



The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

**WORK
EXPERIENCE**



Every year 450,000 graduates emerge from university eager to join the working world. Just a fraction of that number will make a seamless step into their chosen profession. In the current jobs market, possession of a degree is often not enough to get the career that you've been searching for and that you deserve.

Work experience is a brilliant way to show employers that you have the initiative, ambition and determination that they are looking for. This guide will show you how and where to secure a work experience placement and how to make sure that you get the most from it.





The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to Work Experience

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ABOUT US

Graduate Coach has been set up to help students and recent graduates acquire the skills they need to get their dream job.

Having interviewed over 3,000 students and graduates over the last three years, we have a lot of very recent knowledge about how unprepared students are for the rigors of the job market.

There are only 35,000 'proper' graduate calibre jobs available in any given year. And so as every parent and student knows, competition for jobs is therefore ferocious with any advertised position receiving well over 100 applicants. We do not believe that any of this is going to change in the near future. Indeed, if anything it will get worse as student numbers increase further and the current recession causes companies to cut their recruiting.

Our unique approach will teach students and graduates how they can acquire skills such as interviewing, presentation abilities and CV construction. We will also be offering advice and help on a more fundamental level by getting a students to really think through what type of person they are and therefore what type of job they would be best suited for.



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Chapter One

INTRO

WHY IS WORK EXPERIENCE SO ESSENTIAL?

“ *Experience: that most brutal of teachers. But you learn – my God do you learn.*” (C.S Lewis)

Work experience placements and internships are the best way to give yourself an edge in the jobs market. Whatever industry your experience is in, you'll gain important skills that will help you in any career. At the very least, you'll have something to talk about in interviews.

One in five people that complete a work placement are offered a job in the same company. But if you are thinking that you just need to turn up and make the tea to get ahead, you might want to think again.

Every employer is looking for talented, enthusiastic people to take on. Work experience is one of the best ways of discovering whether, after a bit of scrubbing and polishing, you will slot nicely into one of their swivel chairs. It is easy to work this situation to your advantage if you know how. You can show any employer that you are the perfect person for the job if you secure the right work experience and complete it in the right way.

This guide will show you how to do that.

As well as tips and exercises to help you find work experience and make the most of it, this guide contains success stories from candidates who have landed jobs through work experience placements. You'll get inside knowledge on how and where to get a placement and how to ensure that you emerge with your prospects enhanced at the end of it.



DO WORK PLACEMENTS REALLY HELP YOUR CAREER?

If you are new to the working world, you'll soon realise that many industries are like a closed book. Some – in fact most – of the companies that operate within these industries are nearly impossible to get into – unless you are related to the CEO. The rest are only accessible if you work for them for little or no money. These are your windows of opportunity. It can be a disheartening position to start from, but it's important to persevere as you need to start somewhere, at some time. Given the current economic climate, it is best to start as soon as possible. It may not pay, but you'll gain enough experience and know-how to make up for what you lack in money.

A few weeks' free experience gives you an essential advantage when it comes to applying for jobs. Your skills and knowledge, not to mention your confidence, will immediately place you above many other candidates, so you'll have a much better chance of earning a larger salary in the long run.

Three weeks of work experience will prepare you for a job more effectively than three years of university.

There really isn't a downside to putting a work placement on your CV. If it is in the same industry as the job you are applying for, it will show initiative, commitment to the profession and passion. Even if the placement is undertaken in a completely different industry, it's a demonstration of how quickly you can learn and how proactive you've been in sorting out your future.

If your placement turns out to be the worst two weeks of your life, this is a small amount of time to spend discovering the path you shouldn't take – especially if you compare it to the long, miserable years you could have spent proceeding up a blind alley.

The trick is to make the absolute most of any placement and complete tasks that will look good on your CV. This is precisely what GraduateCoach can help you do. Some of it is about luck (where you get a placement, when and what you end up doing), but hard work and effort can get you a very long way, too. Rather than waiting for chances to fall into your lap, you can create opportunities for yourself with our guidance.

Sometimes you'll need to just knuckle down and get the job done and it might be tough. But if there's one thought to sustain you, it'll be that in completing a few days' worth of work experience, you'll be taking one huge step closer to your dream career.



SUMMARY

WHY WORK EXPERIENCE?

- Remember, everyone with a job needs to start somewhere ... and you do need to start as soon as possible.
- Getting work experience to put on your CV shows that you have initiative, commitment to the profession and passion.
- No matter how disheartening it may seem, work experience is worth it.
- Try to remember that you'll get enough experience and know-how to make up for what you lack in money.
- Two weeks could rule out a profession that you could have spent long, miserable years in.
- Don't be discouraged by a miserable outlook or lack of contacts: luck and timing is a part of it, but with hard work you can create opportunities for yourself.
- Always remember to make the absolute most of any experience you do get. Pour yourself into it – it's not forever.

Chapter Two

**BEFORE
YOU HAVE A
PLACEMENT**

HOW AND WHERE TO GET WORK EXPERIENCE

“ *The only source of knowledge is experience.*”
(Albert Einstein)

In order to give yourself the best chance of getting into the career you want, you need some experience in that field. You will see if it is right for you and you'll also learn skills that will give you a head start when you get a job. If you choose the right sector and company for your work experience, you are much more likely to get accepted on a placement and have more chance of getting the job you deserve further down the line.

Choosing the right sector for your experience is vitally important. But how do you find out which one is right? You need to do research. Look into all the jobs you find appealing and get the best idea of the landscape in each sector before you start applying.

Research might take a while, but it is worth every minute.

At the very least, research will widen your knowledge of the working world and the companies within each sector.

WHERE DO I APPLY?

You should choose to work in a role you'll be good at and that you will enjoy. The working life is way too long not to take this into consideration! You might know what you were good at during school and university, but how can this translate into the 'real world'? And how can you possibly decide what you'll enjoy without having done it first?

HOW TO START

You need to be aware of where your talents – but more importantly, your interests – lie. The best way of getting an objective view of this is by simply listing the things you have begun, enjoyed and continued with, before, during and after university.

Don't just write what sounds good or what you think you should have enjoyed. Be honest with yourself. The more truthful you are the more likely you are to end up in a placement and a job that you actually enjoy.

If you find it hard to think of what to write, discuss it with friends and family. They'll alert you to valuable strengths and qualities that you may never have thought of yourself.

HOW TO MATCH THIS UP TO A JOB?

Once you have worked out what you enjoy doing in life, it is time to start applying this knowledge to working out an appropriate job sector. For example, if you get a kick out of helping people, perhaps you would be suited to working in charity.

Remember, you are not committing yourself to anything. Chances are, this is not your job for life!



SUMMARY

HOW AND WHERE TO GET WORK EXPERIENCE

- Research might take a while, but it is worth every minute.
- Think of researching your work experience as a process of elimination. Don't just settle for anything you can get.
- You need to be aware of where your talents and interests lie.
- List the things you have enjoyed before, during and after university.
- Organise these into levels of preference.
- If you are finding it hard to think what to write, discuss the issue with friends and family.
- Now take the personality test to match them up to the job sectors provided.

HOW TO START SECURING WORK EXPERIENCE

“ *The golden opportunity you are seeking is in yourself. It is not in your environment, it is not in luck or chance, or the help of others; it is in yourself alone.*” (Orason Swett Marsden, Author)

Now you know what you are looking for and why you are looking for it. This knowledge will be of great advantage when you reach the interview stage of your application. Employers will invariably ask you why you have opted for them as a placement choice, but many people don't have a strong answer or even one at all.

But how do you turn this knowledge into a work placement?

Don't rush into anything.

If you have got a CV already, you'll need to adapt it to suit the area you're applying for, the company you are applying for and even the type of placement you're applying for. So, you'll need to decide on these things first.

If you don't have a CV already, you'll improve it immensely by just researching companies and positions before you write it.

DECIDING WHERE TO APPLY

The first step of deciding the company and type of placement you are going to apply for is by setting out exactly what job sector you aspire to join and noting down a few details about it.

Essentially, this is just a summary of what you've found out in the previous section.

DO IT NOW!

Industry

Preferred role (ultimately)

What strengths have you got that are applicable

What experience have you had that would be most useful in the role you are applying for?

What challenges might you face in applying?

How would you overcome these challenges?

What could you gain by obtaining experience in this exact role?

Is there any other experience you could get that would prepare you for this role?



DECIDING WHICH COMPANIES TO APPLY FOR

Now you need to narrow your search down to which companies you'll be applying for so that you can adapt your CV to each one you choose.

1. SELF-CONDUCTED RESEARCH

Grab a coffee, put some music on and sit yourself down for an afternoon in front of the computer.

Start by typing the name of the sector that interests you most into a search engine.

The results will show the names of the largest companies involved in the sector. Their websites are a great place to start your research and you can progress slowly on to the smaller companies.

What you learn at this stage really affects the rest of your search, so try to read everything on the sites from case studies to company histories. This way you'll build up your awareness of the general market and be able to judge each company against other organisations.

Find the 'Contact Us' page and note down all the contact details.

Don't be deterred if you can't find a mention of work experience on a company's site. Take down their details.

This search tactic may not show you all the companies you could apply to. You can take the process to the next level by searching for your sector name with the words 'work experience', or by using your knowledge of the different companies' websites to search for more accurate terms.

Also try varying your search terms to include verbal variations on your original words. What you might mean by 'creative advertising' might not be what everyone else does.

DO IT NOW!

Use the notes section on page 26 and 27 to write down the details of any company that appeals to you.

You will need the following details:

- Company name.
- Contact name.
- Phone number.
- Email Address.
- Website.
- Why you would like to work there.
- What they have got above other companies.
- Any other relevant information.

2. WORK EXPERIENCE SEARCH ENGINES AND LISTS

You can also use the vast wealth of internet tools available to carry out your search.

Set aside another afternoon and begin your search again. This time, search for websites that will give you lists of companies offering work experience placements.

Search Engines

You can use a search engine for this, with search terms like 'advertising companies work experience' or 'list advertising placements'. A search like this will also show official search engines, such as the IPA's placement search.

Blogs

You can also try using the online blogs or lists from other websites. These will show sector-specific lists that others have compiled previously. Search for these lists with terms like 'how do I get work experience in advertising'. There will be several articles on sites with this exact name.

Job sites

It's also a good idea to check for placements on job sites, through which large companies often advertise work experience. You can find a list of useful jobsites to check in the appendix of this guide.

Use the Notes section on pages 30 and 31 to write down the details of any company that appeals to you.

You will need the following details:

- Company name.
- Contact name.
- Phone number.
- Generic email address.
- Specific email address / phone numbers (if applicable).
- Website.
- Notes about character.
- Placement offered.
- Placement date.
- Why you would like to work there.
- What have they got that gives them the edge over other companies.
- Facts and figures.

3. UNIVERSITY PLACEMENT SCHEMES

Many universities have placement schemes set up with companies that are designed for students and graduates. This is a brilliant way to get work experience and you won't usually have to compete to get a place. The drawback is that placement schemes are usually run in conjunction with specific courses and only students enrolled on these can apply.

If you are on a course that has industry link-ups for work experience, you will already know about it through your lecturers. However, if you want a placement that is not associated with your own course, it is worth asking around at your university. If you speak to the right people, they might let you apply through a course even though you don't do it.

Alternatively, if you are really serious about your career, you can think about taking a module in this course. You'll then be able to apply in the same way as everyone else.

Use the Notes section on the following pages to write down the details of each placement scheme.

4. UNIVERSITY CAREERS SERVICE

Some universities have brilliant careers services, some don't. Either way, it never hurts to get yourself an appointment with a careers adviser to discuss your options. You can ask them about anything from your suitability for a certain industry to the best ways of getting experience.

Most careers services keep files on hand of graduates from your university that you can use as contacts or ways in to the industry. These can be a useful way of entering a profession.

At the very least, the university careers service should be able to give you information about your chosen sector and the best way to enter it.



RESEARCH CHECKLIST

HAVE YOU:

- written down your industry choice and details about it?
- done self-conducted research on the internet?
- carried out research through internet search engines?
- looked through websites with lists of relevant work experience?
- researched and read blogs about your industry?
- found out whether there are any placement schemes available through your university and whether you can get onto one?
- contacted the university careers service to arrange an appointment or go through their files to find contacts?

USING CONTACTS FOR NETWORKING

“ *Small opportunities are often the beginnings of great enterprises.*” (Demosthenes, Greek Orator)

Using contacts is a brilliant fast-track route into your chosen industry. Your contacts can help you get your ‘foot in the door’, which is a hard place to get to by yourself, especially when dealing with larger companies. If you have someone to vouch for your character and to fight your corner during the application process, you’ll stand a much better chance of securing a placement.

Contacts are brilliant – but what if you don’t have any? Well, it is pretty rare to find contacts without working hard at them. This guide will show you how to use the contacts you have (even though you may not know it yet) and how to make new ones.

Finding or creating contacts and using both to your advantage is referred to as networking.

Networking is crucial for all aspects of life and if you can do it well, it can take you places you would never have dreamed of going. Trying to compete with other young graduates for one placement might be hard, but networking is a tool that can give you the advantage.

FINDING CONTACTS

Ask friends and family members if they know of anyone that works, or used to work, in the industry you are hoping to enter. Increasingly, you will realise that it's not what you know, it's who you know that matters. It may be unfair, but it is a fact you will need to get used to.

The person that knows people in all the right places is often more likely to get ahead than the person who is more qualified but less adept at making contacts.

Take the details of anyone your friends and family suggest. Press them for their contact details and establish a connection. If you get a response from them, follow it up and build a rapport. You have now made a contact. Follow the guide below for examples of how to start networking effectively.

So much of what happens in your career is about luck and random occurrences. You must make the absolute most of them when they arise.

Example of finding and using contacts

You are at a party, chatting away. The conversation turns to a subject involving work or money. For example, your companion invites you to another party, next week. You state that you can't possibly go out next Friday as you are low on cash and are trying to focus your attentions on getting a job within a certain industry.

If the person you're speaking to knows anything about the industry, or knows anyone in it, they will respond with this information immediately. After all, what party would be complete without your sparkling wit and conversation?!!

Example of finding and using contacts

You want to work as a fashion journalist. You ask your parents if they know anyone at all who is in the industry. It turns out you have a distant cousin, that you've never met, working as the Business Editor for a tiny magazine that has a small fashion section.

Drop your cousin an email, asking if she can give you the email address of the person that runs the fashion desk. Contact this person and ask about the possibility of doing a work experience placement in that department.

Your cousin may even go up and have a chat with the fashion desk about the possibility of you working there. This is a brilliant position to be in, as your name is being circulated. You also have an ally within the workplace in your cousin which will help you feel more comfortable as you enter an unfamiliar and possibly intimidating environment. You've got a foot in the door.

Everyone will have some connection like this – it's just a case of being committed to using these to your best advantage. Don't be shy about using tenuous-seeming connections to get ahead. That is what you will have to do throughout your career.

HOW TO GET CONTACT DETAILS BY NETWORKING

Asking for an email address or phone number that you can use yourself is a much better way of getting a contact's details than relying on someone else doing the legwork for you. It is your responsibility to get the ball rolling.

Asking for these details might seem awkward. So might the whole conversation, but it will become easier the more you do it. Remember, everyone has to partake in conversations like these so the person you are speaking to will be used to these kind of encounters. It's just a case of overcoming the normal social habits of being overly-polite or reluctant to ask the questions you want. Remember that in this case, being direct and asking for details isn't rude and nobody will be offended.

- Make it clear that you are interested. Make a point of finding out a bit about the contact's circumstances. Their position at the company, for example.
- When you've started talking, you'll find the other person can be quite forthcoming with information. Keep up this dynamic.
- The person will most likely offer to get in touch with the contact. Let them do this, but if you don't hear anything, insist upon asking for a contact email address or phone number.
- If you are emailing the contact, ask whether you can call him/her to discuss your options.
- When you get round to calling, enquire into how the person got into that line of work.
- If you are feeling confident, you could always ask whether they have any room for you to work with them for a week.

RING AROUND

Another tactic of creating contacts is to try ringing people up to inquire about work experience placements that you want to do. You don't have to send over your CV or even give them your name.

The idea is that you are practising and gaining confidence at talking to people that you don't know. The advantage is that it is all done without the pressure of making yourself sound as good as possible.

While you are on the phone, you can ask for tips on the application process and on what the company looks for in a candidate.

Most will be happy to go over their process of application with you. A surprising amount of people don't actually have the common sense or the courage to just ring companies and have a chat, so they don't get an opportunity to do this every day.

TAKE 'EM DOWN FROM THE INSIDE

If you couldn't get the placement you really wanted, a clever tactic is to apply for a different one within the same company. Once there you can do some serious networking.

- Introduce yourself to the people working in the area that you're most interested in.
- Mention that you're working downstairs and enjoying it, but that you'd really like to give this a go. So could you have the email address of the right person to send your CV to ...?
- Ask if you could possibly meet that person. Chances are, someone will be able to introduce you.
- When introduced: smile, shake hands, make eye contact and ask some brief questions about the job. Mention that you have applied for the position previously and are still interested in it.
- Get moving and send your CV across quickly while your face is still fresh in the mind. You are much more likely to hear back from them if you are quick off the mark.

Case study: How to network for your placement *Amanda Young – Umi Hotel, Brighton*

We all had to do work experience placements in the third year of university and so I decided I'd like to try working in hotel management. I contacted various members of my family and friends and found that my cousin's husband worked as the chef of a hotel in Brighton. I got in contact with my cousin and asked for a favour. Simple as that.

My cousin's husband was happy to put me in touch with the Manager of his hotel, so I emailed her to explain the situation. I had no previous experience in the field, so I asked if I could

shadow her for a few days and see if I got the hang of the job. If not, I said I'd be out of her hair.

She emailed me back after about a week, stating that the hotel did not offer work experience and that I should look elsewhere. I thought that she might have got the wrong end of the stick, so I decided I had nothing to lose by calling her and asking if she was sure that she didn't want a bit of help for a couple of days.

I had already been given her number by my cousin's husband, so I rang her the same day. When I explained who I was and what I really wanted to do, she seemed far more lenient than the tone of her email suggested. I assured her that I was a very diligent person and would get in the way as little as possible. She was impressed by my initiative in calling and by how polite I had been over the phone and was finally persuaded to let me shadow her for three days, starting the next week.

On the day before I arrived in Brighton, I called the hotel Manager again to ask what I should wear to work and to go over what hours I'd be spending with her. I could therefore turn up confident and prepared the following day, which I did. The Manager was very impressed with my discretion and professionalism over the next days and started to give me minor tasks around the hotel that she was too busy to do. I did these as best as I could.

On the final day, the Manager invited me to come back the following week for a month's placement. That month turned into two. When I finish the placement, I am due to attend lectures again, but at the end of the year I'll be getting in touch with the hotel to see if they can offer me more experience, or even a job.

I would never have got into that situation if I hadn't asked around for contacts and been willing to use even the most tenuous of them. It's not what you know, it's who you know.



NETWORKING CHECKLIST

HAVE YOU:

- asked all of your friends and family if they know anyone in your chosen industry?
- asked all of your friends and family if they have any tips on getting into your chosen industry?
- brought it up in conversation at social occasions?
- thought about ‘taking them down from the inside’?
- called around to build up your confidence and get more information about the industry?



SUMMARY

HOW AND WHERE TO START SECURING WORK EXPERIENCE

- Don't rush into anything.
- You'll need to decide on the area you're applying for, the company you're applying for and even the type of placement you're applying for, before you even start adapting your CV.
- Write down exactly what industry you're applying for, along with details about it, in the following template.
- Do some self-conducted research. List every company that appeals to you, as well as their details, in the Contact Details Form (on page 48).
- Trawl through work experience search engines and lists. Document every company you find appealing and their details, in the search engines and lists chart.

- Utilise your university's links to industry in your search for a placement.
- Contact your university careers service.
- Network.

Find contacts: ask friends, family and strangers if they know of anyone that works within the industry that you're interested in. Use parties and social occasions to find contacts. Asking for these details might seem awkward, but it will become easy when you are used to it.

Create your own contacts: if you couldn't get a placement doing the job you wanted to try out most, a clever tactic is to apply for a different position within the same company. Once there, you can do some serious networking. A good way of practising to make contacts is by ringing people up to inquire about work experience placements.

CONTACT DETAILS FORM

COMPANY	NAME	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	DETAILS	GET BACK TO YOU?	NOTES



PLANNING FOR YOUR PLACEMENT

Some final things to ask yourself before you start applying and using your contacts.

- How long? Have a look at your bank statement now. How long would you realistically be able to do a work experience placement for before the money runs out?

If it is simply not feasible right now, then arrange your placement for later on and begin putting £10 aside every week from now until then.

- When? Try to book your placement when you're free. Remember that in your final year at university you'll be consumed by coursework and finals. It won't be the best time to do anything but revision.

A great time to do a placement is during the holidays. Summers are the best holidays to do a placement, because you can offer your time in bulk.

- ... will others have thought of this strategy, too?

Apply months in advance when thinking of getting experience this summer.

- Do you know which placements are likely to have long waiting lists or be inflexible on dates?

This is why research is so vital. If you know that a company is likely to have a long waiting list well in advance, you will have enough time to get your application in early.

- Is there any other way of fitting my placement into my life?

Think outside the box. A great (though very competitive) way of fitting a longer placement into your year is to do one day of work experience a week while you're at university, for an extended period of time. It is a great advantage to have a CV that shows a year's experience working for a local MP or within a youth project.

SECURING WORK EXPERIENCE

“ *Do not be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an experience.*” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Now you have a list of places you could get work experience and you are ready to contact these people to ask if they will consider you.

However, adapting your CV for every application may waste a lot of time and effort. You might want to contact the employer first. Read on to find out how you can do this effectively.

HOW TO SECURE WORK EXPERIENCE

Start by working your way through your list. Get in touch with companies that you are interested in, but that don't offer set work experience placements. It might be terrifying, but this will raise your confidence when you come to write your actual applications. There's nothing to lose, so it's a good place to start!

HOW TO PLACE A CALL TO A COMPANY THAT DOESN'T OFFER WORK EXPERIENCE

Your mission here is to find out whether they do offer work experience. If they do, ask for a contact name to whom you can send your CV and cover letter to. Also ask what type of candidate they are looking for (age, degree, skills, etc) so that you can tailor your application to their requirements.

- Call the switchboard number. Your call will be picked up by the switchboard operator/receptionist.
- Sound friendly, but be calm. If you rush your words, they won't understand what you want.
- Remember that they probably won't know anything about work experience themselves.
- Start with: "Hello. I'm calling to speak to someone about work experience".
- Don't say: "I'm calling to speak to someone about work experience with you". This gets confusing as it sounds as if you want to speak with the receptionist about the placement.
- If the response is, "we don't offer work experience, sorry," ask to speak to the HR Manager.
- When you get put through to the HR Manager, begin with something like: "Hello, I'm calling to talk about work experience. I know you don't offer it officially, but I thought that I could offer myself to you for a few days, totally unpaid, just in case you need a helping hand around the office".
- Take your time when speaking and relax.
- Try to enter into a conversation with the person you're speaking to.
- Try to mention the department that you'd be interested in working in.
- If the HR Department cut you off, ask them if you could speak to someone in the department you're interested in, or go through the switchboard again.

- However, if the receptionist's response is: "you need to talk to so-and-so about work experience, I'll just put you through", the ensuing conversation should be straightforward.
- Whoever you speak to, remember that you're trying to find out:
 1. if they offer work experience.
 2. if they'd consider you for it.
 3. if they can send over a description of the role's responsibilities.
 4. if they tend to hire a certain type of person, eg graduates/students.
 5. if you should send your CV over and who you should send it to.
 6. how long it will be before you should expect a response.

Don't be put off if someone redirects your call or tries to confuse you by asking who you'd like to speak to. You are not doing anything wrong – don't let anybody make you feel that you are!

Write down what you find in the Contact Details Form on page 48 and adapt your CV accordingly.

Now you're ready to start tackling the other companies on the list: those that do offer work experience placements. These tend to pose a much less difficult challenge.

HOW TO PLACE A CALL TO A COMPANY THAT DOES OFFER WORK EXPERIENCE

You've divided your list into those that give a generic email address or switchboard phone number and those that give a specific name/number. Begin by contacting the first group.

Your mission here is to get extra information about the placement that will set you apart. Finding a contact name to send your CV and covering email to will look very impressive. It shows your commitment and initiative and looks highly enterprising.

- Call the switchboard number. Your call will be picked up by the switchboard operator/receptionist.
- Sound friendly but calm.
- Remember that they won't know anything about work experience themselves.
- Start with: "Hello. I'm calling to speak to someone about work experience".
- Don't say, "I'm calling to speak to someone about work experience with you". This gets confusing as it almost sounds like you want to speak with the receptionist about it. If you want to be specific, use the name of the company.
- You'll be put through to someone like the HR Manager, or asked which department you'd like to speak to.
- Begin your conversation with this person in a neutral manner: "Hello, I'd like to talk to someone about work experience with you".

They'll reply with something along the lines of "what would you like to know?" You can take it from here. Start with, "I'm thinking of applying and I was just wondering ..."

1. If they can send over a description of the role's responsibilities.
2. If they tend to hire a certain type of person, eg graduates/students.
3. If you should send your CV over and who you should send it to.
4. How long it will be before you hear back.
5. Anything else you can think of!

Remember to get a specific email address if you can (as opposed to a generic 'hr@graduatecoach.co.uk').



COLD CALLING CHECKLIST

HAVE YOU:

spoken to all the companies that you are interested in, that don't offer set work experience placements and ...

- asked whether they take work experience employees?
- asked whether they would consider you?
- obtained all possible details about exactly who the company is looking for: age, degree, training, etc?
- asked for details about the company that might help your application?
- got a contact name that you can send your CV and covering letter to?

Spoken to all companies that you're interested in that do offer work experience and ...

- asked whether they would consider you?
- obtained all possible details about exactly who the company is looking for: age, degree, training, etc?
- asked for details about the company that might help your application?
- got a contact name that you can send your CV and covering letter to?

Now you're ready to adapt your CV and covering letter.



ADAPTING YOUR COVER LETTER AND CV

So you know the placements you'd most like to get into and who to get in touch with for each. Now you need to actually apply for the position. More than this, you need your application to get the attention of an overworked HR Manager.

Getting chosen for a work placement is not as easy as it sounds, with several thousands applying for the same position. There's also the pressure of getting a company to take a chance on you.

GraduateCoach can show you how to stand out from the crowd. First you'll need to formulate a CV and cover letter that you can send in to your contact.

The trick is to tailor each CV and letter to the placement or company you're applying for.

How can you do this? It's easy. Use the information you've just gathered about the company to turn your CV and letter into a placement-winning clincher.

CV TIPS

If you can, get a copy of the role description. Set it up alongside the notes you've made about the company and industry and refer to these notes constantly while adapting your CV.

Firstly, you should already have a basic CV including all your experience and qualifications. If you don't, read [The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to Cover Letters and CVs](#).

Tailoring your CV to the role description and industry preferences is easy. Each time you sit down to work, re-read your notes and the description so that they're fresh in your mind.

Begin with your Career Objective or Personal Profile.

- Include buzzwords from the job description in your Career Objective or Personal Profile. If the employer is searching for 'highly organised and enterprising individuals', you could describe yourself as 'enterprising and meticulous', or a 'self-starter with strong organisational skills'.
- Try to match the tone of your Objective or Profile to the tone of the company's website. So for an advertising company with a flashy, bright website you could include a line about your aspiration to work in the 'fast-paced, exciting world of advertising', for example.
- Set out your educational background chronologically, but consider adding relevant extra-curricular achievements to it. Think whether you have any additional qualifications or details that might fit with the role's requirements. For example, if you're applying for a role in sales, consider recounting experiences that prove your talent for public speaking.

- When listing your experience, make sure that each requirement in the role description is met by (at least) one 'experience' you have had. This doesn't have to have been paid work. So if the company tend to go for 'determined, organised individuals', leave out the three months you spent as a cleaner and include the two weeks that you spent organising a music concert at school.
- Add an Interests section if – and only if – you suspect the company is keen on employees with personality and quirkiness. Beware though, many companies may say that they employ exciting, unique people with tons of attitude, but many of them are lying!
- Tailor your layout to the appearance of the company's website and the impression you get of the company. If the site is clean and simple, take that as your starting point. If it's snappy and individual, it's time to start thinking outside the box!

COVER LETTER TIPS

- Your cover letter should consist of about five paragraphs and shouldn't contain any waffle.
- Every bit of text needs to be relevant to the job.
- Convey some personality, but don't be too 'wacky'. Don't include anything that requires an exclamation mark.
- Use your common sense. If you are going for a placement in a law firm, you'll have to be very formal with your language, but with a film production company you can be a bit more casual and show some creativity.
- Your main aim in the cover letter is to show your enthusiasm and insight into the industry. But you should still explain why your time working with the company could be advantageous for them. So tell them what skills you can bring to the role.
- Whatever the company, the letter should take a formal stance. Take this as a given until they reply with a less formal (or more formal) response.
- Avoid using 'Dear Sir/Madam'. This should be easy, as you'll have found out the details of a contact by now. Sign off letters with 'Yours sincerely' or 'Kind regards'.
- If you haven't managed to find a contact name, begin your letter with 'Dear Sir/Madam' and sign off with 'Yours faithfully'.
- The first paragraph should summarise why you are writing, the placement which you're applying for and where you heard about it.

- The middle two to three paragraphs should say why you want to work for the company you are applying to. Explain briefly your interest in the industry and the relevance of your past experience to the role.
- Go on to explain your knowledge of what the company you are applying to does. This is where your thorough research into the industry is handy.
- Now briefly explain what you feel you could learn during a work placement and how this will help your career. Keep it simple.
- In the next paragraph, briefly highlight your skills and talents in relation to the role.
- The final paragraph should include your availability. Include a mention of your willingness to supply references and any other information that's relevant, like a portfolio of previous work.
- Your letter should end on a positive note along the lines of 'I look forward to hearing from you' or 'I very much hope you will consider me for the position.'
- Sign yourself off as indicated above.

In-depth CV and cover letter guidance is available from GraduateCoach. To really get an edge on the competition, read [The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to Cover Letters and CVs](#).

Buy it online at www.graduatecoach.co.uk

EXAMPLE COVER LETTER

Dear Mr Brown

I am writing to apply for the editorial internship with Jobhunt Weekly, a role I found when browsing a graduate jobsite. I have attached my CV for your consideration. As you can see I have a lot of experience and a wide range of skills that I could bring to the role, all of which I am keen to develop through the position.

I became interested in entering the world of journalism in my first year of university and have worked to build up a strong portfolio of writing since. Completing articles for the student paper and student magazines throughout university and working on various publications outside of university such as the Burnley Guide and its supplement, I have developed a strong knowledge of the reporting process, including conducting interviews and writing features. It has also given me a chance to become proficient in a range of software packages, such as Adobe InDesign, Microsoft Outlook, Word and Excel.

I am particularly interested in this role because it would be an exciting opportunity to observe the establishment of a new publication. The content of Jobhunt Weekly also attracts me because, as a recent graduate myself, I have had first-hand experience of the issues involved in finding work.

I have an extensive portfolio and excellent references, both of which I'd be happy to supply you with.

I very much hope you will consider me for this position.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Stanfield

WHEN YOU'VE SENT YOUR APPLICATION

- If, after you've made your application, you don't get a response after a couple of weeks, think about whether you'd like to make a call to the company and check that they've received it.
- A follow-up call is common and necessary most of the time. To get what you want you will sometimes have to be a bit of a pest. If you've got nothing, you've got nothing to lose!
- Or if you discover that the application process is longer than you thought it might be, don't be put off. This means that the role is more likely to be good. It's the ones without an interview or application process that you need to be wary of.

INTERVIEWS

If your application is good enough, you may be asked to arrange an interview in person or over the phone.

We suggest buying GraduateCoach's Guide to Interviews which will help get you through this stage.

CV AND COVERING LETTER CHECKLIST

Have you:

written and adapted your CV and ...

- interpreted the kind of candidate the company is looking for and matched it to your Personal Profile or Career Objective statement?
- included buzz words from the role description in your Profile or Objective?
- made sure that each requirement in the role description is met by (at least) one 'experience' you have had?
- thought about including an Interests section if you suspect the company will look kindly on it.
- tailored your layout to the appearance of the company's website and the impression you get of the company?

written and adapted your cover letter and ...

- addressed your letter to the correct person and in the correct format?
- structured your paragraphs as set out above?

- mentioned why you want to work for the company?
- explained what sets the company apart from the competition?
- included details about yourself that fit the guidelines they have mapped out for applicants?
- given your dates of availability, if necessary?

TROUBLE GETTING A PLACEMENT

Can't get a placement within the exact sector you're looking for?

Don't worry, just keep applying and widen your search. Getting experience at any company will give you a chance to hone the generic skills that are useful in all roles. All experience is illuminating and may open you up to something else that you had never considered.

No luck at all?

You're not the first. Here's a tip: big companies have work experience applicants coming out of their ears, but smaller companies don't. They're far less daunting to approach and will be more willing to speak with you. Contacting a smaller company for some experience will also mean you have a better chance of doing the more interesting jobs, will have more one-on-one time and be more likely to get a job offer out of it. So think about applying to smaller companies for experience and do as much as you can when you are on your placement.

Chapter Three

**WHEN YOU
HAVE A
PLACEMENT**



BEFORE YOU START

First of all, if you've got on a work experience placement then well done! You either shone in the application process or had a highly successful interview. But how do you play it when you're 'inside'? How do you impress enough to get a good reference or, better still, a job? These hints should tip the scales in your direction ...

Don't be late

Get the address of where you need to be and make sure you know when you should be there. Do a test run the day before, so that you can work out timing. Allow for morning rush hours, too. Being late on the first day will start you off on a bad foot which is never advisable if you are looking to impress.

Don't be early

Don't be early, at least on your first day, as certain things will need to be prepared for you like your desk, your phone and your workload. You can be early on other days, but be careful of looking too keen and showing others up. It is best to just be punctual.

Have you discovered exactly what the situation is with wages/pay?

This is an essential task to complete before you start. Once you begin your placement, it will be too awkward to ask. Most placements are unpaid, but it is worth checking beforehand.

Make sure you know what to wear

This is something that you'll need to gauge for yourself, depending on the industry type. Even if your placement is in the media, don't turn up in jeans on your first day. Try to choose something middle-of-the-road, so that you can observe the normal dress code of your colleagues without being judged negatively.

It is, however, safe to assume that corporate organisations will have a smarter dress code than most and shirts and suits will be expected. Levels of smartness will depend on the prestige and size of the company.

It's absolutely acceptable to call before you start and ask your contact what you'll be expected to wear and whether you'll need to bring anything. While you are on the phone, you can double check your starting time and the name of the person you're reporting to.

Try to forget that you aren't being paid

It's possible that you could start to think "why should I bother turning up early if I'm not being paid?" or "why should I be doing the jobs that others are getting paid to do?" This attitude is really easy to fall into, especially if your placement lasts for six months or more. But it's counter-productive. Remember, there are many others who would kill to be in your position. So remember how much your placement will help you get a well-paid job and start writing a list of the things you'll buy yourself when you finally have money.

Start thinking right

You'll be successful in your placement if you just adopt the right mindset. You can think yourself into the required role by just remembering that you're a positive, efficient and enthusiastic person. With this attitude you'll always be able to support your colleagues when they need you.

Make yourself an integral cog

If you're constantly helping your team out with various tasks and duties, they will come to rely on you. Nothing could be a better advertisement for your skills and nothing could make your employer more inclined to give you a job after your placement.

If you are asked on a social outing, go

A sociable workplace tends to be a happy one. If you attend social outings, your colleagues will remember you as the fun work experience person that wasn't all about the work. That is the kind of personality that people in most workplaces favour.

Go on all the social outings you're invited on

Remember this, because more often than not, you'll be tempted not to! Social outings are a great place to meet other people in the company you might not have already met. It's also a great way to bond with the people you work with and strike up personal relationships. The more people know you and the closer they feel to you, the more likely they are to recommend you for future jobs.

If you're worried about the costs involved, try and get out of buying rounds or don't drink alcohol, you could also try leaving after a few hours.

Write a list of things that you hope to learn, achieve or find out during your placement

Look at this list every morning and every evening, before and after you go to work. Keeping it in mind will not only help you to remember exactly what you gained from your work experience (which will make writing it into your CV a piece of cake!) but it will give you extra motivation throughout the day to achieve your goals.

THE MYTHS ABOUT WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS

It can be irritating when you don't have all the information you need, or have incorrect facts, before you begin your placement. The last thing you want to do is miss an opportunity because some friend-of-a-friend told you that it was 'pointless'. These tips set the record straight on work experience.

MYTH

All work experience is unpaid.

TRUTH

This isn't so much a myth as a generalisation. Many work experience placements are indeed unpaid, but some offer financial benefits that are not always acknowledged.

Ones that have been advertised may offer to reimburse your travel expenses, or pay you something like £100 per week. If you're learning while working, maybe doing a teaching course, then you'll probably receive a bursary in the low thousands. If it's an industry placement obtained through your university, you'll be looking at anything from £11,000 to £15,000 per annum.

MYTH

A job will automatically follow.

TRUTH

The average number of people that get a job directly from their work placement is one in five. But you should never assume anything. Your placement is just an opportunity for you to see what the industry is all about and whether you could fit in. If you do, you might get a job with that company. If you don't, figure

out how to work on yourself and your application and you'll get ahead eventually.

MYTH

It's only making tea and coffee.

TRUTH

The fallacy of this myth is demonstrated in Andi Jackson's account of getting into the film industry (page 92). The fact is, sometimes you'll be asked to do amazing things immediately and sometimes you will have to make tea. It's unpredictable. Every task, both dull and exciting, is an opportunity to make connections, get experience and get ahead. Believe it or not, even making tea and coffee can get you places.

However, it is rare that your sole responsibility will be tea-making and you'll usually find that if you've been accepted, you'll be needed. Part of this the process may be an assessment of your competence, so if you do the small things well, you will be allowed to move on to bigger tasks.

MYTH

It will be really boring and I will only be doing menial tasks.

TRUTH

Although there is no getting away from the fact that work experience can be boring and a lot of what you will be doing may be menial tasks, it is also the case that it can be interesting and you could be involved in important tasks and roles. All job roles have aspects that you might find boring and as a work experience person, you will often be given the jobs that no one else wants to do. But you need to see these tasks as part of the process. If you can carry these things out with a positive attitude and complete them as efficiently and quickly as you can, then hopefully you will be given some more interesting tasks to complete.

MYTH

You will always be busy.

TRUTH

At some points, you will find that people are too busy to give you jobs and you may need to keep yourself amused. This gives you a chance to use your initiative. You could start working on an idea based on what you've learned so far, or do some research into the company's products. Then choose an opportune moment and ask for your boss's opinion on what you are working on.

MYTH

I don't have to turn up on time or work hard because I'm not being paid.

TRUTH

This should be pretty obvious. You have to work even harder than those that are being paid. It can be tempting to get slightly bitter about working your socks off for nothing while other employees indulge in long conversations and leave early. However, they have earned their right to do those things. You are not there yet.

MYTH

Work experience is only for university students.

TRUTH

Although most work experience is carried out by university students, there is no reason why you can't do it after you've graduated or before you start university. It is actually becoming increasingly common for graduates to do work experience after they've left university as more and more people are coming out of university and realising they don't have enough experience to get a full time job. Doing some work experience before university is also a great way of helping to plan your career development activities when you're a student.

MYTH

If I don't like it, I might be stuck there.

TRUTH

It's fairly unlikely that you will be asked to sign a contract before you begin a work placement. You won't be asked to give a notice period when you leave either, unless you're on an industry placement organised through your university. In this case, you're being paid, so the same rules apply for you as for any other employee.

Normal work experience placements aren't very long. Just try to stick it out until the end and get as much out of it as you can. If you're really not enjoying it, then try taking the person that you report to over to one side and explain your side of the situation. Find a way to show what has gone wrong and try and make your position sympathetic.

MYTH

Work experience placements are always really short.

TRUTH

Work experience placements usually last between one week and three months. It varies widely between companies. For a really large organisation, you can expect planned slots lasting a couple of weeks. For a small company, expect anything.

You can try to extend your placement by being diligent, friendly and approachable. It's a great thing to aim for. The longer you stay, the more you will learn and the better it will look on your CV.

DURING YOUR PLACEMENT

“ *He who refuses to embrace an opportunity loses the prize ...*” (William James)

It's very important to do certain things during your placement, to give you the best chance of securing a job. If you bear the following things in mind every day, you'll be giving yourself the best chance you can.

USE YOUR INITIATIVE!

It's impressive to see a work experience employee using their initiative and gathering information that could help in getting ahead in the working world. A placement is the ideal time to get some insight on the industry you've chosen for your career. Here's how to get it.

- Write a list of things you're looking to find out from your colleagues and from your placement in general.
- Try to ask a lot of people for answers to your questions, but avoid being annoying.
- A good thing to ask people is how they got their job. You'll find that everyone has a different story. Every scrap of information is useful in giving you an idea about the lie of the land.
- You might also want to ask the employer what was impressive about your CV, or what factors led to your application being successful.

- Ask if there's anything you should do before you graduate to stand a better chance of getting a job. If you've already graduated, ask if you can do anything else to enhance your employment prospects.
- Ask if there are any other qualifications you might need to enhance your career prospects.
- When you're comfortable in the office, ask if you can undertake further duties. If there's a meeting taking place, see whether it would be alright to sit in on it. This is something to judge when you have eased yourself into the placement a little. The idea is that you will be learning without bothering anyone. But by sitting in on as many minor meetings as you can, you'll learn a lot.
- In spare moments, carry out extra work that you think might impress your colleagues. Using initiative will always be impressive, but take time to gauge what your team really values and aim to achieve that. Ask for guidance or an opinion from your boss when appropriate.

BE USEFUL

- Find out exactly what your duties are. Then you'll know whether more is expected of you than you can deliver.
- Do as much as you can, as well as you can. There's no point in rushing, but always be conscious of time ticking away. Efficiency is impressive, especially in work experience employees.
- Do as much as you can for other people. If you finish a job early, let your boss know you've finished and ask whether there's anything else you can help with. If you don't hear back, get on with a menial task that you might not have finished earlier, or use your initiative and create work for yourself. If you haven't been given something by the next morning, then ask again and suggest a task that you could get on with.
- Do not, under any circumstances, go on Facebook if you have some downtime.
- Be careful of asking "is there anything I can do?" — too much it will get annoying quickly.
- Always be open to all tasks, big or small.
- Use the following Notes section to keep track of how much work you're doing and how much you are asking for. It will show you how efficient you are and how well others are likely to view you because of this.
- It will also show you whether you need to be asking for more or less work. Try to ask your boss at least once a day, but no more than twice.

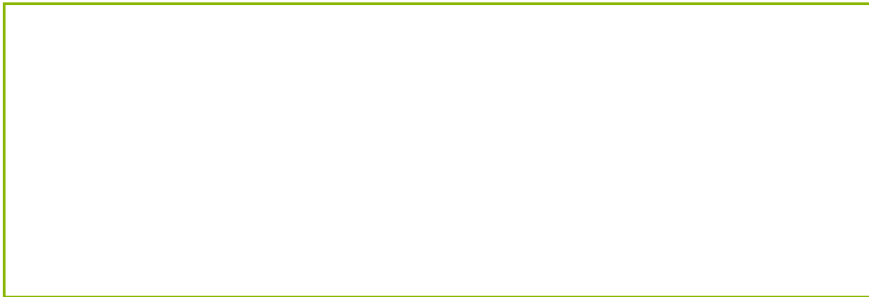
NOTES

What tasks did you complete today?

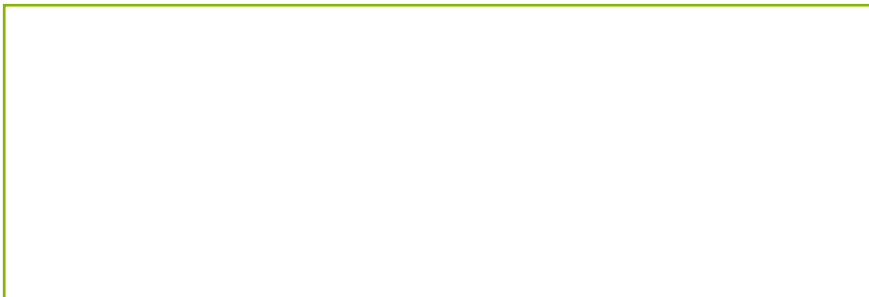
How many were you given randomly?

How would you summarise these tasks to put on your CV?

How many times did you ask your boss for more work?



How many times did you ask your colleagues for extra work?



Professional advice: How to be useful while using your initiative

Katharine Watson, PR Account Manager

Before I got my job, I did work experience in the summer between my final year and graduation. It was supposed to last for three months, but after six weeks my employer realised she needed someone to work full-time and decided to take me on. Basically, I was given the position because I made myself necessary and relevant to the company, without being annoying.

Now that I'm on the other side of the fence, I understand so much more about the relationship between a work experience employee and their employer. When it comes to staying on the employer's good side, there is nothing more important than using your initiative and instinct.

Basically, work experience people are supposedly there to help out and to be a relief in the office. However, most just put me on edge.

The staff get in at 9.30am and we ask work experience employees to arrive at 10.30am to give us time to prepare tasks for them. However, I spend the rest of the day just hoping that they don't finish everything, because I'm too busy to find more for them. When they've got nothing to do I can see them in the corner of my eye, dawdling and looking unsure and it stresses me out.

Our company (and most companies), do not have a set programme which a work experience employee can follow, so current employees do have to make work for them to do. That takes so much time – time that people usually don't have. The difference between my own placement and the average work experience employee is that I would use my spare time to go over things I'd already done: I'd do stock

takes. Basically, I used my initiative and didn't annoy anyone.

The worst thing an intern can do is to constantly ask if there's anything they can do. Obviously, asking it from time to time is to be expected but realising that people are really very busy goes a long way. It is so great when someone comes to me and says, "I've done this and this but I also just went over this and I thought I could do this ..."

It's important to have a bit of confidence – there's no need to suck up or be submissive. However, too much confidence will get you the boot. We once had a work experience person who practically had her feet up on the desk. She would shout down the office at us asking if her work was all right. I went away for a week. By the time I got back she was gone.



SUMMARY

- Use your instinct at all times to judge what you should be doing.
- Complete work fast and ask for more, but be aware that you might be getting in the way.
- Find your own work wherever possible, then ask your boss whether it would be a good idea to do this.
- Don't get complacent and do anything you can to avoid coming across as lazy. Don't get overconfident, either: you can only relax once you've got the job.

BE ENTHUSIASTIC

- Remember being forced to do that work experience placement for two weeks when you were about 14? You probably didn't enjoy it and neither will have the employer you were doing it for. Don't fall back on bad old habits by being grumpy or moody. Students and graduates should be hungry, focused and skilled. Don't let this image down.
- Be open to every duty. There aren't many work experience placements that are just about making cups of tea. However, if you are asked to do something unappealing, don't get annoyed about it. Show enthusiasm. Smile, agree to the task and ask when your deadline will be. You can fume about it later. The more open you are to all jobs, the more likely it is that you'll get to do interesting work.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you don't know how to do something, you won't look stupid or less enthusiastic if you ask a member of your team or your boss. In fact, calls for help actually make you look like you know what you're doing if they are done with right sort of enthusiasm or tone of enquiry.

Professional advice: How to be enthusiastic without being annoying!

Andi Jackson, Film Production Assistant

One of my friends knows a film producer, Fi, who works for a very small company. I emailed her asking if she could help me get into the film industry in any way. A lot of people are sympathetic to the fact that it is a seriously difficult industry to get into and will give you a helping hand. I met with her and she gave me two email addresses of people she thought might help me get work.

After this meeting, I sent an email to each of these people, containing a confident name-drop: that Fi had told me to get in touch. Two emails came back, one of which offered me work immediately – though it was only for a week.

I was polite, well-mannered and enthusiastic on turning up and was put to work reading unsolicited scripts that the production company had received. On my second day, I was asked how long I could stay and ended up staying for two months, getting paid for one of them. It was only £100 a week, but beggars can't be choosers – especially graduate beggars.

After two months, they had booked another graduate in for work experience, so I was out of work. However, I would pop in for a chat occasionally, just to let them know that I was still around.

After about a month, I emailed the other company again. I made sure my email was enthusiastic and energetic, assuring them that I would be committed to any task they could give me, however menial. This time they replied with an offer of two weeks' work.

When I arrived for the job I realised immediately that it was typical of a placement in the film industry. It was literally just making teas and coffees, then doing the washing up.

There are a few people that will refuse to do this point-blank, saying “I’ve got a degree, I’m better than that”. But your degree doesn’t make a difference: everyone has one! One thing that you need to remember is that if you don’t do it, there are a hundred other people that will. You’ve got to start somewhere and you can use this time to your advantage if you try. So I read through scripts, talked to people, made contacts and found out more about the industry.

After completing this placement, I got back in touch with Fi, who knew that there were other companies willing to give me work now that I had some experience.

After I had emailed a few of these places, a sizeable film company sent a reply with an offer of temporary work as an Assistant Music Supervisor, paying £300 a week. When this contract finished I was offered two more jobs, one of which was a recommendation through word of mouth. I’m now working on a major film for the next six weeks and being well paid. I think I’ve jumped the unpaid hurdle now. It just takes a lot of determination and drive – and absolutely no ego – but once you’re over it, you won’t need to go back.

My main piece of advice would be that first impressions count. I remember one guy who came into work and was asked to leave by the afternoon. He rocked up looking pretty shabby, wasn’t very talkative and just seemed like he generally didn’t want to be there. He might have been nervous, but there’s not really any room for nerves.

If I had been lazy during my second work experience placement, I wouldn’t have made the contacts that helped me to get a position through word of mouth. I would definitely know a lot less about the industry as well.

At the end of the day, you can’t do anything but be yourself, but you should always work as hard as you can. My experience has shown me that doing menial work doesn’t last forever and if you don’t put as much effort as you can into these formative days, you might regret it for the rest of your career.



SUMMARY

- Use your contacts whenever you're out of work.
- Email contacts politely but enthusiastically – you don't want to take the chance of them not wanting to reply or help you. Don't be afraid to name-drop.
- Take any offers of work. Be polite, well-mannered and enthusiastic from the word go.
- Try to be on good social terms with the people you work with. When you've finished a placement, you'll be able to pop back and check if they've got any more work you can do.
- Chase up all possibilities of work with emails – but not immediately. Andi waited for about a month – a good time for new work to accumulate.
- Use all time to your advantage, even if you're making tea and coffee. Talk to people, make contacts and find out more about the industry.
- Remember that first impressions count.
- Work as hard as you can. Remember, it's not forever.

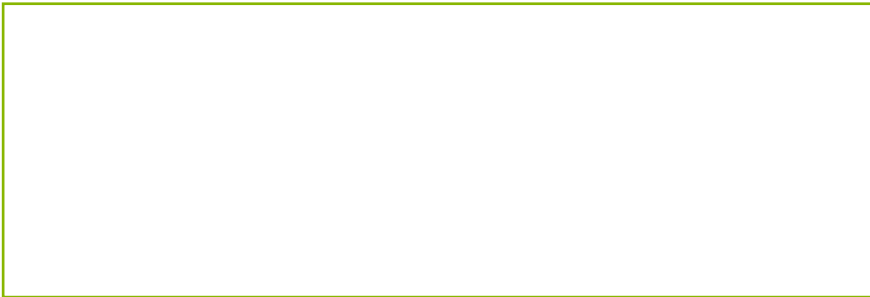
NOTES

This section will help you keep track of what you learn from your work experience and will help you to summarise in an effective way when you've finished.

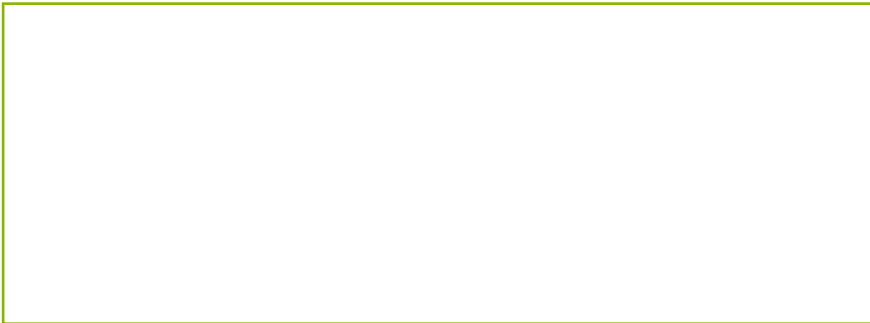
My duties are ...

Experience gained

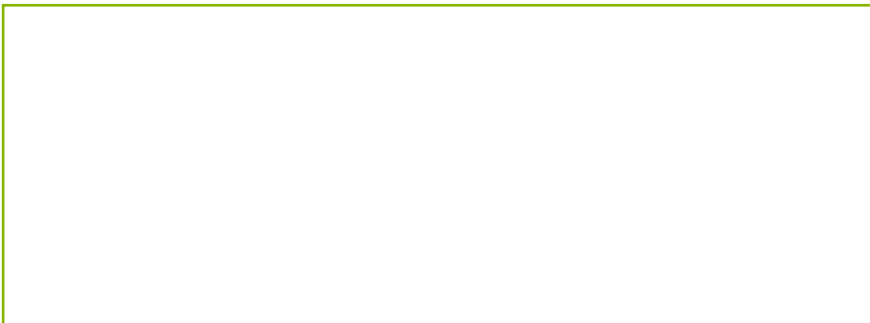
Organisations dealt with

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to list the organizations they have dealt with.

Achievements

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to describe their achievements.

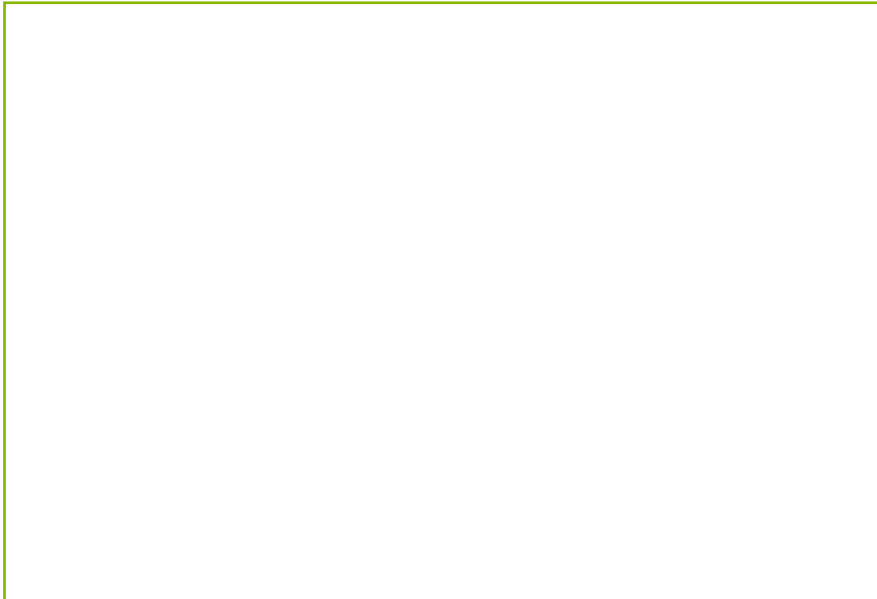
Other things learnt

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to list other things they have learnt.

IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE

Here are some questions to ask yourself if you feel that you want to leave your work experience placement.

Why do you want to leave, in less than 50 words?



- Have you put all your effort into the job?
- Is there a colleague you can speak to vent these feelings?
- Is there a chance it is an oversight of your boss, or one of the team?
- Will you really have no use for this experience on your CV?

Chapter Four

**AFTER YOU
FINISH**

AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE

The world can be confusing after you finish your work experience placement. It can even be disappointing if you were expecting job offers to rush in. So, to get you prepared for the next step, follow this list of things you can do after you finish to give you the best head start possible.

Keep in touch

If you sparked up a particular friendship with one person, keep in touch with them. Pop in and see them one lunchtime, or email them and ask them about any jobs that might be coming up. This is a brilliant way to maintain contacts and to sniff out opportunities and surprisingly few work experience employees use it to their advantage.

Find out if you can use someone from the office as a reference

Always try to use a colleague that works in a relevant field as your referee for an application. Find out if people would be willing to do this as soon as possible. They might forget you otherwise.

Let it focus you

After your experience, you'll have a good idea of whether the job is the right one for you. If you've got the drive to get more experience in the same line, get the ball rolling immediately. Don't give yourself a rest or get distracted by university work, because you'll forget. Alternatively, if you are certain it's not the path for you, reassess your options to find out where you'd like your life to go. Either way, you should be motivated and focused in this period. If you don't make the move while you've got the motivation, you are unlikely to be proactive when you are less driven.

Get more advice

Go through the list you made before your placement started, of the things you want to find out from your colleagues. Note down the questions that are still unanswered. Make a point of finding out this information by contacting a sympathetic colleague from the company you did your placement with.

Fill in the gaps in your knowledge

Go over the lists of things you wanted to achieve and find out over the course of your placement and see which boxes are still unchecked. Think about finding more experience that will fill the gaps in your knowledge. You could try and find more work experience or you could go on a course to get specific skills, or do some work as a receptionist to improve your organisational skills. With a full set of skills in place now, you'll be in a brilliant position to secure a good job.

Practise talking on the phone

All employers will appreciate this skill and it can't be faked. Practise will improve you immensely.

Use the advice you collected from your colleagues

After a work placement you are bound to have a new perspective based on the conversations you have had with colleagues. Think about their words of wisdom and ask yourself how you can apply the advice to your situation.

Get it on your CV

The more headings you can put under 'Relevant Experience' the better. Write your placement into your CV immediately. Use the following Notes section to summarise your responsibilities and achievements. Do remember to adapt them to be relevant to each application you make.

SUMMARY

WORK EXPERIENCE GUIDE

- Think of your placement as a trial for a proper job.
- A work experience placement is not for life. It's only for a short while, so think of it as an experiment in the industry.
- Create your own chances and make the most of them when they're there.
- Ask people in your sector of choice if you can call them for advice or to do a placement with them.
- If you are not having much luck, try applying for smaller companies. You may get more opportunities to do interesting work.
- Remember that first impressions count. Be friendly, polite and accessible from the word go. Use your initiative and be useful without being annoying.
- Be open to all tasks.
- Don't be afraid to use your contacts more than once.
- When you're finished, let the experience motivate you to progress your career.
- Stay in touch with your ex-colleagues. They may come in handy in revealing future opportunities.
- Get your placement written up on your CV immediately.
- Practise talking on the phone – all employers will appreciate this skill.



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**ALSO
AVAILABLE
FROM
GRADUATE
COACH**





OTHER COACHING MANUALS, BY GRADUATE COACH IN THE 'ESSENTIAL SERIES'

Every coaching manual in the series splits each part of the job hunting process into easily managed chunks with easy to follow step-by-step instructions. They are filled with activities, checklists and contact forms that you'll find easy to manage.

These coaching manuals will give you the tools you need, to get the job of your dreams.

The following pages include some sample chapters for you to read





The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to COVER LETTERS AND CVS

In an increasingly competitive jobs market, it is essential to know how to make yourself stand out, not easy when the only materials you have are your CV and your covering letter. With GraduateCoach's Essential Guide to Cover Letters and CVs writing an eye-catching CV and a perfect cover letter is well within your reach. Following our tips will give you the edge that you need to get ahead.

This complete coaching manual breaks each step of writing your CV and Cover letter down into easy to complete parts.

“ *This is a really interesting book. Following the tips in this book won't guarantee you'll get a job but it will definitely increase your chances.*

The book teaches you how to select the right information and how to display it correctly in your CV. It also teaches you how to write a good cover letter with direct tips such as 'do's' and 'don'ts'. It provides lots of examples and a space to practice. It is really useful.”





The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

COVER LETTERS & CVS

WHY ARE CVS AND COVER LETTERS SO ESSENTIAL?

“ I think luck is the sense to recognize an opportunity and the ability to take advantage of it ... The man who can smile at his breaks and grab his chances gets on.” (Samuel Goldwyn)

When an advert for a well-paid job gets posted online, the employer will receive a multitude of CVs in no time. Rifling through them, the person overseeing the initial stages of the recruitment process starts to become more ruthless than Alan Sugar: one whiff of a bad CV and it's on the 'reject' pile. This happens countless times in countless offices across the country every day.

The average CV gets just 15 seconds to make an impression. Chances are, if you think you can do the job well enough to apply for it, you probably can. It is convincing the person in charge that is the hard part and that starts with getting noticed.

Ideally, you'd be able to ask each employer exactly what they wanted to see. Some believe the cover letter is more important than the CV, some don't. It is impossible to know in advance.

The CV shows your experience and qualifications; the cover letter demonstrates professionalism, your ability to write and your salesmanship skills. Both are equally important so it is vital not to favour one and neglect the other.

A job advert won't tell you how to sell yourself – but we will.

HOW TO APPROACH COVER LETTERS AND CV WRITING

THE FIRST STEPS TO WRITING YOUR CV AND COVER LETTER

“ Any human anywhere will blossom in a hundred unexpected talents and capacities simply by being given the opportunity to do so.” (Doris Lessing, Author)

What is a CV?

A summary of a person's education, professional history and job qualifications for a prospective employer.

Things to consider when applying for a job

Always remember that with a CV and cover letter you are introducing yourself and your abilities to the employer. You are saying, “I am just what you are looking for! Here's why ...”

Both the CV and the cover letter need to show confidence and enthusiasm. If you think that you really are the best person for the job, this will come across. So convince yourself that you are.

You're the best!

You might find it hard at first to write about your best qualities, abilities and skills, but throwing modesty to the wind is essential. You've been to university and that's a major achievement in life. And when you start thinking about it, you've also done a whole lot more ...



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM EMPLOYERS

BACKGROUND ON THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Finding the right person for the job is a long and expensive process for companies. If they use a recruitment agency, they will have to pay 10%-33% of your annual salary for the agency's services – usually over £1000.

Imagine that you are offered a salary of £20,000 per annum. As soon as you are hired, your employer will have to pay the recruitment agency £2,000 or more, with the possibility that you may not like the job and leave after three months. How can they avoid this? By hand-picking candidates that come across as reliable, trustworthy and able to fit well with the attitude of the company.

Nearly half of all newly-graduated employees will leave their jobs within five years.

This is another factor in why employers are so picky about who they employ. It's no small matter to invest in and train a graduate and the prospect of them only staying for the short-term is one that many companies are wary of. You need to be able to convince the employer that you are willing to commit yourself to a position. If you can't, they will choose someone who can.

UK employers spend £1.4bn per year on recruitment advertising.

If the company does the recruiting themselves, it's just as expensive and much more time-consuming. A job description needs to be thought about and written in a way that ensures the right people apply. The advert also has to be displayed in the right places and paid for.

A 2009 survey conducted by the Association of Graduate Recruiters found that an average of 48 university graduates compete for each graduate job on the market.

As soon as a job advertisement is placed, CVs start flooding in. Time and people need to be allocated to look through them. But these people are few in number and short on time. It is really important that you grab their attention and get to the point quickly.





The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to GREAT PRESENTATIONS

The chances are that in university you would have had to give the odd presentation in front of your class, maybe even as often as once a week, but there is a world of difference between talking in front of your peers and impressing at an interview. Which is why GraduateCoach has put together this coaching manual to help you. The manual is split into three sections; the Introduction, Writing a presentation and Giving your presentation.

“ This book starts with the most important idea that everyone needs to understand: even if you do not have a natural skill to speak in public, make presentations and lead people, this skill can be learned. And this is exactly what the book is for. It explains how to organise good presentations and gives tips on how to present well.”





The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

**GREAT
PRESENTATIONS**

GIVING GREAT PRESENTATIONS AT YOUR INTERVIEW

In 2001, a Constituency Selection Panel for the Conservative Party was interviewing candidates for a safe seat in the House of Commons. Eight candidates had been selected to present, seven of whom walked in, placed their notes on the lectern that had been provided and presented from behind it. When the eighth candidate entered with no notes at all, it came as a breath of fresh air as he ignored the lectern and conducted a flawless presentation from the edge of stage. He won the seat. His name was David Cameron.

Increasingly, particularly within the corporate and sales sectors, candidates are being asked to prepare a presentation as part of the selection process. Many people would rather run down the street naked than perform this activity. It is fair to say that some are naturally better at public speaking than others. However, it is a myth that these skills can't be taught.

ASSESSING YOUR SKILLS

Your personal assessment – ask yourself these questions before going any further. They will get you in the right mindset, prepare you for what you will need to do and, depending on how much you know already, how hard you will have to work.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

How many presentations have you done?

What did you learn from any previous experiences?

What have you particularly enjoyed about doing presentations?

Were there any aspects you didn't enjoy?

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE?

- Would you like to be a presenting virtuoso?
- Do you want to be able to do a presentation without any stress or worry?
- Do you want people to automatically think of you as a good performer when they need a presentation?

HOW DO YOU GET THERE?

Wherever you are and where you'd like to be, we'll show you your route map to presentation success.

In today's tough job climate, an increasing number of candidates with similar qualifications and experience are going for the same role. Presentations during the application process are a popular way of sifting the diamonds from the rough. Ideas come and go but the skills necessary to present well are there for life and are an asset in so many jobs today.

It's impossible for us to predict what kind of presentation you'll be asked to prepare for your audience. Often you'll need to base it on the simple subject, "Why me for this job?" You may be asked to prepare a presentation about the company using all the information you can find out about it.

The point is that whatever the subject of your presentation, the rules remain the same.

In a good presentation, you are solving someone's problems, you are inspiring them to hire you and you are telling them something they didn't know before. Plus you need to do it in an interesting, concise and original way. Sounds difficult? We'll make it easy.







The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to INTERVIEWS

Arguably the most daunting of career-hunting tasks is the interview. GraduateCoach will arm you with the knowledge and techniques to help you sail through these frequently intimidating encounters without breaking a sweat. The guide is split into three parts before your job interview, at your interview and after your interview. With chapters such as; essential interview techniques, the best answer format, common questions you might be asked and tips on answering difficult interview questions you'll have everything you need.

“ *This is probably the best book that I have ever read about how to behave during an interview. It covers everything from the preparation before an interview to what to do after an interview.*

It explains what is going on in an interviewer's mind, so it teaches you not just what to say but how to say it. The part I liked most was the tips about the questions most companies ask, because even though they are common, I was unsure about how to answer them.”





The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

INTERVIEWS



ESSENTIAL INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Did you know that some interviewers will give higher points to the candidates that ask for a question to be clarified?

These are the kind of insider tips that we as employers can let you in on. We will cover everything from the vital initial first impression to how to sell yourself without blowing your own trumpet too loudly.

Interviewers will always pose some tough questions. They will probe your weaknesses and question your abilities. Our job is to ensure that you walk into the room with the confidence to come through this test of character with flying colours.

Feeling nervous before an interview is human nature – even the most experienced of people get butterflies in these situations. What we aim to provide you with is a grounding of self-confidence that will impress your future employer and give you the opportunity to let your qualities shine to their full potential.



GETTING AN INTERVIEW

Dictionary definition: Interview – a meeting in which one or more people question, consult or evaluate another person.

Congratulations. CVs and applications are rejected by the bucket-load so getting over that first hurdle should be a boost in itself. You should process this fact and use it to build up your confidence. Being granted an interview shows that it has been accepted that, on paper, you are equipped to do the job. Now it is time to prove it in person.

You need to sell your personality and your skills and to do this you must market yourself as a package. Be prepared, well-presented, motivated and self-confident and you have the perfect opportunity to prove that you are a ‘must have’ for the job in question. If you can impress here, there’s no limit to what you can achieve.

Be warned, however, interviews are tough. They can be tense affairs and interviewers won’t go easy on you. Don’t expect friendly smiles and easy conversation, expect to be quizzed and cross-examined. Just remember the key phrases: preparation, practice, confidence and self-belief.

Stars from the world of sport have to have an enormous amount of self-belief. They don’t just say, “I hope I win this one,” they say, “I’m going to win!” Muhammad Ali pumped himself up by saying, “I am the greatest, I am the double greatest!” He believed in himself and by combining this belief with his natural ability, he fulfilled his own prophesy.



AVOIDING INTERVIEW PITFALLS

DISPELLING THE MYTHS ABOUT A TYPICAL INTERVIEW

We never really know what questions are lurking at job interviews. There are, however, plenty of pointers to keep in mind that will save you from tripping up almost immediately.

First impressions don't count

You may think that the shoes you are wearing won't affect whether you get the job or not, but you would be surprised how often they do. Making a good first impression is vital. You need to look and feel the part.

A trend for the rest of the interview can be established at the very beginning. If the interviewer takes an immediate dislike to you, it can be tough to get things back on track. Instead of having to redeem yourself after making a bad first impression, you have to ensure that you have given yourself the best possible start. Presenting yourself impeccably is a must.

You are there to make up the numbers

Interviewers have enough work to do. They would rather not interview people that they already know are unsuitable for the job from their CV. You are there because they want you there.

All interviewers ask the same questions

Never predict that what goes on in one interview will definitely occur in another. Different jobs require different information. The more you prepare, the better off you will be. You can try to predict what questions will be asked of you by referring to your CV and the job description.

Your interviewer will use trick questions to catch you out

Try not to think of your interview as something that is being done to you. The sole purpose of an interview is to establish whether you're right for the job and not to trick you.

You are inferior to your interviewer

There is no need to be submissive as the interviewer will not want to employ someone who thinks of themselves as 'unworthy.' Look at it as more of a meeting of two adults that are both looking for the same thing and seeing if they are right for one another.



SUMMARY

AVOIDING INTERVIEW PITFALLS

- Go into the interview with a positive attitude.
- First impressions do count whatever people say.
- You are there because they think you'll be able to do the job – not to make up numbers.
- Do prepare for certain questions but be aware that you'll have to be able to think on your feet.
- Think of yourself as an equal to your interviewer.
- Your interviewer is not trying to trick you.



