

# South Wilts Grammar School

## Sixth Form



## A Guide to Employment & Training Opportunities

### 2016– 2017

#### Contents

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. What employers want      | 6. Distance learning  |
| 2. Where to look            | 7. Employer funded study  |
| 3. Apprenticeships          | 8. Cadetships   |
| 4. School leaver programmes | 9. Gap years  |
| 5. Employment and training  | 10. The process – CVs, covering letters, application forms and interviews |

Name:

Tutor Group:

## Introduction

This booklet is a very brief introduction to alternatives to university as well as the process of applying for a job. You are likely to apply for a job over the next few years whether you are planning to move straight into employment, go to university or take a gap year. Find out more about where to look for jobs, CV writing, covering letters, application forms and interviews. There are many books that go into this in far more detail than we have room for here but this is a start for you.

## What employers want

Ultimately they want to know that you are employable – i.e. you are going to be effective in the workplace. You have to demonstrate this through an application form and or a CV and an interview. Apart from the skills specific to a particular role they are looking for:

- Required academic and or practical qualifications
- Problem solving skills
- Good oral and written communication skills
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively
- IT literacy and numeracy
- Commercial awareness
- A '**Can Do**' attitude

Below are some ideas for different types of employment and training opportunities before the booklet moves into the more detailed information about the process. There are many opportunities available and more and more come to light each day. Please see Mrs Mackay and visit the ResourceComp@nion via the VLE for more information about finding the right opportunity for you.

## Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a way of combining work with study and getting paid. In most cases an apprentice will work within a company at a specific job and also go to college to study that subject as well. They tend to last between 1 to 4 years. You can find apprenticeships in many different professions from building, engineering, hospitality, marketing, finance and many more.

Apprenticeships lead to different nationally recognised qualifications and have several different elements to them:

- **A competency qualification** showing you are competent to perform the skill, trade or occupation your Apprenticeship requires.
- **A technical knowledge qualification** showing you have the technical skills, knowledge and theoretical understanding for the relevant industry and market.
- **Key Skills** – team working, problem solving, communication and use of relevant technology.

There are three levels of Apprenticeships:

- **Intermediate Level** - NVQ level 2, or BTEC giving you a qualification equivalent to GCSEs
- **Advanced Level** – NVQ level 3. Usually working towards a learning-based qualification such as a BTEC. These are equivalent to A levels
- **Higher Apprenticeship** NVQ Level 4 working towards a learning-based qualification such as a Foundation Degree. These will have A levels as an entry requirement.

You may choose to consider an Advanced Level Apprenticeship even if you have completed your A Levels, in order to gain specific qualifications in a particular field.

The Apprenticeship Guide on line ([www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk](http://www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk)) and The National Apprenticeship Service ([www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)) both have lots of information regarding apprenticeships as does Not Going to Uni ([www.notgoingtouni.co.uk](http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk)). Both The National Apprenticeship Service and notgoingtouni allow you to register and look for apprenticeships in your area and chosen field.

## **School Leaver Programmes / Higher Apprenticeships**

Higher Apprenticeships are sometimes known as school leavers' programmes or considered the same. They are not as easy to find as they are not always registered on the National Apprenticeship Scheme. You may find details at the company's websites or the following websites:

[www.schoolleavers.milkround.com](http://www.schoolleavers.milkround.com)

<https://www.gov.uk/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

<http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>

These are often in the finance or retail sectors and advertised on the company's own website. These include (correct at time of going to press):

Tesco	Marks and Spencer	John Lewis
PwC	Ernst and Young	Deloitte
Goldman Sachs	KPMG	IBM
RBS	Barclays Bank	Santandar
Procter and Gamble	MOD	Civil Service
British Airways	Network Rail	Vodafone
Siemens	Unilever	National Space Centre
QinetiQ	Busby Bees Nursery	National Composite Centre

These programmes require you to obtain a certain number of tariff points and an interest in the profession and motivation to work hard and do well. Their application process is likely to include the following:

On line selection test  
Telephone interview  
Assessment Centre  
Interview

All of which we will help you prepare for. See individual company websites for more information. ResourcesComp@nion has a link to the sites as Mrs Mackay hears of the latest availability.

## **Employment and Training**

Some employers, particularly accountants offer a training contract whereby you will be based in the company learning 'on the job' and then have a day at college to learn the technical aspects of the role and gain a qualification. For accountancy you would be expected to take a training agreement for 3-5 years and over that time would take 15 modules covering related topics. You would then be a qualified accountant. Many accountancy companies offer this type of contract – speak to the firm direct.

## Employer Funded Study

More companies are looking at how they can work with universities to secure graduates from early stages. To do this they offer sponsored degrees (either fully funded or part funded) which mean that either you work with the company and go to university for a year of the degree (or maybe some modules) or you go to university and work for the company during holidays; you initially apply for these through UCAS. You will not only have your degree paid for but also receive a salary in the process. Examples of this degree are:

BA in Business Management at Nottingham Trent,  
BSc in Business Management at Bradford,  
BA in Accounting and Finance at Lancaster or Newcastle.

Companies that offer these include Ernst and Young, PwC, KPMG, Morrisons. You may be tied into working for these companies when you finish for a particular period of time.

You can also apply for an Army / RAF or Navy Officer Bursary which, if successful, will give you a bursary towards your living costs whilst at university and a place at Sandhurst (Army), Dartmouth (Navy) or Cranwell (RAF) for Officer Selection. If you pass that you will be required to serve for 3 years.

See specific universities or companies for further information.

## Cadetships

Throughout the armed forces there are cadetships available, for example nursing or engineering. In the Merchant Navy there are two types – Deck Officer and Engineering Officer where cadets take block leave to study at college or university and then return to sea for a period of time. See individual service websites for further information.

## Distance Learning

Distance Learning simply means studying for a qualification away from school, college or university. It usually means that you study at home and the course comes to you in the form of books, CDs, online learning and virtual communities. Some courses have local tutorials available and may require you to attend a residential course. Distance learning is often thought of as a path more suited to mature students but is becoming more of a recognised option for school leavers. In fact, 25% of Open University (the most well-known provider of distance learning courses) students are under 25. Many distance learning students work full time and study in their spare time. It takes organisation and self motivation to do this but can be a very worthwhile way of studying. See [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk) and [www.rdi.co.uk](http://www.rdi.co.uk) for further information as well as individual universities.

Fees are paid by module and you are able to take a break between modules if it suits you. It is possible to access Student Finance ([www.directgov.uk](http://www.directgov.uk)) to assist with the payment of the fees.

## Gap Years

Not just about travelling and sitting on a beach for a year! Also you are not likely to be travelling for a whole year! There are many different things to do on a gap year and for some it becomes a way of life and employment rather than a year before going to university. Please ensure that you check the validity of the Gap Year organisation. See [resourcecomp@anion](mailto:resourcecomp@anion) and [gapyear.com](http://gapyear.com) for ideas.

- Volunteering – you can travel and give something back to the community at the same time. Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Raleigh International, BSES are three of the larger companies but there are many more. Expect to have to pay some money towards your expedition but those that make the effort have nothing but good things to say about them and many go back time and time again.
- Summer Camps – holiday activity camps for children very popular in USA. You will get a small wage but have all your food, accommodation and flights paid for whilst acting as an activity leader and counsellor for the children attending the camps.
- Learning a new skill and working after it such as ski instructing, life guard
- TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language. You can take this qualification in England and then travel whilst teaching English.
- Travelling
- Volunteering in England – CSV is an excellent charity to work with.
- Year in Industry – placements for students interesting in engineering, science, IT, e-commerce, business, marketing, finance and logistics. Generally taken between A levels and starting university.  
[www.etrust.org.uk](http://www.etrust.org.uk)

## Where to look

Less than half the jobs available are actually advertised. You need to think beyond a local paper to find the job for you. You can try the JobCentre, employment agencies (on line and in towns), direct with the company and of course networking.

Many national companies, (including Waitrose, Marks and Spencer, The National Trust) have their application process centralised in their early stages so you need to visit the website and you will then be able to see if they have vacancies and where.

Networking is, in the nicest possible way ‘using the people you know’ and in turn the people they know, to discover what opportunities are available. Whenever you speak to people, think about who they might know and what they do and what opportunities they may know about. Even if they don’t know about a specific position, they may still know something useful about a company.

## THE PROCESS

Whether or not you want to start working straight away, it is a good idea to have a plan. List what it is you want, where you can go to find the information and who it would be useful talking to. Once you have done that it’s a good idea to start with your CV.

## CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

- CV stands for Curriculum Vitae which literally means ‘the course of one’s life’ or, in the thoughts of an applicant ‘Please don’t bin my application!’
- Your CV should be tailored to each specific job that you apply for but much of the information will stay the same, so it is good to have a standard CV that you can then adapt as necessary.
- Even if an application does not want a CV but wants you to complete an Application Form, your CV will have all the relevant information on it so that you can complete the form easily.
- Employers use it as a start point to choose who to select for an interview

- You need to make sure it makes you stand out from the crowd and makes the employer want to find out more by interviewing you because you have given them the impression you are right for the job.

## What an employer does with it

- **Stage 1**- Discards time wasters – grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, difficult to read, informal email
- **Stage 2** - Reads application properly for evidence that the applicant will be able to demonstrate the majority of the essential and desirable skills and throws out the generic CV that has nothing relevant to the position on it
- **Stage 3** - Reads each covering letter and re-reads CV to find best fit
- **Stage 4** – Invitation to interview

There are different styles of CV: the two main ones are a chronological CV (example 1) and a skills based CV (example 2). If you haven't had much work experience, then a skills based CV may be easier to demonstrate your abilities with.

## What to include - Chronological

**Personal Details** – name, address, telephone number and email address. Make sure it's a sensible email address and check that your answerphone message is sensible too.

**Personal Profile** – Sum yourself up in one or two sentences. It needs to be a brief statement about yourself that gives the reader a really powerful idea of who you are and makes them think they can't wait to see you. If you have some experience say it here '*Experienced waitress*', '*Efficient sales person*'. Then you write about your personal, profession and business traits that make up the most successful employee. These are sometimes called employee competencies and will make up part of the job description. These could include:

- Personal traits – drive, motivation, communication, energy, determination, confidence,
- Professional traits – reliability, integrity, dedication, pride, analytical skills, listening skills.
- Business traits – efficiency, economy, procedures

**Education and Qualifications** – name of school and town, dates attended, qualification levels, subjects and grades

**Employment & Work Experience** – your most recent position first – job title, who for, a general description of the position, dates and bullet points to explain what each job entailed.

**Achievements / Positions of Responsibility** – positions in and out of school. Make sure they are easy to understand, don't use 'school speak' so don't just say 'link prefect' explain what you did.

**Other Qualifications and Awards** – driving licence, CRB certificate, music / sports qualifications etc

**Hobbies and Interests** - make sure you can talk about them. If you only been sailing once, don't put it down; you might be opposite a keen sailor in an interview.

**References** – generally better to say 'Available on request'. Therefore you can let your referee know that they might be contacted and any details about the position you are going for.

## **What to include – skills based**

**Personal Profile** – Sum yourself up in one or two sentences. It needs to be a brief statement about yourself that gives the reader a really powerful idea of who you are and makes them think they can't wait to see you. If you have some experience say it here '*Experienced waitress*', '*Efficient sales person*'. Then you write about your personal, profession and business traits that make up the most successful employee. These are sometimes called employee competencies and will make up part of the job description. These could include:

- Personal traits – drive, motivation, communication, energy, determination, confidence,
- Professional traits – reliability, integrity, dedication, pride, analytical skills, listening skills.
- Business traits – efficiency, economy, procedures

**Personal Details** – name, address, telephone number and email address. Make sure it's a sensible email address and check that your answerphone message is sensible too.

**Education and Qualifications** – name of school and town, dates attended qualification levels, subjects and grades

### **Skills Profile**

With a skills profile you should determine the key characteristics/skills that the employer is looking for. These may be listed in the job description or you may be able to work them out. Here you can take examples for all your activities to demonstrate your skills. This can be very helpful to the interviewer as you have matched yourself to the job.

**Employment & Work Experience** – your most recent position first – job title, who for, a general description of the position, dates and bullet points to explain what each job entailed.

**Achievements / Positions of Responsibility** – positions in and out of school. Make sure they are easy to understand, don't use 'school speak' so don't just say 'link prefect' explain what you did.

**Other Qualifications and Awards** – driving license, crb check, music / sports qualifications etc

**Hobbies and Interests** - make sure you can talk about them. If you only been sailing once, don't put it down; you might be opposite a keen sailor in an interview.

**References** – generally better to say 'Available on request'. Therefore you can let your referee know that they might be contacted and any details about the position you are going for.

# EXAMPLE OF CHRONOLOGICAL CV

## Joe Bloggs

123 Any Street, Any Town, SP1 1AA Mobile 0123456789 Email: [joebloggs@internet.com](mailto:joebloggs@internet.com)

### Personal Profile

I bring determination and enthusiasm to all that I do as result of high levels of motivation and ability. I take a logical approach to problem solving and am capable and well organised whether working as a team or as an individual.

### Education and Qualifications

<b>2009 – current</b>	<b>South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, Salisbury</b>
2016 GCE A	Maths (A), History (A), Classical Civilisation (B) Predicted grades
2015 GCE AS	Economics (B), General Studies (A)
2014 GCSE	Maths (A*), Biology (A*), Chemistry (A*), Physics (A*), English Language (A), English Literature (B), Geography (A), Resistant Materials (B), French (A*), Art (A*), Religious Studies (A*)
2013 GCSE	Statistics (A*), ICT (A*)

### Employment & Work Experience

<b>Sep 2015 – current</b>	<b>Customer Service Assistant</b>	<b>John Lewis plc, Salisbury</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Answering customer queries and complaints</li><li>• Processing special orders</li><li>• High level customer service and checkout duties</li></ul>	

<b>Aug 2014</b>	<b>Work Experience</b>	<b>Foster Wheeler, Reading</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Editing piping and instrumentation diagrams and procurement lists, doing basic fluid flow calculations and report updates</li><li>• Researching feasibility of shale gas as a fuel</li><li>• Overview of company projects (refineries and LNG plants), graduate scheme, and upstream process</li></ul>	

<b>Jan 2012-current</b>	<b>Babysitter</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for 2 children aged 4 and 9 during evenings and day time in holiday</li></ul>	

### Achievements / Positions of Responsibility

<b>Sept 2015 – current</b>	<b>Senior Academic Mentor</b>	<b>South Wilts Grammar School</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• With 4 peers developed student led mentoring scheme</li><li>• Matching over 60 mentors with 150 mentees for all subjects</li><li>• Developed record keeping system using Excel</li></ul>	

### Other Qualifications

- Sports Leaders Award
- Full driving licence

### Hobbies and Interests

Playing the clarinet, singing, baking and cross country running

### References

On Request

# EXAMPLE OF SKILLS BASED CV

## Joe Bloggs

123 Any Street, Any Town, SP1 1AA Mobile 0123456789 Email: [joebloggs@internet.com](mailto:joebloggs@internet.com)

### Personal Profile

I bring determination and enthusiasm to all that I do as result of high levels of motivation and ability. I take a logical approach to problem solving and am well organised whether working as a team or as an individual.

### Education and Qualifications

<b>2009 – current</b>	<b>South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, Salisbury</b>
2016 GCE A	Maths (A), History (A), Classical Civilisation (B) Predicted grades
2015 GCE AS	Economics (B), General Studies (A)
2014 GCSE	Maths (A*), Biology (A*), Chemistry (A*), Physics (A*), English Language (A), English Literature (B), Geography (A), Resistant Materials (B), French (A*), Art (A*), Religious Studies (A*)
2013 GCSE	Statistics (A*), ICT (A*)

### Skills Profile

#### Teamwork

- Trusted member of regular staff team of all-age and experience as customer service assistant
- Part of cross country team representing school at national school competitions
- Full member of school choir and orchestra

#### Leadership

- Senior position of responsibility developing student led mentoring scheme
- Leading, training and co-ordinating over 60 mentors to work with over 150 students
- Organisation of house teams for sports activities motivating less able students to participate

#### Communication

- Excellent customer service delivery to diverse range of exacting customers
- Chosen to represent school at open days and parents evenings
- Clear written and spoken presentation style as demonstrated during work experience placement.

### Employment & Work Experience

<b>Sep 2015 – current</b>	<b>Customer Service Assistant</b>	<b>John Lewis plc, Salisbury</b>
	Delivering high level of customer service expected from John Lewis Partnership	
<b>Aug 2013</b>	<b>Work Experience</b>	<b>Foster Wheeler, Reading</b>
	Two months working in research and development department, culminating in presenting a report about shale gas to senior managers.	
<b>Jan 2012-current</b>	<b>Babysitter</b>	
	Responsible for 2 children aged 4 and 9 during evenings and day time in holiday	

### Positions of Responsibility

<b>Sept 2015 – current</b>	<b>Senior Academic Mentor</b>	<b>South Wilts Grammar School</b>
	Student led scheme, organising and developing peer-to peer mentoring for any subject and organisation skills. Tutoring yr 7-11 students in Maths and History	

### Other Qualifications

- Sports Leaders Award
- Full driving licence

### Hobbies and Interests

Playing the clarinet, singing, baking and cross country running

### References

On Request

## **Making your CV stand out**

- Match to the job advert; don't just tell, show them – give them examples
- **TAILOR IT TO EVERY JOB YOU APPLY FOR**

## **Essentials**

- Mirror phrases from the job description or advert
- Don't lie or exaggerate
- No more than 2 pages, 1 is fine at this stage
- Layout – consistent, use clear headings to separate out the section, a clear clean font, bullet points
- Sensible email address and you don't need to title it CV, head it with your name
- If you've done something amazing, include it
- Keep a copy of each one
- Check, check and double check and get someone else to read it and check it

## **COVERING LETTER**

This is as important as your CV or application form, don't overlook it. It's the first thing that the employer sees so you need to make a good impression. Even if you are emailing the CV or application form, you still need to be formal in your email and treat it as a covering letter. It gives you a chance to tell them some additional information and a quick introduction to you as a person.

## **Essentials**

- Good quality paper (same as your CV) on unlined paper
- Addressed to the right person using their correct title and full address (if you don't know, find out. All you have to do is ring the company and check with the switchboard.)
- Use a formal layout for a letter which means:
  - Your contact details and date on the right hand side; their name, title and address on the left. Date to be written in full.
  - Highlight the title in bold or underline
  - If you have written to the person by name, sign off 'Yours sincerely', if you really can't find out the name and have written 'Dear Sir' sign off 'Yours faithfully'
  - Write 'Enc' at the bottom to show that you have enclosed your CV or application form.
  - Type it unless asked to hand write it.
- If emailing:
  - Title of job and where advertised in subject line
  - Dear Mr / Mrs / Miss
  - Body of letter

- Yours sincerely / faithfully as above and your name & full contact details (name, address, telephone number, email address.)

## Content

This needs to be confident, lively and inspiring telling the reader in brief why you'd be good for the job. You don't want to come across as arrogant and pushy, you're just letting them know what you can do. You're summarising what you've said in your CV or application form and maybe adding some new information. It gives you a chance to tie up what you've done with what they want.

## General Format

- **Paragraph 1** – introduction to yourself, what job you are applying for, particular details of why you want the job. Be enthusiastic and show them that you have done your research.
- **Paragraph 2/3** a short description of highlights of your education, skills that particularly fit with the job you are applying for and how you think you can make a difference to the organisation.
- **Paragraph 4** positive final comments, telling them that you hope to hear from them soon.

**Remember – use key words from the job advert or description**

## Example

Mr John Evans  
Eagle Limited  
29 Wellow Road  
Salisbury  
SP1 111

33 Stratford Road  
Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP1 3RH  
01233 445566  
jennysmith@live.co.uk

2 May 2016

Dear Mr Evans

### VACANCY FOR DIRECT MARKETING ASSISTANT

I am very interested in the Direct Marketing Assistant position advertised in this week's Salisbury Journal.

I am currently finishing my A levels at South Wilts Grammar School where I have been studying Business Studies, Music and Communications and Culture. I am predicted ABB in these subjects. I particularly enjoyed the module on marketing and learning how communication differs from culture to culture. Last summer I spent 3 weeks work experience with Pepper Agency learning the different aspects of PR and Design for businesses. Whilst with them I learnt the importance of customer contact, knowing your target audience and addressing each audience in a specific way.

For the last two years I have been the editor of the school magazine, with a team of 4 students and am proficient at word processing and desktop packages including Microsoft Publisher.

I very much want to work in the field of marketing and feel that with the increased use of social networking sites for direct marketing it is an exciting and dynamic world to be part of.

Yours sincerely

*Jenny Smith*

J E Smith  
'Enc'

## APPLICATION FORMS

Applications forms may be long but they are easy. You are given the format, you simply have to fill in the spaces with the information they want and quite often the space suggests how much you have to write. You can often complete them electronically or at least fill them in by typing and then post them. Unless asked not to, always complete by type rather than handwrite.

### Essentials

- Read the instructions and follow them exactly. You will often be given guidelines telling you exactly what they want in each section and how they want the information structured. **FOLLOW THESE TO THE LETTER.**
- Practise on a spare copy and ask someone to check your answers before completing the real version.
- If you do need to write, write legibly, following instructions. (I have thrown applications out if the applicant used blue ink rather than black as they were instructed to do so).
- Be consistent with your presentation
- Take care with abbreviations and jargon, best not to use them
- Do not just enclose your CV and write see CV. That is lazy and guaranteed to get your application form put straight in the bin.
- Include a covering letter or email with the application form.

### Sections

- **Biographical** – name , address, career history, qualifications, etc
- **Equal Opportunities Form** – often a separate sheet torn off from main application for the organisation to check that they are not discriminating against any group. In many organisations, this information is often detached before the shortlister sees the rest of the form.
- **Give information in support of your application** – this is an employment version of a personal statement. Think about the position involved, what the skills and traits are and what you have to offer to match those, just like you did when you were thinking about your CV. Check the guidance notes or see if you can find the selection criteria (job description, person specification, competencies)
- **Why are you applying for this post?** Not because it's on your bus route or the pay is good! They want to know why you want to work for them and what you can offer them.
- **STAR** – when you are completing the supporting sections, think STAR – situation, task, action, result.

### **Example**

*During my final year at South Wilts Grammar School I led a team of students in the publication of a new school magazine. We decided to start the magazine, I called for volunteers and we met to plan the strategy for the development of the magazine. I was voted the Editor and delegated different roles to individuals giving them clear responsibilities, tasks and deadlines. As a result the school magazine was produced termly and the Headteacher is happy for me to assist with choosing the team that will continue the successful production over the coming years.*

# INTERVIEWS

Interviews come in all shapes and sizes. You may have an interview with just one person or a panel of people. You may be part of a group or the interview itself may be part of an assessment process that could take up to a day that will involve other activities such as exercises, discussions, group activities, presentations and tests.

Interviews are held to gather more information that can be found out from your CV or application form and to consider your character and fit for the company. If you are called for an interview, you will probably be one of a short list as a result of you having best fit for what they want in an employee. Expect to be in an interview for between 20 minutes and an hour.

Don't be surprised if you have an initial interview over the phone. If you do, make sure you book a time when you can be in a quiet, calm place, away from others. If you are at home, I suggest you put shoes on and sit at a desk to have the interview. This will ensure you are in a professional frame of mind. As with a face to face interview, follow the relevant essential instructions below.

The interview may also be part of an assessment centre process which could last one or two days. They often include

- **A social or informal event:** remember you are being assessed all the time, be friendly but not over familiar. If alcohol is available we suggest you avoid it!
- **Information session:** providing more information about the organisation. Listen carefully, you may need this information later
- **Tests and exercises:** designed to reveal your ability and potential.
- **Group discussion**
- **Interview**

More details on how assessments centres are run can be found on various websites including:

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/assessment\\_centres.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/assessment_centres.htm)

## Essentials

- Check the date and time of the interview and where you need to be. If you need to, find out how long it will take you to get there. Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- You will be asked questions and notes will probably be taken so that the interviewer can remember the main points of the interview and your answers.
- Prepare yourself. Re-read your CV or application form, the job advert and job description.
- Treat each interview positively – it's a chance for you to find out more, just as much as it for is them.
- Be yourself, and remember everyone has had to go through an interview to get a job, even the person interviewing you.
- **TURN OFF YOUR PHONE** (not even onto silent – **TURN IT OFF**)

## Creating the Best Impression

Research shows that

- 55% of a first impression is based on appearance and behaviour which includes body language, posture, clothing, facial expressions.
- 38% of a first impression is from the way we speak, including clarity of speech, accent and the way we use our voice.
- Leaving only 7% for the words we actually use.

- **REMEMBER** – your interview starts the minute you arrive in the building. The interviewer will ask the receptionist and anyone else what they thought. We do it in school when Head Girls show staff around the school
- **Appearance** – you will be in competition with others so make everything you do count. I am not talking about being part of a fashion show, I'm talking about realising that you need to come across to the interviewer as someone who has taken time with their appearance, relative to the position you are applying for and that you have a professional outlook. For example, if you were attending an interview in the more traditional sectors of employment such as banking you would be expected to wear a suit. In a more creative sector such as PR, a suit might be 'over the top' but you still need to be smart. Plain colours are the safest when you want to look smart. However, remember what I said earlier about being yourself, you need to feel comfortable in these clothes. If you do buy an interview outfit, make sure you wear it several times to get used to it.
- **Behaviour** – Smile, say hello to the interviewer(s) and shake hands. At the end of the interview, thank them for their time, smile and shake hands again.
  - **Make eye contact.** Don't hold a stare but do at least look at the interviewer when you are answering a question and make sure you include all the interviewers throughout the process. You are likely to be asked questions by different people, start to address your answer to that person and then give the others a quick glance.
  - **Posture** - walk tall and sit up. Do not lean on the desk particularly if that desk belongs to the interviewer. Don't slouch, it gives the impression that you aren't taking the interview seriously.
  - **Confidence** – Practice gives you confidence. Practise **POSTIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE** – why are you such a great person, what are you good at, what are you going to bring to the job, what have you achieved, why do they need you? Make sure you think all these things through and give yourself a really good bank of thoughts to dip into.
  - **Voice** practise speaking slowly – if you need to pause to collect your thoughts, that's fine. An interviewer will expect some early nerves but you need to get them under control quickly.
  - **Nerves** – everyone suffers from nerves but remember your nerves show less than you think. You may know your palms are sweaty or your stomach is churning, the interviewer doesn't. Again, it comes down to practice – talk yourself through the interview, think of the questions they may ask you how you will answer them.
  - **Go to the loo** - arrive in time to go to the loo and check your appearance. Unless you feel you will have a very dry mouth, I suggest you don't ask for a drink even if offered, it will distract you from the matter in hand.

## Answering Questions

This is generally the longest part of any job interview and often the most worrying. It doesn't need to be, if you do your homework and planning. You can't accurately predict every question but you can have a very good guess as to what might come up.

The employer only has a limited time to come to a decision about which is the best candidate for the job and has to ask the same questions of all candidates. Therefore they will have a list of questions that they have which will be based around the job description and personnel specification for the post. Always come up with examples so that you can paint a picture of what you mean. Be enthusiastic and try to make everything relevant to the role you are applying for. Some of the sorts of questions that might be asked are as follows with a couple of ideas of how to answer.

- ***Can you tell me about why you are doing your A levels / degree?***

Tell them why you are doing what you are doing and what your long term plans are.

- ***Which bits did you enjoy most?***

Be enthusiastic. Find an example that links with the job you are applying for. It might not be directly, but if the job requires team work – talk about something that you did that shows you like that.

- ***Tell me about a specific project that you worked on at school / university***

Many aspects of employment are about projects from very small ones, to much larger ones involving many people. Think in terms of STAR – situation, task, action result so that you explain everything to do with that project. Don't be afraid to tell them if something went wrong as long as you can explain what you did to put it right.

- ***Have you had any work experience?***

Think about something that you have done to show that you have done something outside of school – volunteering, babysitting, paper round.

- ***Can you tell me about your last job?***

Summarise the main features of the job – don't presume that they have read and remembered your CV or application form. Think about what particular aspects are relevant to the new job and highlight those. Say the reason that you are leaving your last job – always put a 'positive spin' on the reason. Even if you had a terrible time, say that you wanted more responsibility, greater challenge etc.

- ***What has been your greatest achievement?***

Again, if you can, use something that has some relevance to the job and the personal qualities and characteristics that they are looking for. Don't ramble – explain what it was, the background and why it's your greatest achievement.

- ***Can you tell me about a problem that you have had to deal with?***

They are looking to discover how you would tackle obstacles at work. Talk through a problem – again you can use the STAR approach. Choose something that shows you to be positive, practical and successful.

- ***What would you do if you had a problem that you couldn't deal with?***

You need to show that you wouldn't give up straight away but that you would be responsible and calm, find out what the problem is and calm the customer down. That you would apologise for the delay and would pass it on to your supervisor who you would then brief with all the relevant facts.

- ***What hobbies and interests do you have?***

They aren't being nosy, they are trying to get a feel for you as a person. Someone who enjoys knitting, cake decorating and bird watching comes across as very different person to someone who enjoys, kayaking, singing and swimmm

- ***What are your strengths?***

Now is your chance to shine. Come up with 10 strengths to have in your mind (if you can't think of them, think what a friend would tell me if I asked them). Pick a few to discuss in detail, showing them how you use them and how they will be useful in the job.

- ***What are your weaknesses?***

Don't give them a whole long list. Mention one that could be seen as a strength for example – 'I sometimes stay late until I get a job finished and am accused by friends of taking my work too seriously.'

- ***What do you see yourself doing in five years' time?***

They are looking to check you are not going to disappear in the next year and you are serious about the work. If it is a part time job whilst you study, say that you have several more years to finish your studies and do not intend to move before then. If it is a full time job, indicate that you hope to be with the company and maybe take on more responsibility or become more specialised.

- ***What do you know about the organisation?***

There are no excuses for not having an answer to this one. Do your homework. Look at the organisation when you arrive at the company, what does the reception tell you about it? Read the company report when you are waiting to be interviewed.

- ***Why do you want to work for this company?***

Answer this in relation to your own skills and strengths and what you would be contributing to the role. Match yourself with the company and demonstrate what they will get from you rather than all you can get from them.

- ***Why are you applying for this post?***

Another chance to shine. Bring out your experience and enthusiasm for the role. Don't be arrogant and don't criticise the company if you are asked how you could make things different. Build on what has been done. Structure your answer – skills and experience, character and personality, your vision for the particular post.

There are many other questions that might come up – think about the role and come up with some 'role specific' questions to prepare answers for.

## **CONCLUSION**

This booklet has been a very brief overview of the process of applying for a job. There are many books and much advice available in the LRC and on the internet, not to mention family and friends. Above all, take the process seriously, do your homework about yourself as well as the company and role and believe it or not, enjoy it. Please do contact Mrs Mackay for further information, help and practice.