



Looking for work

If you're a job-seeker, this handy material will help you with looking for work. Our Candidate Toolkit contains many other materials like this one, which have been prepared to help you with every step of the application process. For more information, visit our website.

Before you start

It might sound obvious, but before you start looking for a job it's a good idea to consider the kind of employment a) that you want and b) that you're suited for.

Think about doing a personal 'skills audit'. You will no doubt have qualifications and experience that will stand you in good stead for the future, but don't overlook things you have learned outside of work and in your spare time.

Everyone has more skills than they think they have, although sometimes we're happier to tell others what we can't do rather than what we can! It may help to make a list of the jobs you have done and the skills that you have developed as a result. Think also about your non-job experience and the things you are good at, including hobbies and interests.

Next, think about the kind of work you're interested in and how the skills and experience you've listed relate to those required, for example:

Jobs I have done:	Skills I have learned:
Production line in factory	Team working, health and safety, working under pressure , good with my hands, achieving quality standards, time management
Stay at home parent	Managing a budget, childcare, cooking, cleaning, DIY, time management
Volunteer on school PTA	Publicising events, arranging events, teamwork , fundraising, communication skills
Jobs I'm interested in:	Relevant experience/skills I have:
Shop work	Working under pressure, team work, time management, communication skills

Some skills can be transferred to virtually any work environment, and are much valued by employers. To help you focus on your core strengths, use the table on the next page to think about how you rate in terms of some of these. When you've finished, see how they can help your application for the jobs you're most interested in.

Skills	Very good	Good	Avg.	Poor
Adaptability How well do you adjust to new situations?				
Response to supervision How do you respond to being managed by someone else?				
Attention to detail Are you the sort of person who likes to dot the i's and cross the t's?				
Initiative Do you wait for someone to tell you what to do, or do you get on and do things without being told?				
Attendance and punctuality How good are you at timekeeping?				
Relationships with colleagues Do you get on well with others at work?				
Personal appearance Do you prefer to dress smartly or are you happier in jeans and trainers?				
Writing skills Can you write well, using correct spelling and grammar?				
Numerical skills How confident are you with using numbers and carrying out mathematical functions?				
Self-confidence Do you have an outgoing personality, happy to be the centre of attention, or do you stick to the sidelines?				
Self motivation Are you able to motivate yourself to do the work or do you need someone there to keep you on track?				
Working under pressure Are you happy to work under pressure, or do you tend to suffer when under a lot of strain?				

These are only a few suggestions of transferable skills—you can probably think of many others. The important thing is to spend time considering what you can offer an employer and focus on your strengths. These exercises will help to guide you towards the most suitable role for you and form the basis of a personal profile when you apply for jobs. You are now ready to start searching for a job!

Where to look

Employment agencies

Hoople has its own employment agency, Hoople Recruitment, which specialises primarily in office-based temporary and permanent employment as well as jobs in the local authority, health sector, schools and hospitals. You can register for work online, or pop in to our offices in Hereford for help and advice.

Herefordshire has a number of other employment agencies that may be able to help with your job search. If you're looking beyond Herefordshire, there are hundreds of agencies to choose from. You could start with one of the websites listed in the 'Internet' section.

Internet

The majority of vacancies are advertised on the internet, either by recruitment agencies or by employers. There are a number of national websites where you can register to receive alerts, for example indeed.com, reed.co.uk, monster.co.uk. These sites are 'fed' jobs by recruitment agencies and allow you to specify what geographical area, salary, type of work and level of seniority you're looking for.

It is more difficult to keep tabs on individual employers' vacancies, particularly if they choose not to register with an agency to fill their posts. The best tip is to think about the companies you'd like to work for and then regularly visit their websites to see if there are any vacancies. You could also think about making a speculative enquiry (see next page).

If you don't have your own computer, go to your local library—you can usually access computers and the internet free of charge.

Newspapers/magazines

Gone are the days when local newspapers, such as the Hereford Times or Ross Gazette, contained pages of jobs. These days, most employers cut their recruitment advertising costs by only advertising online. However, some do still use the local newspapers or specialist magazines to advertise their vacancies so it's worth keeping an eye on these.

Despite the fact that job vacancy advertising is largely a thing of the past for many employers, it's still worth reading newspapers or relevant trade journals as you may pick up information on businesses moving to the area or expanding and therefore worth contacting with a speculative enquiry.

Jobcentre Plus

There are Jobcentre Plus offices located in Hereford, Ross-on-Wye and Leominster. At each of these centres you will find latest jobs listed, and there will be specialist officers available to offer support and help with any enquiries you may have.

Speculative enquiries

Although this can be a very hit and miss way to find a job, you can try phoning a company you're interested in and ask if there are any vacancies coming up.

Make sure you speak to the appropriate person within the organisation. This will vary, depending on the type and size of the business. For example, larger organisations (those employing more than 50 people) will usually have a Human Resources (HR) or Personnel Officer or Manager, whereas for smaller businesses it may be best to ask to be put through to the manager or the person who is responsible for recruitment.

If and when you decide to phone, make sure you have to hand your CV, a pen and paper. Introduce yourself and give basic information about your qualifications and skills. If there are no suitable vacancies available, ask if the employer would like to meet you to find out more about your skills, qualifications and background. If not, ask for your details to be kept in mind for the future. You could also ask about where the organisation would usually advertise its vacancies and if any are likely to arise in the future. Whatever the outcome, end the phone call positively and politely.

Cold calling (as above) is very difficult and takes a lot of confidence. It will always be easier to call if you are responding to a news item that you have seen or have heard from other sources that a company is expanding. In this case, refer to this news when you speak to the HR manager and ask if there are any vacancies likely to arise and, if so, how you can go about getting your CV considered.

If you don't fancy phoning your favoured organisation, you could try writing to the business, enclosing a covering letter and your CV (please see our separate information leaflets on these topics). Don't be too disappointed if you don't hear anything back. Many employers don't respond to enquiries of this nature, which is regrettable but you should not take it too personally.

Notices in windows

Many companies, especially retailers, advertise vacancies in their shop window or elsewhere on their external premises. Keep an eye out and visit your local shopping area or industrial park regularly. Make sure you're appropriately dressed and have your CV with you before you go in to enquire about a vacancy.

The grapevine

We all have friends, relatives and acquaintances who work in businesses where we'd like to work, so let them know you're looking for a job and ask them to give you a 'heads up' if they hear of a vacancy.

Research has shown that one of the best ways of finding a job is through personal contacts, so be sure to make use of yours!

Keep a record

Whatever actions you take in your job search, it's important that you keep a record of what you've done. You could use a chart similar to the one below so you can see at a glance who you've approached, when and for what vacancy.

Employer name	Vacancy applied	Application date	Outcome

Feedback

Unfortunately, it's quite common for employers not to respond to letters or applications from people seeking employment. If you haven't been shortlisted, you can ask the employer for feedback on why and learn from this when making your next application, but note that some employers will only give feedback to shortlisted candidates.

If you're submitting lots of applications but haven't been invited to interview yet, ask a friend, relative, colleague or someone else you trust to see if they can offer any advice.

If you are offered an interview, but don't get the job, take the opportunity to find out why. Most employers expect candidates to ask for feedback and are happy to provide it. Once again, you should try and learn from this and bear it in mind at your next interview.

Good luck!

Found this guidance useful? Need more advice? Then stop by our website, www.hooplerecruitment.co.uk, and follow @hoopletd on Twitter for weekly #TuesdayTips!