

# 1 Your career

## TIPS

Australia's online  
career information  
service is myfuture at  
[www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au)

Your 'career' includes paid and unpaid work, learning and the life roles you are involved in throughout your life. This booklet will help you develop your career direction and, in particular, help you get a job.



## TIPS

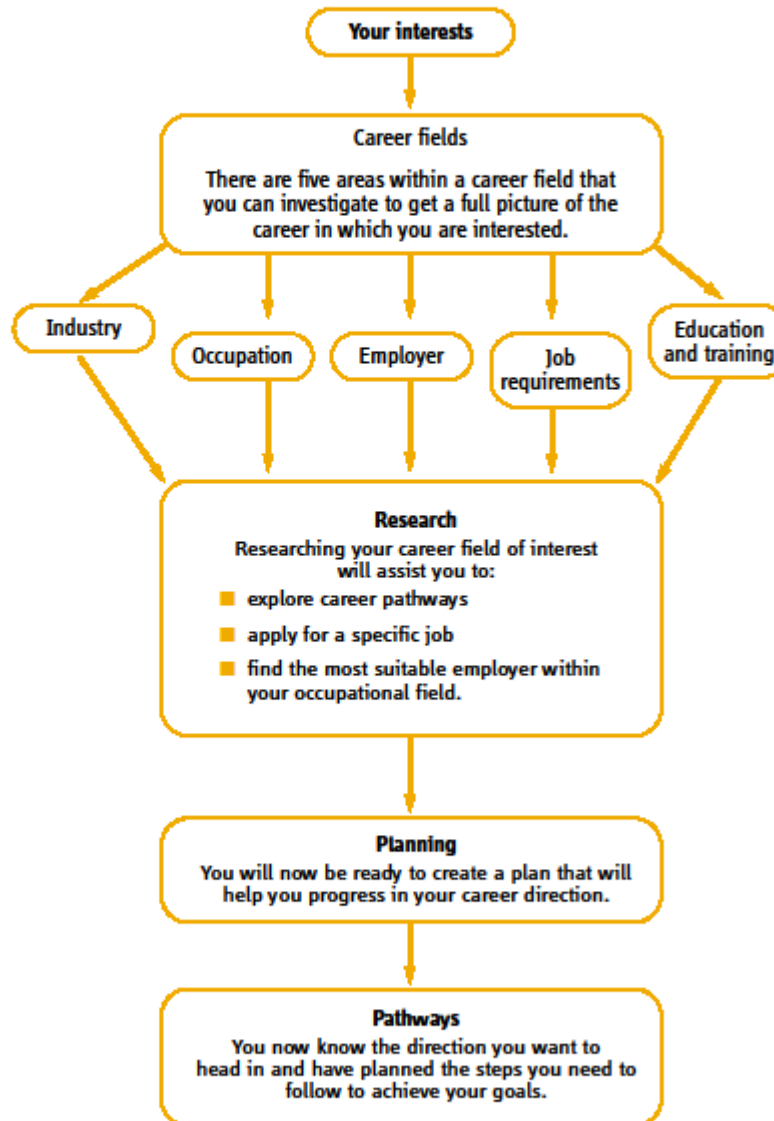
*Your understanding of yourself will continue to grow and change throughout your life as you learn more about your interests, interact with people and experience life events.*

*Talk to a career advisor to get help in matching your personal information to career fields.*

## Starting your research

The information you have gathered about yourself will point out the type of career fields or broad areas of work that might suit you. This information is important for writing your resume, application letter and talking to employers.

You now need to research the world of work. Planning your research and finding out about industries and occupations you are interested in will help you to see the many pathways towards your career destination.



## Questions to ask

Use the questions below to find out the kind of information that will help you with career planning and job searching.

### INDUSTRY

- How large is the industry in relation to other major industries, locally, nationally and internationally?
- Does the industry provide services or products in an area of growth?
- How many major functions does the industry have?
- What are the main pathways into and through the industry?
- What opportunities for development or progression exist in the industry?
- What industry or government bodies can you contact to find out more information about the industry?
- What industry reports, websites or other references provide information about the industry?
- What other fields of work are linked or interact with this industry?

### OCCUPATIONS

- What industry does this occupation belong to?
- What would a person in this occupation do?
- Are there specialist roles or new and evolving roles in this occupation?
- What are the major influences now and for the future?
- What training or education exists for this occupation?
- What key competencies are required or preferred for this occupation?
- Is there any research occurring in this occupation?
- Do you need to be registered with an authority to work in this occupation?
- Are there specific licences required to work in any area of this occupation?
- Are there any minimum age requirements?

### EMPLOYERS

- What services and/or products does the organisation offer?
- Where is the organisation located, does it have branches and how long has it been established?

- What type of organisation is it (eg company, incorporated body)?
- What reputation does the organisation have?
- Who are its competitors?
- What industry trends impact on the organisation?
- What is the organisation like regarding its management style, work culture and safety record?
- What education or training does the organisation recognise?
- Does it offer professional development?
- Is the organisation not for profit? If so, where does funding come from?

### JOB REQUIREMENTS

- What are the duties and responsibilities of the job?
- What qualifications are essential for this type of work?
- What qualifications are desirable for this type of work?
- What does a typical day's work involve in this job?
- Does this job require any prior experience?
- What are the hours of work?
- What is the salary range or award for this job?
- What personal characteristics are required for this job?
- What do people doing this job like about it?
- What do people doing this job not like about it?

### TRAINING/EDUCATION

- What courses are available in the career area of your interest?
- Which education/training providers offer these courses?
- How is the course delivered?
- How long does the course take to complete?
- What type of work can this learning pathway lead to?

## Setting goals

You will be ready to plan your career and job goals when you have:

- assessed your values, interests, strengths, skills and knowledge

- identified your career field of interest
- researched the current world of work.

When talking to employers it is important to be clear about your short-, medium- and long-term career goals and how the job you are applying for fits in with your plan.

Short-term goals are achieved approximately within one year, medium-term goals within three years and long-term goals within five years. Short-term goals consist of jobs that you can do now with your current level of skills.

When planning your job goals it is useful to think of the four categories of jobs:

- **Survival jobs**  
These are jobs not in a career field of your interest but useful for immediate short-term employment. They provide an income while you do further study or training or look for another job. However, having one survival job after another or for a long period is usually not advisable.
- **Entry-level jobs**  
These jobs allow you to begin a career path within your career field. The level at which you enter a job depends upon experience, education, what is available in the industry and the local job market. All industries offer entry-level jobs.
- **Transition jobs**  
These are jobs that move you from an entry-level job to your 'dream job'. They are jobs in the career field of your interest and take you a step ahead and/or teach you the skills you need for your dream job.
- **Dream jobs**  
These jobs give you a sense of fulfilment. They use your gifts and talents as well as your skills and match in with your passions and values. Your potential dream job will help you decide on entry-level career jobs and transition jobs.

Survival, entry-level, transition and dream jobs mean different things for different people; that is, a dream job for one person might be a survival job for someone else.

The assessment of skills that you have now will help you to decide whether the job you apply for is a survival, entry-level, transition or dream job.

## Develop an action plan

When you have chosen the job you would like to aim for you need to:

- compare what you have to offer with what the employer needs
- outline gaps in your skills, knowledge and experience that are a barrier
- decide how you will overcome any barriers that you find.

Your action plan includes listing:

- any jobs that you have had from most recent to least recent
- the schools and institutions you have attended including your academic achievement there
- any additional training or licences you hold (eg driving licence)
- volunteer or other unpaid work
- steps to overcome barriers (eg further study, obtaining a driving licence, work experience).

Action plans are a useful tool for making a list of tasks that will direct you toward your goal. Be sure to estimate the targeted date of accomplishment for each objective. An example is below.

## Barriers to achieving your goal

A barrier is anything that stops you from reaching your planned goal. Barriers to achieving your goals can also include reservations that employers might hold.

To identify such barriers you need to consider the following questions:

- Can I do the job?
- Am I motivated to do the job?
- Do I present myself as being dependable?
- Do I fit the image and attitude the company is looking for?
- Am I eager to learn and extend my skills?

Once you have identified your barriers think about the action you might need to take to address them.

## TIPS

*One way to find people you are going to contact is in directories available in employment centres and libraries. This includes:*

- Yellow Pages
- business directories.

*Asking for advice is a good way to build a link within the company. Most people like to help so be honest about why you are calling.*

*Don't forget it is important to be friendly and courteous to everyone you speak to at all times.*

*If the receptionist doesn't provide the information you could say that you have information you would like to submit and want to ensure that it gets to the right person.*

*Whatever response you receive, don't forget to thank the person for their time.*

NETWORK LIST		
People	Names	Contacts
Boyfriend/girlfriend		
Parents		
Brothers/sisters		
Uncles/aunts		
Grandparents		
Classmates		
Friends		
Teachers		
Work experience contacts		
Employers		
People I have worked with		
Sports teams		
Hobby clubs		
Church clubs		
Youth clubs		

### Cold calling

'Cold calling' is contacting people you have not met and is a way of finding jobs in the hidden job market. You can use cold calling to:

- gain an interview
- find out job related information
- get more networking contacts.

Because you will be speaking to someone that you don't know you need to sound confident by:

- knowing the name and title of the person you are speaking to
- knowing what you are going to say
- letting the person you are talking to know how you can benefit the company.

**GETTING PAST THE RECEPTIONIST/PERSONAL ASSISTANT**  
Receptionists/personal assistants are

often responsible for screening calls and the more important the person you're calling, the harder they will be to reach.

Ask the receptionist the name of the person who does the hiring.

'Hello, this is Kathy Porter. Can you please give me the name of the person who is responsible for staff selection? Thank you.'

OR

'Can you please tell me the name of the manager for the IT department?'

Ask for the person's full name and the correct spelling, and find out how to say their name correctly.

If you can't get past the assistant, sell them on your experience and skills. Ask about the company and for advice about the best way to follow up about a position.

# 3 Employer's perspective

## TIPS

*Don't say you have done something that you haven't.*

*Selling points that you highlight for one job might be very different for another job.*

*Summarise your skills, knowledge and experience to help you write letters, resumes, and answer questions at interviews or when you're on the phone. Your summary also highlights how much you have achieved when you are looking at job offers.*

Who to employ is a business decision that involves a big risk for the employer. Showing the employer that the risk is small means a better chance of a job offer.

You can help employers make informed business decisions by:

- looking at the job from the employer's point of view
- highlighting your selling points
- removing employer concerns.

Two main questions that are important to an employer are:

- How will they benefit from employing you?
- How soon can you become productive or useful to them?

### Check the following questions to look at a job from an employer's point of view

#### CAN YOU DO THE JOB?

- Do you have the abilities, skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications for the job?
- Could you start the job without too much extra training?

#### WILL YOU DO THE JOB WELL?

- Will the goals in your life benefit the company?
- Do you hold similar interests to those of the company?
- Are you someone they can depend on?
- Are you available to work for a period of time (ie will the company get value for money if it spends money on training you)?

#### WILL YOU FIT INTO THE ORGANISATION?

- Do you have a good attitude?
- Do you fit the company's image, values and goals?
- Do you dress and speak in a way that represents the company well?
- Are you able to communicate positively with clients and co-workers of the company?
- Will you attract valued clients to the business?

### Highlighting your selling points

A 'selling point' is something that you have to offer and includes:

- your successes
- past experience
- your knowledge, skills and training
- your personal strengths.

Your selling points will meet the needs of the employer and make you a suitable choice for the job, and will answer the question: How will the employer benefit from employing you?.

### Writing a selling point

To write about your selling points you will need to:

1. **Identify the job requirements**  
These are the tasks, skills, qualities, knowledge and experience the employer is looking for.
2. **Identify what you have done that proves you can meet the job requirements**  
The knowledge and skills you have to do the job include those gained

from part-time jobs, voluntary work, hobbies, subjects studied at school and life experiences.

**3. Provide proof of your skills and knowledge**

Provide a clear picture and proof of what you have achieved (eg positive outcomes, comments from teachers, education outcomes).

**4. Give a timeframe**

A timeframe of achievements helps to demonstrate your selling points.

## Removing employer concerns

During the screening process an employer may exclude you if they are concerned you can't do the job or won't get along with colleagues and clients. They might not tell you their concerns so you need to find out what doubts they might have and prepare an answer.

An employer may have doubts about your suitability because:

- you don't give enough information about how you meet the job requirements
- your application reveals a barrier of concern to them
- information you give leads to more questions in their mind
- they hold a belief or a stereotype that excludes you.

You can overcome concerns for yourself and the employer by being confident in your answers and assisting the person interviewing you to focus on:

- the skills and knowledge you have to offer
- how quickly you will be productive in the workplace
- identifying skills you enjoy using and your areas of interest (eg hobbies, education, work experience, volunteer experience, personal abilities).

## TIPS

*Talk to people who are prepared to help you, for example family and friends, and let them know how they can support you.*

### Example of how to summarise skills, knowledge and experience

Employer needs	Selling points
Patience	A report from my work experience at a childcare centre remarked on my ability to communicate in a calm manner with both the children and parents attending the centre.
Dependability	During the past three years at school I have had only three sick days.
Good with customers	Over the past two years at school I have undertaken canteen duties on a regular basis. Feedback from my supervisor and students using the canteen is that I always provide friendly and efficient service.
Computer skills	Over the past five years I have developed an interest in the use of computers. I am proficient in Office 2000, Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Photoshop, Explorer and Outlook. Over the last year I have been a peer support for other students in computing and have been employed by the school as a computer support person.

## Example layout

Kathy Porter  
1 Looking Street  
ADELAIDE SA 5000  
Phone: (08) 8123 4567  
Mobile: 0405 111 111  
E-mail: kporter@somewhere.com.au

### Name and address

- Person's full name
- Position title
- Company name
- Street number and name or PO Box
- Town or suburb, state, postcode

Date

Ms Sarah Job  
After School Care Coordinator  
The Hills After School Care Program  
24 Hills Road  
HILLTOWN SA 5000

Your contact details.

Salutation should use correct spelling of person's name.

Dear Ms Job

**Ref: After School Care Worker**

The opening paragraph explains the purpose of the letter and gives the reader a reason to read on.

The position of After School Care Worker, advertised in the local community paper, is a job that I would be well suited to, as I have enjoyed babysitting for families in my community over the last two years.

The second paragraph demonstrates that you can do the job, why you are the 'best fit' for the company and how your skills meet the company's needs.

As a babysitter I have been responsible for caring for children ranging from 3 to 10 years of age. This work has required that I provide supervised play, ensuring the safety of the children at all times, prepare light snacks and meals, perform simple first aid and maintain a safe and clean environment. The parents for whom I have provided this service have consistently given me good feedback and recommended my services to other parents/caregivers. My studies in Home Economics and Performing Arts at high school support me in being able to deliver a high level of service.

The third paragraph shows you are willing to do the job, motivated and enthusiastic and can fit into the organisation (eg communicate well with co-workers and clients).

Caring for the social, emotional and physical needs of young children is an area of work that I enjoy and would like to learn more about. Working at the Hills After School Care Program, which has such a high reputation in the community, would match the career path that I am pursuing. I would also look forward to working as part of a team with co-workers and parents.

The fourth and final paragraph refers to your enclosed resume, application form or other attachments. Thanks the reader for considering your application. States you would welcome an interview to discuss your suitability (include your phone number again).

Please see my resume that I have enclosed that refers to experience and courses that would support me in undertaking this position. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to meeting you and providing further information in an interview. I can be contacted at anytime on my mobile phone number which is 0405 111 111.

Yours sincerely

If you started with **Dear Ms Smith** you should end with **Yours sincerely** or **Yours truly**.

*Kathy Porter*

KATHY PORTER



## TIPS

*Make your name stand out.*

*If you are moving house, include your old and new address and the date that you are able to receive mail at the new address.*

*Most employers contact you by phone, so list a number where you are sure you will receive a message.*

*An objective should:*

- be worded carefully
- communicate useful information about you
- show you are focused.

*Don't include an objective if you want to be considered for a range of jobs.*

*A summary is easier to write when you have finished writing your resume.*

*Always remember the needs of the employer and the selling points you have to meet those needs.*

*Make sure the information in your resume supports what you have written in the summary.*

*To decide on education and training information, ask yourself:*

- What will the employer know about my study?
- What do I need to describe or give more information about?

## Sections of a resume

The section headings of a resume match the job advertisement. The most common headings are: contact details, objectives, summary of experience, competencies, education and training, work experience, activities and interests, and referees.

### Contact details

Your contact details say who you are and how you can be contacted. This includes:

- Your name  
First and last name.
- Address
- Telephone number.

Include home and mobile number if applicable. Include a work number if it is all right to be contacted at work.

- E-mail/fax

This is optional. Include an e-mail address or fax number only if you check it regularly.

### Objectives

An objective tells an employer what position you are seeking, the kind of work you are looking for and the next step of your career path. This section is optional.

**Alternative terms for 'Objective' are:**

- Professional objective
- Job objective
- Career goal
- Professional goal.

### Summary of experience

The summary is a 'big picture' statement about you which describes what you do, and the strengths and abilities that you offer an employer. It is a brief description written in one short paragraph or in bullet points.

**Alternative terms for 'Summary of experience' are:**

- Summary
- Career summary
- Profile.

### Competencies

Competencies are about your abilities and are targeted to the job. This section convinces the employer that you are capable of doing the job.

**Alternative terms for 'Competencies' are:**

- Key skills
- Capabilities
- Skills summary
- Work skills.

List skills and abilities gained from paid and unpaid work. Group skills under headings such as computer skills, programming skills and interpersonal skills. List accreditations and licences that you hold.

### Education and training

This section shows you have the educational requirements to do the job. Include your most recent educational qualification and subjects you have studied that are relevant to the position.

**Alternative terms for 'Education and training' are:**

- Education
- Training
- Educational achievements
- Educational and vocational skills
- Education and qualifications
- Licences/certificates.

**Education and training information includes:**

- university degrees
- certificates
- short training courses
- workshops, seminars, conferences

- other professional training
- licences
- accreditations.

#### How to include education information in your resume

- List the most recent information first.
- Include high school details if you have just recently left school.
- List the qualification, the school and date in that order.
- Include the name of the school/institution if it has a reputation of excellence in a particular field.
- Include grades or marks if it helps to sell you to an employer. If the grades or marks don't reflect how good you are then leave them out.
- If you are still completing a degree or training, write something like this:
  - Undertaking Certificate 2 Warehousing
 OR
  - Graduate studies in Human Movement, in progress.
- If you have skills in a particular area you can put this information in a sub-section or its own section. For example, training in relevant computer packages could be listed under 'Computer competencies' instead of under your education section.

#### Work experience

This section explains past and present work activities. It should include full-time, part-time, casual, contract and temporary jobs; self-employment; and positions you have held as a volunteer or student.

#### Alternative terms for 'Work experience' are:

- Work history
- Professional experience

- Employment history
- Experience
- Employment background
- Related experience
- Employment
- Volunteer work
- Work background

Work experience should highlight past work achievements.

- List the most recent experience first.
- Use the heading 'Work experience' if you are still at school or have just left school and haven't worked before.
- Use headings and sub-headings to organise information, for example:
  - Heading: Voluntary work
  - Sub-heading: Counselling experience
- Put the job title first unless the employer is well-known and their name helps sell you.
- You don't need to point out whether the work is paid or unpaid. Employers are more interested in what you did and how you did it.

Each job listing should include the following elements:

1. Job title
2. Company name and location
3. Dates of employment or involvement
4. Description of responsibilities and duties
5. Description of achievement for each job.

#### How to include work experience in different resumes

Chronological resume – Work experience comes after the contact details or objective.

## TIPS

*Avoid using jargon and abbreviations because the employer might not know what they mean.*

*Don't put paid and unpaid work experience together under the heading 'Employment' as this heading suggests paid work.*

*Use who, what, why, where, when and how questions to expand your descriptions in 'Work experience'.*

## TIPS

*Don't forget to edit and proof read for spelling, grammar and typing errors.*

*A disorganised, incomplete, or out-of-date resume can tell an employer you're not really interested in getting the job.*

*Visit [www.resume.monster.com.au](http://www.resume.monster.com.au) to see examples of a range of resumes.*

*Word searches in a database look for industry terms, hard skills and commonly used trade terms. Include words relevant to the target job like job titles, key functions, relevant personality traits, computer software, academic degrees, fields of study, and foreign languages spoken.*

Functional resume – Work experience comes after the skills section and is more like a list.

Combination resume – Work experience is listed after the skills section.

### Activities and interests

This section is optional but it helps an employer build a picture of you (eg playing sport suggests fitness). Activities and interests also highlight initiative, communication and organisational ability and skills you have gained which may be important if they are relevant to the job.

Activities are structured pursuits (eg clubs and voluntary organisations – Amnesty International member). List the organisation, your role and years of participation.

Interests are unstructured individual pursuits (eg sewing, reading, running, football). List the interest and your involvement (ie writing poetry is different from reading poetry).

If you include information in this section you need to ask yourself:

- What am I trying to tell the employer?
- What do my activities and interests say about my values and me?

### Referees

A referee provides details of your experience and can comment on your personal qualities. It is common to include three referees.

Referee information goes at the end of the resume and includes:

- referee's name
- referee's title
- their employer
- work phone number
- mobile number (if applicable)
- e-mail address
- brief statement explaining how the referee knows you.

## The final word on writing resumes

### Language

- Complete sentences are not necessary.
- You don't need to refer to yourself as 'I' throughout the resume.
- Use plain, simple language in a professional and business-like style.
- Use bullet points and key phrases, and avoid long descriptions.
- Avoid jargon and abbreviations.
- Two to three pages is a good length for a resume.
- Don't exaggerate or include things you haven't done.

### Layout and format

- Be consistent with format and style of writing throughout the resume.
- Use easy to read fonts such as Arial, Bookman Old Style or Garamond
- Font size should be no smaller than 10 and no bigger than 14.
- Print in black on white or off-white (not coloured), A4 sized paper.
- Use 2.5cm for left and right margins with a line space between paragraphs.
- Don't fold your resume too many times. If the resume doesn't fit in a DL size envelope (1/3 an A4 page) use an A4 envelope.
- Staple the resume neatly. Don't use binders.
- Don't include a title page or cover sheet.
- Don't send resumes that are photocopied.
- Don't make changes with pencil or pen and never use correction fluid.

#### Making your resume scanner friendly

- Don't use graphics, fancy borders, decorative lines or shading.
- Use plain text. Don't use italics, bolding or underlining.
- Choose a popular font such as Arial, Bookman Old Style or Garamond.
- Font size should be no smaller than 10 and no bigger than 14.
- Use job specific key words.
- Use a high-resolution laser printer to print your resume, and send an original, not a photocopy.

### Two examples

The following two examples of resumes show the main features that you could include. Both examples show a combination style resume.

Personal

## Natasha El Domino

38 Elegant Avenue  
TINDALE SA 5167  
Phone: (08) 8555 5555

Objective

### Career Objective

I am looking for employment in the clerical/administration field. I am computer literate, have typing skills and experience in filing and reception duties. I enjoy working with people and I am committed to the delivery of quality customer service. I believe my positive attitude and willingness to give 100 per cent will be an asset to your business.

Competencies

### Key Competencies

#### ADMINISTRATION/CLERICAL SKILLS

- Experienced in handling profit and loss reports
- Knowledge of manual payroll duties (taking out tax and doing pays for employees) as well as using MYOB
- Able to work under pressure and prioritise tasks
- Knowledge of computer packages, MS Windows, Word, Publisher, Internet and e-mail
- Sound typing and keyboarding skills
- Able to handle counter enquiries in an efficient and professional manner
- Experienced in writing letters and typing up invoices
- Highly developed organisational and time management skills
- Experienced in general bookkeeping and records keeping
- Able to carry out general office functions
- Knowledge of confidentiality practices
- Experience with the use of multi-line phone system
- Confident telephone voice and manner and experienced in taking accurate telephone messages
- Able to perform tasks in an efficient and accurate manner
- Neat and legible handwriting
- Able to fill orders and forms
- Able to use various office equipment including fax and photocopier

#### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Ability to communicate with a variety of people from all levels
- Ability to use commonsense and work through problems
- Experience in training new staff
- High standard of written and oral skills

Education and training

### Education

Currently in Year 12  
Tindale East High School

- Business maths
- Child studies
- Nutrition and lifestyle
- Dance

2002

Work experience

**Work History**

**REPLACEMENT RECEPTIONIST (CASUAL) 2000 – CURRENT**  
HOOVER HOME IMPROVEMENTS

- Typing letters and invoices
- Answering phones and taking messages
- Assisting in payroll–MYOB
- Filing, bookkeeping and banking

**KITCHENHAND 2000 – CURRENT**  
MAMA'S PIZZA HOUSE

- Customer service both face to face and over the phone
- Taking phone orders
- Making pizzas and pizza dough
- Money handling
- EFTPOS and credit card transactions
- General cleaning

**CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSISTANT (ON CALL) 1999 – 2001**  
JAY'S CATERING

- Taking orders
- Serving food and beverages
- Handling money
- Washing dishes
- Collecting glasses

**CLERICAL ASSISTANT JAN – SEPT 2000**  
PROTOCOL CRASH REPAIRS

- Filing, sorting, photocopying
- Reception duties
- Money handling
- Banking, accounts payments, writing cheques
- Office cleaning
- Doing the payroll–sorting out tax and pays for employees
- General bookkeeping

Activities and interests

**Interests**

- Going to the beach
- Reading
- Cooking
- Looking after young children
- Going out with friends
- Listening to music

Referees

**Referees**

Brian Dash  
Owner  
Protocol Crash Repairs  
Phone: 8922 2222

Josie Plack  
Manager  
Mama's Pizza House  
Phone: 8999 9999

Personal

## Brook Simmons

14 Intersection Road  
Mawson Park 5159  
Phone: (08) 8777 7777

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Competencies

### Key Work Skills

#### RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY

- Experienced in handling cash
- Excellent customer service skills, face to face and telephone
- Knowledge of issues related to food hygiene
- Experienced in table and beverage service
- Knowledge of food preparation skills including washing, chopping, slicing and dicing fruit and vegetables
- Able to prepare ingredients for all courses and follow menus
- Experienced in basic cooking skills—baking, pan work, frying and steaming
- Knowledge of safe handling of kitchen utensils
- Skilled in function preparation and service

Hard skills

#### OTHER SKILLS

- Communicate well with a variety of people from all levels
- Apply commonsense and work through problems
- Work unsupervised or as part of a team
- Effective team member

Soft skills

### Personal Qualities

- Courteous and friendly
- Hardworking and honest
- Punctual
- Willing to learn

Education and training

### Education Outline

2002

Currently Studying South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), Stage 2, Year 12 at Mawson Park High School

- Biology (PES)
- Food and Hospitality (PAS)
- Legal Studies (PES)
- Business Maths
- Classical Studies
- Modern European History

# 10 Interviews

## TIPS

*People you meet could be future employers so it is important to:*

- *develop your skills to promote yourself*
- *always be aware and positive.*

*Make sure you can explain everything on your resume.*

*Arrive 10 minutes early at the interview so that you can gather your thoughts and relax.*

*Get a good night's sleep before your interview so that you can think clearly.*

*The interview is not the time for:*

- *true confessions*
- *discussing politics, religion, race or marital status*
- *expressing anger over previous employment*
- *talking about family problems*
- *complaining about looking for work or the number of interviews that you have had.*

*If you're not sure about a question the interviewer is asking, ask them to explain or clarify that question.*

Reaching the interview stage in a selection process means the company or organisation is interested in you as a possible employee.

## Preparation

By being prepared, you will be able to:

- predict possible questions
- show you want the job
- show you are enthusiastic about what you have done and what you want to do
- communicate your skills and abilities clearly
- focus on the person interviewing you
- present yourself as being confident.

There are tasks you can do to be ready for an interview. These include:

- researching the structure, history, personnel and goals of the company
- preparing questions you want to ask the interviewer
- practising how you will answer possible questions
- knowing the time and place of the interview
- knowing the name of the person who will interview you (sometimes interviews are conducted by more than one person—find out who they are)
- preparing an interview portfolio.

First impressions count, so spend time on how you look and make sure that you are neat and well groomed. Imagine how the people who work there would dress if they were representing their company at a public function.

Unless you're applying for a job where you are expected to dress in the latest fashion, dress conservatively. There are employers who won't appreciate the latest trends. A more conservative look may be required because the organisation's customers expect it.

## The interview process

There are different types of interviews for different purposes or situations. However, most use the following stages:

- establishing rapport
- exchanging information
- closing the interview.

### Establishing rapport

The first five minutes of the interview is your opportunity to establish a link between yourself and the interviewer. You can do this by:

- smiling and shaking hands
- following their lead: if they start a casual conversation (about hobbies or the weather) join in, but keep your answers short and positive.

### Exchanging information

The exchange of information takes up most of the interview. During this time you need to let the interviewer know what you have to offer.

Be positive about your skills and abilities and show the interviewer that you:



- can do the job—describe your skills, abilities, knowledge, experience and qualifications
- will do the job well—show that you are motivated, dependable and enthusiastic
- will fit into the organisation—demonstrate that you match the company's image, values and goals and will get along well with clients and co-workers.

## Closing the interview

When the interviewer has finished collecting information they will ask you if you have anything to add or any questions.

If you have said everything and have no questions you should:

- thank the interviewer for their time and consideration
- ask when you can expect to hear from them.

## Questions to expect

Employers usually have issues they look at when selecting a person for the job. Not all issues will be covered in one interview but you need to be prepared. They can be divided into the following categories:

- job qualifications, job related interests and career goals (including previous experience)
- abilities, skills, talents and experience
- listening skills
- written and oral communication skills
- ability to work in teams or without supervision
- goal orientation and leadership potential
- ability to work and learn.

## TIPS

*If you do not get the job you have been interviewed for ask for feedback so that you can improve your interview performance. You could ask questions like:*

- *Do you have any suggestions or feedback regarding my approach or attitude?*
- *Do you have any hints on how I could improve my interview skills?*

*Searching for a job takes time and patience. Talk to friends who have found work and ask them what they did, or to people employed in industries that interest you about how they got their job.*

**Examples of questions.**  
The following examples of questions will give you some idea of what to expect.

Questions	Answer tips
Why do you think you are suitable for this position?	Keep your answer to one or two minutes. Use your resume summary as a base to start from.
Why would you like this job?	Don't talk about what you want; first, talk about their needs; for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ being part of a specific company project</li> <li>■ solving a company problem</li> <li>■ making a contribution to company goals.</li> </ul>
What qualifications do you have for this job?	Describe your education and skills. Use your resume and career portfolio as a base.
What are your strengths, weaknesses, or faults?	Emphasise your skills. Don't say you have no weak points. If you have a lack of skill in an area refer to it as 'an area for improvement'.  Turn a negative into a positive; for example, if you find it hard to say 'no' to people say that you 'tend to take on too much work'.
Do you work well with others, as part of a team?	Give examples of positive experiences of how you work well with a 'group' of people.

Questions	Answer tips
Does future study appeal to you?	Say how you would use your skills to perform in the job and if future study would help you then you would be interested in studying. If you have looked at courses of study that relate to the position, then mention your investigations.
Do you have any career plans?	Don't just answer yes or no. In your reply relate your career interests to the position and industry.
Why do you think we should employ you?	Relate your knowledge, experience, abilities and skills to the employer's needs. Be specific.
What have you got to offer us?	Present at least three points and relate them to the company and job you are being interviewed for.
What do you know about this organisation?	Spend time before the interview researching the company. Find out about its products, size, reputation, image, skills, history and philosophy. Also, show an informed interest and let the interviewer tell you about the company.
Are you a member of any clubs or organisations?	Again, don't stop at just yes or no. Mention your role in or association with any clubs or organisations. This could include associations you have researched with a view to joining.

There could also be hypothetical questions which ask you to imagine a situation and provide a solution. Answer as best you can and point out that the people involved and the place would affect the outcome in different situations. Take your time and ask for clarification if you need it. Your research into the company or organisation could help you with your answer.

Always answer the questions in a positive way that shows you are the best person for the job.

### Questions you might ask

Asking your own questions shows you are prepared and interested. Things you might want to know more about include:

- more details about what the job involves, including the hours of work
- prospects for advancement and training
- the pay, but don't overemphasise its importance.

### Dealing with barriers

Sometimes personal, work or education history can cause an employer concern and you will be

asked for more information. Decide if the employer needs to know. If they do need to know be honest and present the information as positively as possible.

### After the interview

If the interviewer says, 'we will ring you in two days', wait until the day and if you haven't had a call, phone them. This shows your keenness.

Reflect on your experience both by yourself and with a supportive person. Use this interview experience to prepare for the next one:

- List the skills the interviewer commented on or wanted to know about that you didn't describe in your application.
- Evaluate how you think the interviewer responded to your resume. Is there anything you think you should change?
- List questions that you think you could improve the answers to. What could you do next time to increase your chances?

# 11 Evaluating a job offer

At last, after all the research, sending out resumes, going to interviews, making phone calls and preparing for interviews, you've been offered a job. Before you accept, there are questions that you need answers to. Most importantly, you need to know that the working conditions are:

- safe
- fair
- reasonable.

## What to do when a job offer is made

Usually a job offer is made verbally. The employer may phone you days or even weeks after the interview, or an offer might be made at the end of your final interview. Whatever the case, you need to be enthusiastic and professional. Thank the employer, show your appreciation and express your interest. Be honest but don't talk about your reactions unless you are asked.

Don't make a quick decision even if you are sure you will accept the job. Ask for some time to think clearly about your decision. Find out:

- when a decision is required
- what the start date is and if it is negotiable.

There are no rules about whether a job offer is a good one or not. You are the only one who can decide.

There are questions you might like to ask yourself:

- Does the job match your interests and qualifications?
- Will the job satisfy your expectations and lifestyle?

- Does the job fit with your long-term goals?
- Are there opportunities in the company or organisation for your career development?

You may need further information from the employer about:

- main duties of the job (get a job description in writing)
- performance expectations
- days and hours of work
- starting date
- flexitime
- rate of pay/salary—make sure there is no misunderstanding
- overtime pay
- holiday and sick leave entitlements
- any conditional requirements (physical examination, drug testing, police check)
- superannuation choices
- relocation assistance if necessary.

## Accepting

Once you have decided that you are going to accept the offer you should express your appreciation and let them know you are looking forward to starting.

However, it is best not to accept a job offer until you have the offer in writing. Sometimes verbal offers don't happen or what is discussed changes.

A written letter of offer outlines the terms and conditions for the job. An authorised employee of the organisation should sign the letter. The letter should include:

- date of offer
- company

## TIPS

*To help you make a decision, list the pros and cons of the job offer.*

*Don't leave your decision too long as this will frustrate employers.*

*It is not a good idea to accept a job and then change your mind if you get a better offer. Employers will see this as unprofessional and inconvenient.*

*Accepting or declining an offer can be made verbally, but it is also a good idea to formalise it with a letter.*

*How you react to an offer will influence future discussions and negotiations.*

*Most employers will not expect you to accept or reject an offer straight away.*

*Always get a letter of offer, or sign a contract, before giving notice to a current employer. If something changes and your new employer withdraws the job offer, you could be left without a job.*

## TIPS

*It is important to remain on friendly terms with employers you decline as other jobs might come up in the future or you might be doing business with them in your new job.*

*Visit [www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au) and go to The Facts section of the site to find out about your work rights and responsibilities.*

- job title or position offered
- department or location
- starting date
- probationary period
- salary and method of payment
- hours of work
- holiday and sick leave entitlements.

The job offer can also contain other terms of employment such as:

- details of company rules
- details of future salary reviews
- superannuation information
- conditions of use of a company car or mobile phone if applicable.

Some organisations will ask you to sign a contract or an acceptance letter attached to a letter of employment offer. It is important to read this document including the fine print before you sign. The written confirmation can be legally binding so make sure:

- any questions you have are answered before you sign anything
- you have a copy for your files.

If you don't sign a contract or an acceptance letter, you can follow up your verbal acceptance with your own letter. The letter should state job title, salary, benefits, location, start date and other relevant information. For example:

*Dear (This would be to the person making the offer)*

*I am writing to confirm acceptance of (JOB TITLE) offered in your telephone call on (DATE). I accept the salary of (SALARY AMOUNT) for (HOURS/DAYS) at (LOCATION), and look forward to working with (COMPANY NAME), starting on (STARTING DATE).*

*Yours sincerely*

If you have more than one offer to choose from investigate each offer to make sure you will be happy with the

job that you finally accept. You can investigate the offer by:

- reviewing the information you have about each job
- talking to someone you trust (eg a career advisor or a parent)
- making sure you have a good understanding of what each job involves
- contacting the potential employers if you need additional information.

## Declining

When you decide not to take a job you should:

- thank the employer for the offer and for showing confidence in you
- say something positive about the company before declining the offer; for example:

*'Hello Ms Smith, this is Emily Jones. I'm phoning in regard to the office administration position. I really appreciate the offer of employment and the confidence you have in me to be successful in the role. I was really impressed with the communication strategy that the organisation uses to include everyone in the decision-making process. I have given the position a lot of thought and, unfortunately, I am declining the offer. I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to come and work with you.'*

## Your work rights and responsibilities

Over recent years there have been changes to the laws affecting the rights and responsibilities of Australian workers.

Whether you are new to the workforce or changing jobs it is important to learn about your rights and responsibilities.

Questions you may need help in finding the answers to include:

- How much will I be paid?
- What are my main working conditions?
- What is the legal basis of my entitlements?
- What do I need to know about equity and safety in the workplace?
- Do I have to join a union or not?
- Under what circumstances can my employment be lawfully terminated?

### **Employer expectations**

Don't forget your employer has given you the job because they expect you to:

- be qualified to do the job or be willing to be trained
- arrive on time and have a good attendance record
- think about the job and make suggestions
- be interested in the work and ask for help if you need it
- follow instructions and accept suggestions
- behave in a way that reflects well on the employer and your co-workers
- follow occupational health and safety rules
- dress suitably for the job
- do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay
- be responsible and take care with the job and the employer's property.

### **What you can expect from your employer**

Your employer also has responsibilities towards you and your co-workers. You can expect your employer to:

- show you what to do or provide you with training

- encourage you and help you get experience and confidence in your work
- only give you tasks that are legal and within your capability, accepting your genuine mistakes as part of learning
- let you develop and use your skills at work
- give you a fair go and not discriminate against you
- tell you about things that affect you
- not dismiss you unfairly
- provide a safe workplace.