

# Life Skills for Adulthood: Employment

---

## Contents:

- Where to start
- Creating a resume
- Creating a cover letter
- Job searching
- Interviews
- Starting a new job

## Where to start

Finding and getting a job can be overwhelming so don't be afraid to take things one step at a time.

The first step to getting a job is deciding what kind of work you're looking for.

- What are your interests?
- What qualifications or training might you need?
- How many hours of work could you manage each week?
- What kind of sensory input would you be able to cope with, and for how long?
  - Consider the clothes you might need to wear for the job, the noise levels, how much you might need to interact with people, etc. If you get a customer facing job, you can't just walk away suddenly. So, you need to choose a job that fits within your capacity.
- What days and times would you be able to work (e.g. could you work nights or does it need to be certain times during the day)?
- Are you open to rosters or shifts that may change week to week?
- Are you open to being on a casual contract that may vary week to week?
- How much money do you need to be earning from your job?
- What is your preferred location?

## Creating a resume

There are plenty of online templates for creating a resume, but it should include:

- Your name
- Your contact information
- A personal statement. This is often the first thing a potential employer reads, so it gives you a chance to make a strong initial impact. A well-crafted personal statement can grab the employer's attention and encourage them to read the rest of your CV.
- Your work experience. This should include:
  - The job title
  - The dates you worked in this position
  - Bullet points describing your role and what you did
  - You can include some of your achievements and skills in the role. You should list these in order starting with your most recent job. If your resume is getting long, you don't need to include work that you only did for short periods of time, such as a month or less.
- Education and qualifications. Include any training such as first aid. Anything you completed a course for.
- Strengths and skills. List skills that might be relevant to positions that you are looking for. Do you have good communication skills? Or are you proficient with Microsoft? Whatever you list, you need to be able to back it up and explain why you believe you have these skills, if you are asked in an interview.
- You may want to tailor your CV to the job you are applying for and list skills you have that the job ad is looking for.
- You may also choose to include a list of some of your hobbies or interests if they are relevant to the work you are looking for. For example, if you are looking to work in a school or holiday programme, listing art, music, or sport, for example, would be beneficial to the position. You may also choose to list extracurricular activities such as sports because they show that you can work as a team, or being into gaming might mean you are good with technology. Use your passions and interests to showcase your skillset.

Don't be afraid to have someone look over your resume and give feedback. You want to make sure it's clear, concise and tells the right story. You don't want to be oversharing or handing in something longer than it needs to be. You want to keep your resume to two pages maximum unless you are in a very senior or experienced position.

## Creating a cover letter

Cover letters are something you write specifically for each job you apply for and they are sent in addition to your resume.

A cover letter is an opportunity to:

- Introduce yourself
- Express your interest in the position
- Put forward an argument as to why you might be a strong candidate for the position and highlight any relevant achievements and skills
- Demonstrate skill and professionalism in written communication
- Demonstrate an understanding of the company or business you are applying to work for.

Cover letters should be structured. There are templates online.

- Start with your name
- Include a date
- Include contact information
- Address the letter to the person facilitating the hiring process if you can find their name or address them as 'Hiring Manager'.
- Write your opening paragraph. This should include the title of the job you are applying for and why you are interested in the position.
- Your middle and closing paragraph should go into your skills (relevant to the position) and why you might be a good candidate. Usually in job adverts there will be a section that tells you what skills are required or desired, you should use this in writing your cover letter and show how your expertise fits their desired applicant.
- Somewhere in your cover letter you should include your availability and how much notice you need before starting or let them know if you can start immediately.
- Remember to sign off your letter at the end. Thank them for taking the time to consider your application.

Keep your cover letter on one page. It doesn't need to be long.

For both resume and cover letters, keep the font simple and easy to read.

## Job searching

- Look on Seek, Trademe, Student Job search or other similar platforms.
- Job hunting can be a daunting task. If you know what kind of job you're looking for you can use filters to narrow your search.
- You can also set up alerts with some job searching websites. You will get emails when new jobs are listed that fit the criteria you select.
- Have a look at the days and the number of hours the job requires and consider whether it fits within your availability and capacity.
- Have a look at the job requirements. Don't worry too much if you don't meet all of the requirements. If it's a job you want and you think you could be good at, there's no harm in applying anyway. You never know, you might still be the best candidate.
- Track Your Applications: Keep a note to track the jobs you've applied for, including application dates, follow-up reminders, and interview schedules.

## Interviews

- Be early (around 5-10 minutes is good). But understand that sometimes your interviewer may run slightly late. They are still at work, may be interviewing other people, and may have tasks or meetings run over time. Do not point out that they are late.
- Dress tidily. If you know what kind of attire the workplace wears, try to match that for your interview. For example, if you are interviewing for a law firm, it's probably best to dress in very tidy business attire. But if you are interviewing for a childcare role, it's probably okay to wear tidy casualwear.

- Do a bit of research on the organization/company. If you know your panellist (interviewer) memorise their name. It's a good gesture to mention their name when you thank them and say your goodbyes.
- You may find that the interview is the right time for you to explain that you are autistic and may not make eye contact, or that you might interpret questions quite literally. This is a personal decision and is up to you.
- You can take someone with you to interviews. Don't be afraid to take an employment support person, or a previous manager, an old colleague, someone who might be able to prompt you to be able to answer some of the questions that require examples of how you've handled certain scenarios.
- Prepare some questions for the interviewer as well, things you might want to know about the position. This shows that you are serious about the position and have been thinking about it carefully.
- Read the job description beforehand
- Bring a copy of your resume
- Don't ramble. Keep your answers to the point if you can.
- If you don't know an answer to a question, you can ask for more clarity or ask for an example, or say "I'll make sure to look into that after our meeting and can follow up with you." It's perfectly fine to say, "I'm not sure about that, but I'm willing to learn." This shows honesty and a willingness to grow.
- Don't be afraid to write down the questions if they aren't given to you in advance.

Below are some common interview questions and what they are looking for:

Tell me about yourself?

This question isn't asking for your life story. Tell them your most recent work or study position, what qualifications you have, what you're passionate about and what your career goals are.

### Why do you want this job?

Everyone knows that we need work to get money to survive but you should not give this as an answer in an interview. If you're asked why you want the job, explain what interests you in that particular position. Is it an area you want to grow in? Is it something you're good at?

### What are your weaknesses?

You do not need to list all of your weaknesses here. Just pick one or two, ideally ones that wouldn't cost you the position. Perhaps you are working on being more confident, or you'd like to be a bit more organised. Make sure you choose things that you are working on improving.

### What are your strengths?

This is an opportunity to highlight some of your skills, but again, pick a couple things. You don't want to go on too long. Strengths might include problem solving, honesty or attention to detail. How do you know this is a strength of yours?

### What makes you the best person for this job?

You may not know who else is applying or what their strengths are, but you can give an answer as to why you believe you should be hired. Keep your answer up to a few sentences long. Be confident.

### Walk me through your resume

This is an opportunity to talk through your work experience and make sure you highlight anything you'd like the interviewer to see on your resume.

### Tell me about a time you dealt with conflict?

Ideally, do not talk about conflict you have had with managers or bosses, or if these are the only examples you have, do not identify that they were people in roles of authority. You don't want to speak badly of previous employers.

Try to choose a scenario that is relatable; something that others would get into a conflict about as well.

Explain the situation and what actions you took to resolve it.

### Why are you leaving your current position?

Again, be careful not to speak badly of previous employers. So, if you are leaving a work place because you were being treated poorly, you could say something along the lines of it not being the right fit, you're looking for a change, you're looking to further your career, you're interested in what other opportunities are available etc.

- Thank the Interviewer: A follow-up email is a polite way to thank the interviewer for their time and consideration. It shows that you appreciate the opportunity to interview and are courteous.
- If you haven't heard anything back after an interview (say after 2 weeks) you can email the company to follow up and ask for an update. For example:

I wanted to follow up on my application for [Job Title] after our interview on [Date]. I'm still very enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with [Company Name]. I was wondering if there have been any updates regarding the hiring process or if there is any additional information you need from me.

- Stay Positive: Focus on the next steps in your job search, and don't get discouraged if there's a delay in hearing back.

## **Starting a new job**

It's a good idea to prepare for the first few days or even weeks to be a bit overwhelming or take some adjusting. So, if you have difficulties with change or if you have additional sensory needs and find you can get overstimulated quite easily, it's important that while you are settling into a new job, you give yourself some time before and after work to look after yourself and regulate so that it doesn't become too much.

You want to make a good impression, so here are some tips when starting a new job:

- Make sure you dress tidily and to the dress code
- Arrive early and be ready to start before your shift

- Get to know your team but do this at a pace that isn't too overwhelming for you
- Introduce yourself
- Listen, observe, take the time to learn as much as you can about your job but also about the team/work environment and day to day norms.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Take Notes: Write down important information, names, procedures, and any details that will help you remember what you've learned.
- If you're finding yourself getting overstimulated or overwhelmed, step aside for a bathroom break when you can, recollect yourself and take a minute to just breathe. You can do this!
- Don't rush. You don't have to achieve everything on your first day.
- Ask for feedback. This can help you know what you might need to focus on improving and what you're doing well.
- Don't panic if it seems too hard in the first few weeks. Give it a bit of time. If you're still not coping, consider why. Is it because you don't have the right accommodations? Is it not the right job for you? Is it a bad work environment? Do your values not align? Is it too many hours? What, specifically, is causing you not to cope with the job? Once you know a bit more, you might be able to ask for some accommodations or see if you can reduce your hours or decide to leave the job. At the end of the day, you need to do what is best for your wellbeing.