
Make the first move

1 Identify a new direction. "Create a list of career options you think you'd really enjoy, not just the ones you think you can do," says Catherine Roan, managing director of career change consultants careershifters.org. "Don't limit your thinking at this stage. If you really want to be a polar explorer, or start your own jewellery business, put them on the list. Then research how others changed into these careers."

2 Think about things you're good at. "Jobseekers who ask, 'What can I do with my degree/experience?' have it backwards," says Tanya de Grunwald, founder of GraduateFog.co.uk. "A good job search should start with you, not your CV. Are you an ideas person? Do you have the gift of the gab? Are you good at explaining things to others? Most of us don't think of ourselves as 'talented' – but look closer and you'll find something to guide you towards the sort of jobs you'll most enjoy."

3 ... then think about the skills you have picked up. Is there crossover between the two? If so, use these lists to help identify the types of jobs and industries you are most suited to. "Get to know yourself and focus on your strengths," says Roan. "What makes you come alive? Ask yourself what really motivates you? Understand your unique skills, abilities and interests."

4 Do your homework. "Many careers can sound exciting when you only know a little about them," says Dr Rob Yeung, executive coach at consultancy Talentspace. "Make sure you know what's boring and awful about a job, as well as what's great – only then can you decide if it's the right choice for you."

5 Dip your toe in before taking the plunge. "Research what it entails, what training you may need and talk to people doing that job," suggests Roan. "If it's possible, try it out part-time, or shadow someone in the role."

Tidy up your CV

6 Look around for inspiration. Talk to recruiters in your sector to establish what they consider to be an above-average CV. If you can afford it, consider asking a CV-writing agency to help you, "but only one that comes recommended by someone in your network," suggests Rowan Manahan, author of *Ultimate CV: Trade Secrets from a Recruitment Insider*. "As always, there's a bell curve of skill and you can spend a lot of money to very little effect if you hire the wrong wordsmith."

7 Create your own marketing pack. Spending a little extra on good quality materials can really make your application stand out. "Choose a high quality paper with matching envelopes," says James Innes, author of *The CV Book*, *The Interview Book* and *Brilliant Cover Letters*. "A co-ordinated image can really impress; it's a small investment which could pay dividends."

8 ... but don't go over the top. Applying too much bling, such as bright colours or whizzy picture effects, will just make employers fall over, as opposed to falling over themselves to hire you. "Glitz and razzamatazz won't help you be taken seriously," advises Rebecca Corfield, author of *Knockout Job Presentations*. "Be unforgettable for the right reasons. Impact comes from strong words, having a clear and logical layout, and detail about what makes you special."



Tidy your CV before you send it off. Photograph: Nils Jorgensen/Rex

Features

9 Have some trusted friends give you feedback. "When you've been tinkering with your CV for hours it's easy to miss glaring typos, so make sure someone else has seen it," says de Grunwald. "The best people to canvass are those already working in your chosen industry. Ask, 'If you were me, what would you change?' Be prepared for a variety of responses. It's a myth that there's a perfect CV – it's surprisingly subjective."

10 Include a cover letter. "According to a recent survey, cover letters are seen by almost 50% of recruiters as being equally as important as the CV itself," says Innes. "Many people lose out not because of their CV but because of their cover letter – or lack of one."

Create a template cover letter and modify it to suit your needs. Including one allows a little more of your personality to shine through, and an extra platform on which to sell your skills.

11 Consider a video CV if you are in a technical field, but be careful – it's easy to do this very badly. Manahan recommends putting one online, using professional makeup and lighting. "Produce a 30-second, a 90-second and a five-minute piece for your channel," he says. "Make sure that channel – on YouTube or Vimeo – reflects the professional image you are seeking to cast and track viewing stats very closely to assess if your approach is working."

12 Customise your CV. "Put yourself in the shoes of each recruiter and make sure you've emphasised the bits they'll be most interested in," says de Grunwald. "Don't use jargon they won't understand and if your former employers aren't well-known, explain briefly the nature of each, before detailing what you did there."

Where and how to look

13 Go online. Search by both area and job title, and repeat your search every day. "The methods that pay most dividend are [Google Alerts](#) for the wider market and manually tracking specific companies you'd like to work for," says Manahan. "Register judiciously with reputable job sites [see step 19]."

14 Target organisations you'd like to work for. Visit their websites and look for employment information – you may find jobs that don't appear elsewhere online. "Demonstrating that you have a genuine interest and real enthusiasm for an organisation can make you really stand out," says Yeung.

15 Look under your nose. While many large firms use the internet to find employees, most small businesses do not. A local paper can still be a useful place to find jobs in your town.

16 ... but also cast the net wide. If you currently work five minutes from home, try widening your search. "Difficult times require more creative solutions and you will find more options by casting your net more widely," says Corfield. "Don't be put off by commuting. It can provide time for reading, learning or just thinking."

17 Aim high and low. Apply for jobs above and below the level you are currently (or were formerly) working at. It's hard to generalise, but particularly if switching career, you need to be realistic about the level of opportunity that may be open to you.

18 Apply to unconventional places. You may assume your local hospital, for example, doesn't have any jobs you'd be suited to if you aren't a healthcare worker – but you might be wrong. "Most large organisations have admin, IT and HR staff," says Corfield. "Scan job vacancies widely and use your contacts when job-hunting wherever they work."

19 Look out for scams. There's no shortage of unscrupulous people out there [waiting to take advantage of the unwary](#). Scams can encompass everything from "work at home" to "pay for a list of available jobs".

"Also, some agencies trawl for good CVs, then approach companies with the claim that they have the cream of the market," says Manahan. "Employers hate being approached this way, so make sure that the ad you're responding to is a real job."

"Get some real detail on the position; if you have any doubt as to its veracity, then don't apply."

Build an online profile

20 Put your CV online. It creates a strong impression if your résumé is available to employers to download. Try it once yourself to see how it looks, and make sure it prints out the way you expect it to.

21 Use a universally accepted document format. "PDF or Word-compatible are the best," suggests Innes. "If your CV is in a different format, you're immediately reducing the chances of someone being able to access it – and thereby your chances of getting a job."

22 Use the right keywords. If you post your CV online, make sure that high up (and in the filename) it contains lots of keywords that are relevant to your ideal job. The goal is to have your CV pop up at the top of the list when a potential employer searches for those keywords. "Gather as many job description and person specification documents as possible as you proceed with your search," says Manahan. "Then start to seed your CV with the right language – and keep it honest [see step 40]."

23 Become an expert in your field. The more people who know you and your work, the more chances you have to make a new contact when you are seeking a job. "Think about articles you could write for trade journals, talks you could give, blogs and other opportunities to build credibility in your field," says Yeung.



It's hard to beat a good profile on LinkedIn

24 Build online profiles. "For findability, it's hard to beat a good profile on [LinkedIn](#)," advises Manahan. Start it privately, hone it and then go public to a wider audience."

25 Keep your profiles accurate and up to date. "It's vital that the details posted in your online profiles match the details contained within your CV and cover letters," says Innes. "Employers frequently use the internet as a quick and easy means of checking up on applicants. Don't get caught out."

26 Behave yourself online. If you use a more general social networking site, such as Facebook or MySpace, be careful to present yourself in the best light possible and make sure privacy settings prevent casual viewers from seeing your full profile.

"Would you mind if your boss, or the members of your next interview panel, read what you were saying online?" Corfield points out. "Save the risqué jokes for when you are actually with your friends."

27 Be old-fashioned. Many employers are geared up to receive applications online, but sometimes simply submitting your application and following up by phone is the best approach, particularly when applying speculatively. "Different methods work for different industries – so be scientific," suggests de Grunwald. "Try everything and see what response you get. If something works, do more of it. If something doesn't, stop doing it."

Marshal your resources

28 Put your friends and family to work. "In a healthy market, 55% of jobs beyond graduate/entry-level positions, will be filled through some level of personal contact and in an unhealthy market the figure is even higher," points out Manahan. "Let people know what you are looking for. This approach regularly pops up leads you might not have otherwise found."

29 Ask for a referral. If you know someone who is leaving a job you like the look of, and it feels appropriate, ask them to put in a good word on your behalf. You may be able to apply for the position before the company readvertises the opening.

30 Make use of any resources your former employer offers. If you have been laid off, consider accepting any assistance offered by your employer with CV help, retraining or career counselling. "It could really help you get started on the next phase of your career," suggests Corfield. "It can't hurt and could help kick-start your next career phase."

31 Apply for benefits. If you are eligible, apply for unemployment benefits right away, even if you think you will land a new job. Jobcentre Plus offers free training and advice to jobseekers as well as monetary benefits.

Be professional

32 Treat your job search like a job in itself. It may sound clichéd but if you're unemployed, sustaining momentum is important. Spend time perfecting your CV, finding new places to submit applications and researching potential employers.

"Do something every day," suggests Roan. "Finding a new job, especially if you are changing career is not easy, it can seem an overwhelming task at times. Keep busy, and step by step you'll get there."

33 Get a sensible email address. "Lovemachine69@emailaddress.net might have been hilarious when you were at college, but unless you are going for a job in the adult film industry, it's unlikely to do you any favours now," says Manahan. "Set up a separate address for career management and point all your social networks to that address. Set up a professional signature on your email account that shows your address, phone and key online sites (blog, LinkedIn, etc) on every sent email."

34 Be easily contactable. The phone number you put on your CV should be one you can either answer immediately, or one that has voicemail. A smartphone, such as a BlackBerry or iPhone, makes it easy for you to pick up email on the go.

At the interview

35 Be prepared for common questions. Interviewers often ask the same sort of questions, like "Where do you see yourself in five years?" or "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" Have the answers to queries like these up your sleeve.

36 Rehearse to a live audience. "Writing down what you want to get across in an interview is only part of the challenge," Yeung says. "Make sure you can express yourself in an articulate fashion by asking a friend to throw likely questions at you."

37 Create an "elevator speech" about yourself. In American parlance, this is a quick one- or two-sentence spiel about who you are and what you do. "Get ready to talk about your skills and experience," says Corfield. "How does your personality fit? What is your vision for the job? Why are you the best person to do it?"

38 Turn the tables on your interviewer. Prior to an interview, you should assume a potential employer will have searched for you online – so why not do the same to them? "Try to find out as much as you can about your interviewer," says Innes. "You will have a head start on other candidates – and you haven't even got anywhere near the interview room."

39 Free the skeletons in your closet. Be prepared to address the six-month gap in your employment history, or the reason why you suddenly had to leave your last position.

40 Be honest. Don't claim to have degrees or experience you don't. "Remember that many organisations check references," Yeung warns. "Any inconsistencies could lead to an employer rescinding a job offer."

A class apart

41 Look the business. Dress appropriately for the job you want. Presentation can make the difference in whether or not you are hired or even the salary you are offered. "Dress at least as well as you would when actually turning up to do the job – preferably better," advises Innes. "If you feel you look good, you will come across as confident and relaxed."

42 Be nice to everyone you talk to, especially when you aren't 100% certain who they are. "I once assumed the girl who greeted me and asked if I wanted a coffee was a secretary – but when she sat down and started the interview I realised she was the boss," says de Grunwald.



images.com/Alamy

Phone up to confirm the time if necessary. Photograph: artpartner-

43 Be on time. Phone in advance to confirm time, place and directions if needed. It's also worth scouting out the location in advance to check parking, public transport, cafes where you can loiter and so on.

"If an act of God makes you late, phone and offer to reschedule, but don't expect to be taken as seriously as the candidate who has the same experience as you who showed up on time," says Manahan.

44 Send a thank-you note. Follow up an interview with a brief courtesy message (an email will do) a few days later. Not many applicants bother with this, and it will keep you at the front of an interviewer's mind.

"It doesn't take more than 15 minutes to knock out a well-crafted thank-you letter," says Innes.

45 ... **but don't pester an interviewer.** Waiting to hear back after an interview can be stressful, but resist the temptation to bombard your potential employer with emails and phone calls – they'll just think you're a nuisance. Instead, find something to take your mind off things and let the process run its natural course.

Take the long view

46 **Get back in touch with your old college** to see if they have an alumni job placement scheme. "If you're serious about finding work you should leave no stone unturned," says de Grunwald.

47 **Take some classes.** "Today's emphasis on lifelong learning means you need to show you are someone who wants to learn new things," says Corfield. "Sport or exercise can get you fit; practical skills will gain you confidence, languages can widen your world and academic subjects will boost your CV. It can give you a whole new outlook."

48 **Think about the future.** "Some industries, like energy and healthcare, are likely to have huge demands for jobs in future," says Roan. "Do your research to find out where these gaps will be and if it is an industry that you would be interested in."

49 **Create your own job.** Consider starting your own business, either consulting for your current field, or doing something entirely new. This is almost a subject in itself, but [Businesslink.gov.uk](https://www.businesslink.gov.uk), the government's small business advice service, is a good place to start looking.

50 **Don't give up.** It may take a while, but the perfect job for you is out there. "Remember you are not alone," says Roan. "Many people have been where you are now, and, if you talked to them, they would urge to not to stop. Be clear on what you want, believe in yourself and keep