals

If you have clear goals to work towards, it's easier to stay focused and recognise the progress you're making.

Having job search goals and a plan for achieving them improves your chances of finding work. Putting a routine in place helps with this and can keep you motivated.

A system for organising all your job leads, contacts and applications will help you track your progress. Some people have a notebook or a file on their PC, while others use website tools or a smartphone app.



## Free online tools:

Create an Action Plan on the National Careers Service website to help you choose and break down your goals. You can set one up in as little as 30 minutes. Visit: [bit.ly/jobgoals](https://bit.ly/jobgoals)

Print off templates from the Career Coach website for an instant way to plan your week, review your progress and keep track of applications. Visit: [bit.ly/searchplan](https://bit.ly/searchplan)

Websites like [jibberjobber.com](https://jibberjobber.com) offer a range of tools for organising your searches and a basic account is free.

## Top tips:

- Major goals can be overwhelming, so **break them down** into smaller ones that will gradually get you where you want to be.
- Set daily, weekly and monthly goals and **write them down** (this makes it more likely you'll achieve them).
- Choose goals that are **within your reach**, such as 'I will research ten target companies this week' – rather than things you can't completely control, like 'I will get a job'.
- Decide how long you'll spend on different things and **set aside time** to do them. Be realistic with your timetable. Good quality applications can take longer than you might think – at least two to three hours.
- **Reward yourself** when you achieve your goals. Small successes are worth celebrating because they contribute to your overall aim.




## Are you getting the most out of being online?

On the internet you can:

- find and apply for jobs
- research companies and your local job market
- assess your skills and match them to jobs
- learn about job search techniques
- get support from mentors and other jobseekers.

If you need help accessing or using the internet, ask your local library or jobcentre or try UK Online Centres – visit: [bit.ly/internethelp](https://bit.ly/internethelp)



*“You don’t realise at first that you have to learn how to get a job, you just want it to happen”*

# Set aside time to learn about job seeking

Finding a job requires strong job search skills as well as time and effort. There's an art to the way you manage the process and present yourself in CVs, applications and interviews.

The good news is that these are skills you can keep learning and developing as you go. Seeing your job search this way – as techniques that can be mastered with a bit of patience and practice – will help you stay confident and motivated.

Try setting yourself a goal of learning something new each week.



## Useful resources:


- ⬆ [careersavvy.co.uk](https://careersavvy.co.uk) includes a blog and free digital magazines for jobseekers.
- ⬆ [theworkbuzz.com](https://theworkbuzz.com) join a jobseeker community.
- ⬆ [learnist.org](https://learnist.org) fresh ideas and an easy-read style.
- ⬆ [howstuffworks.com](https://howstuffworks.com) lots of articles about job seeking.

For help practising interview techniques, visit

⬆ [myworldofwork.co.uk](https://myworldofwork.co.uk) or ⬆ [bemyinterviewer.com](https://bemyinterviewer.com)

## Top tips:

- Think of your job search tools as a **work in progress**. Your CV, LinkedIn profile (see page 11), cover letters and interview technique might take a few goes to get just right.
- Start a list of your favourite websites for jobseekers and **sign-up for e-newsletters, blog feeds and digital magazines** – anything that will regularly drop some new inspiration into your inbox.
- If there's something you want to learn, type the question or phrase into a **search engine**. You'll instantly come across new ideas. For example try searching 'Using keywords on your CV'.
- If you use social media, spend time sorting out your **profile and privacy settings**. Most employers will look you up and if you've posted anything unprofessional it could cost you an interview. Check for problem posts on your Facebook page using ⬆ [sociallyclean.com](https://sociallyclean.com)

A woman with brown hair, smiling, stands in a kitchen. She is wearing a blue short-sleeved uniform with white polka dots and a white name tag. She is holding a yellow plastic dish rack. The kitchen has light blue tiled walls, a microwave, and various kitchen items on shelves. A speech bubble with a teal border and arrows pointing to the woman and the kitchen items contains the text: "I didn't start out looking for a job in care, but I couldn't be happier now".

***"I didn't start out looking for a job in care, but I couldn't be happier now"***

# Widen your list of target jobs

A solid job search is based on knowing three things: what you want, what you're able to do and what there's demand for in your local area.

If opportunities aren't coming along often enough it might be time to review your target jobs and consider other types of work. Make sure you're not limiting yourself – spend time exploring what's possible and what you have to offer.

You could also think about seasonal work. It's a good way to try out a new location or type of job without too much commitment. It also means you can avoid long gaps in your work history while you look for something more permanent.

## Try it:


Explore potential job matches with Skills Health Check Tools from the National Careers Service. Visit: [bit.ly/skillscheck](https://bit.ly/skillscheck)

Use a skills-based format for your CV if you want to show you have skills and knowledge that can apply to different sectors or roles. Visit: [bit.ly/cvtypes](https://bit.ly/cvtypes)

To find seasonal work, look on websites like [seasonworkers.com](https://seasonworkers.com) and [leisurejobs.com](https://leisurejobs.com)

## Top tips:

- Look online to see how much competition there is for different jobs, what's in demand and how far you should be prepared to travel for the job you want. The National Careers Service lists job market information by region and sector.
- Look beyond job titles when looking at advertised jobs. Unless something is clearly not for you, read the job description and think about the skills you have that could be useful in the role.
- Think about a change of direction. Get help exploring your skills, learning about other jobs you could do and any training that might help you. Many skills can be used in a wider range of jobs than you might think.
- Remember a short-term compromise doesn't mean you have to give up your long-term aims. Even if something isn't exactly what you're looking for, it can give you valuable experience and skills.



***“Talking to the  
right person at  
the right time  
got me a job”***

# Look further than online job listings

Many people start their job search with the internet as it can make finding, sorting through and applying for jobs a lot easier.

But if you rely on job boards alone you're probably limiting your chances of finding work.

Not all jobs are posted on job boards and listings can be out of date. Because most people search for work this way, there can be more competition for jobs.

It's usually best to combine an internet job search with other ways of looking. In fact, many jobs are never advertised at all, so it helps to do other things too, like targeting companies you want to work for.



## Useful resources:

Get networking tips and job search advice from the National Careers Service website. Visit: [bit.ly/wheretolook](https://bit.ly/wheretolook)

The Job Fairs Network can tell you about job fairs coming up in your area. Visit: [bit.ly/findajobfair](https://bit.ly/findajobfair)

For advice on using LinkedIn to find jobs visit: [bit.ly/searchwithlinkedin](https://bit.ly/searchwithlinkedin)

## Top tips:

- Sign up for alerts from job sites so you have more time to concentrate on **searching in other places**. Look at trade magazines, local newspapers and company websites too.
- **Networking is the way most people find jobs** and it's not as scary as it sounds. It just means **building up contacts** who could help you find a job or work experience.
- Have a **list of companies** you want to work for and keep adding to it. Research them and send a targeted CV and cover letter (see page 13).
- Make **social media** part of your job search, especially LinkedIn. Many employers use LinkedIn to find people who can fill their vacancies without ever advertising them.
- **Build relationships** with recruitment agencies – don't just send a CV. They recommend people they trust to do a good job, so take the time to have a conversation and stay in regular contact.



## Making your CV digital

It's a good idea to have a special version of your CV for online applications. Electronic CVs are often scanned by information-seeking computer programmes (called Applicant Tracking Systems) and these decide whether you should be short-listed.

To help them pick out the right information, make sure you:

- use both nouns and verbs for keywords e.g. 'sales' and 'sell'
- use standard fonts like Arial or Times New Roman (no italics or bold print)
- avoid putting bullets, tables and borders in your CV
- submit your CV as a plain text document.

This advice is just for digital CVs. You can still use bullet points to improve the look of CVs you are printing out. For more guidelines visit: [bit.ly/getpastATS](https://bit.ly/getpastATS)

***“I already have a decent CV, why isn't it getting me noticed?”***

# Change your CV every time you apply for a job

Once you have a CV it's tempting to leave it alone and get on with finding a job.

But employers want to see how your skills and experience fit with their specific job. Showing why you want to work for them will also help you stand out from the crowd.

Always take the time to do your research, and tailor your CV for each job you apply for. This is one of the most important things jobseekers can do. It often makes the difference between a good application and one that gets lost among others.




## Free online tools:

For CV tips and examples visit: [bit.ly/cv-how-to](https://bit.ly/cv-how-to)

For a free recruitment company guide to help you perfect your CV visit: [bit.ly/freeadviceguides](https://bit.ly/freeadviceguides)

## Top tips:

- Employers don't want generic CVs or application forms. Focus on giving them information that's **relevant to the role** you're applying for, even if it means taking out other points.
- Include as many **keywords** from the job description in your CV as you can. But don't just list them – work them into details of your experience and achievements.
- If there's no job description **look at similar roles** and job profiles online to find keywords. Sources include the National Careers Service website and [prospects.ac.uk](https://prospects.ac.uk)
- If your CV was created by a third party or with an online tool then **make some changes**, so it doesn't look like everyone else's and your personality comes across.
- **Do your research** – look on the company website and in news stories before you apply. Use your cover letter and interview to show you understand the business and what you'll be expected to do.



***“It makes a difference to have someone telling you that you’re doing the right things”***

# Learn to turn setbacks into positives

One of the difficult things about job seeking is staying positive when you're not getting immediate results.

But if one job doesn't work out, don't see it as a reflection on you. Keep reminding yourself that each setback will help you be more prepared and confident next time.

Having people to support and encourage you will also help you stay motivated. This doesn't just mean friends and family; you could also try getting a mentor, using online job forums or joining a job club.



## Get support:

Use the Horseshmouth website to find a mentor, whether you want advice or just a friendly ear. Visit: [bit.ly/jobsearchmentor](https://bit.ly/jobsearchmentor)

Jobseeker forums like UK Job Forum cover topics such as CV advice, job seeking and finding local jobs.

Visit: [bit.ly/jobseekerforums](https://bit.ly/jobseekerforums)

For job clubs in your area ask your local jobcentre, library or college.

## Top tips:

- **Try not to take setbacks personally.** Employers have a picture in their head of who they're looking for, and sometimes small things can keep you from getting short-listed.
- Always **ask for feedback** after you apply for a job or go for an interview. Keep track of when you need to follow up with employers.
- If you can't get feedback from an employer, try asking your **friends or family** to look at your applications and practise interviews with you.
- **Don't avoid applying** for jobs you know you can do, just because you haven't been successful in the past. It's a natural reaction but could cause you to lose out in the long run.
- **Become a volunteer** to gain experience, build your confidence and feel valued. Volunteering can increase your chances of finding paid work too. Find opportunities with Do-it: Volunteering Made Easy. Visit: [bit.ly/volunteeringoptions](https://bit.ly/volunteeringoptions)

# A checklist for reviewing your job search

Plan your goals and routine	✓
Set daily, weekly and monthly goals and reward yourself for achieving them.	
Plan when and where you will carry out job search activities.	
Have a system for organising your job search.	

Improve your job search skills	✓
Set aside time to learn about different job search methods.	
Sign up for newsletters, digital magazines and blog alerts.	
Practise interview techniques regularly.	

Review your target jobs	✓
Check your target jobs are realistic.	
Consider a change of direction if your job search isn't working.	
Look for work experience and volunteering opportunities.	

Widen your search	✓
Don't limit yourself to job sites – try networking, job fairs, recruitment agencies etc.	
Use social media as part of your search, especially LinkedIn.	
Research and target companies you want to work for.	

Improve your tools	✓
Plan how you will tailor your CV to each job.	
Have a digital CV for online applications.	
Make sure your social media profiles are 'employer-friendly'.	
Ask employers and others for feedback.	

Get support	✓
Find a mentor who can encourage you and follow your progress.	
Join a job search club.	
Seek advice through online forums.	

Look inside  
for help  
putting these  
into practice

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