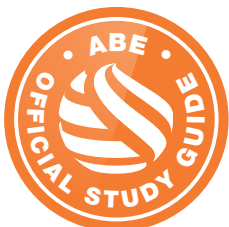


Your road to success

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**ABE LEVEL 2  
AWARD IN  
EMPLOYABILITY  
SKILLS – MAKING  
THE MOVE TO WORK**



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# Using your study guide

Welcome to the study guide for the **ABE Level 2 Award in Employability Skills – Making the Move to Work**.

Below is an overview of the elements of learning and related key capabilities (taken from the published syllabus), designed to support learners to assess their own skillset in terms of employability and to develop their own personal development plans.

Element of learning	Key capabilities
Element 1: What employers are looking for in prospective employees	Be able to explain what is meant by employability skills and explain why employers want people with these skills in addition to qualifications and/or experience.  <i>Willingness to learn; integrity; confidence; humility; awareness of health and safety at work</i>
Element 2: What I have to offer	Ability to analyse your own skillset in terms of employability and provide examples to support your strengths and personal preferences.  <i>Confidence; self-esteem; self-motivation; awareness of abilities and limitations; desire to make a positive contribution</i>
Element 3: Presenting what I have to offer	Complete a job application and prepare for an interview based on your skillset.  <i>Desk research; enthusiasm; commercial awareness; written and verbal communication; active listening; adaptability; initiative; integrity; confidence; respects equal opportunities and diversity</i>

This study guide follows the order of the syllabus, which is the basis for your studies. Each chapter starts by listing the overarching syllabus learning outcomes covered and the assessment criteria.

## L2 descriptor

Knowledge descriptor (the holder...)	Skills descriptor (the holder can...)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has knowledge and understanding of facts, procedures and ideas in an area of study or field of work to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems.</li> <li>Can interpret relevant information and ideas.</li> <li>Is aware of a range of information that is relevant to the area of study or work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select and use relevant cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems.</li> <li>Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions.</li> <li>Identify how effective actions have been.</li> </ul>

Contained within the chapters of the study guide are a number of features which we hope will enhance your studies:



**'Over to you'**: Activities for you to complete – just print out the page and use the space provided. You can write out longer answers on an extra piece of paper.



**Case studies**: Realistic business scenarios to reinforce and test your understanding of what you have read.



**'Revision on the go'**: Use your phone camera to capture these key pieces of learning, then save them on your phone to use as revision notes.



**'Need to know'**: Key pieces of information that are highlighted in the text.



**Examples** illustrating points made in the text to show how it works in practice.

**Tables, graphs and charts** to bring data to life.

**Source/quotation** information to cast further light on the subject from industry sources.

**Highlighted words** throughout and **glossary terms** at the end of the book.

### Note

Website addresses current as at March 2017.

# Chapter 1

## What Employers are Looking for in Prospective Employees

### Introduction

Specific technical skills, qualifications and previous work experience are important to any future employer. However, employability skills, which can usually be transferred directly from one job to another, are also highly valued by employers when choosing potential new employees. Employers value these generic skills as they help to distinguish between prospective job candidates and can highlight those who are most likely to succeed in a new role. This chapter outlines the main employability skills that are favoured by employers and helps candidates to appreciate why these skills are just as important as any technical skill or qualification.

### Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

- 1 Describe what is meant by employability skills and why employers want people with these skills in addition to qualifications and/or experience

### Assessment criteria

- 1 Describe what is meant by employability skills and why employers want people with these skills in addition to qualifications and/or experience
  - 1.1 Outline the employability skills that are most frequently desired by employers, such as:
  - 1.2 Describe why employability skills are important to employers

# ABE Level 2 Award in Employability Skills – Making the Move to Work

## Background

Making the transition to work from a study or non-work environment is both exciting and daunting, but you are not likely to be in that one job forever. Most people don't stay in one job throughout their working lives and this is no longer a realistic expectation in today's job market. During your working life you can expect to work in a variety of jobs, with a number of different employers. This means you need to develop a number of skills that can be transferred from one work context to another.

The type of work available has transformed because of changes in the economy, in society and organisations. The trends which shape our working lives are far-reaching. On a local labour market level, job opportunities will be influenced in part by government policy, the health of the economy, shifts from manufacturing to services and rising incomes. Population changes also have a huge impact, including trends such as an ageing workforce, increased female participation and migration.

Globalisation and technological change have probably had the biggest impact on our working lives. Many of the jobs that are done today simply didn't exist ten years ago. The jobs that the children starting school today will be doing haven't even been invented.

These trends provide a challenge for governments, businesses and individuals. Skills requirements are changing fast and qualifications can quickly become out of date.

Flexibility and the development of transferable employability skills are essential if you are going to remain relevant in the job market. **Employability skills** are transferable **interpersonal** and **behavioural skills** that make you more attractive to a potential employer.

### ! NEED TO KNOW

Transferable employability skills are skills that you can develop in one job role and organisation which can be transferred to another job role or organisation. Some good examples are time management or communication skills, which are attractive to all employers, no matter what the job involves.





## OVER TO YOU

**Activity 1: Changing employability skills**

**Identify a job that did not exist 25 years ago.  
Now write down three transferable skills that are important for that job.**

*For example: Virtual Assistant. Skills include: listening and understanding, solving problems and managing time and priorities.*



## OVER TO YOU

**Activity 2: Transferring employability skills from outside work**

**Interpersonal and behavioural skills are not exclusive to the workplace. Think about an activity that you have taken part in, during the last week, and list the skills you used that could be transferred to the workplace context.**

*For example: Booking a trip to the cinema – planning, organising, time management, decision making, attention to detail.*

## 1.1 Employability skills desired by employers

The skills that an employer believes make a good employee will vary depending on workplace context and job role. The underemployment of individuals with good qualifications suggests there is a difference between what employers want and the specific skills that potential employees have.





Individuals need good communication skills if they want to do well in the workplace. Many of my new hires are lacking in writing proficiency and essential public speaking skills.

The use of social media and text for personal communication has meant that many people have not developed the ability to write a business email or conduct a professional phone conversation. It is essential that you can speak confidently and professionally to customers, suppliers and colleagues. You must make sure you have developed this skill if you are to interview well. Sharing information, through reports and presentations, is key to success in business. Employers seek out such essential skills as being able to get your message across clearly to avoid any misunderstanding.

It's alarming that a significant number of potential employees lack basic self-management and functional skills.



Being job ready means that you have a solid foundation in the basic functional skills required by employers such as numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and communication. You must always get to work and meetings on time and deliver tasks to deadline as these are the qualities that employers expect of a reliable employee. Personal qualities which contribute to a positive work environment are a must-have for individuals who wish to progress and are also highly valued by bosses.



Potential new recruits at all levels need to improve their interpersonal skills and must be able to work together with other people.

Some people naturally have good interpersonal and social skills, while others learn and develop these skills over time. In either case, it is possible to improve the way you interact and engage with other people. It is important to develop team-working skills so you can work well with others, build relationships and develop rapport in order to make sure you can get tasks completed efficiently and on time.

I need people who can solve problems and make decisions.



Dealing with challenges to achieve business goals are daily tasks in the modern workplace. Understanding what the business is trying to achieve, finding reliable information, evaluating the information for suitable solutions and choosing the most appropriate solution for the situation are critical in the fast-moving modern workplace. People with these skills are extremely desirable because they add value to the workplace.

**REVISION**  
*on the go*

It is clear that there is a wide range of employability skills that make a good employee and which are applicable across a wide range of job roles. There are frequent reports of business leaders complaining about the lack of key employment skills in school-leavers, graduates and prospective employees. The employability skills that are most frequently desired by employers are shown in Table 1.

### Self-management skills

Effective self-management is a key life skill, which involves individuals monitoring, controlling and directing aspects of work and work life for themselves.

Elements	Important to employers because it...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punctuality</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Planning and organising</li> </ul>	Demonstrates dependability and reassures the employer that you will do the job and do it well.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-confidence</li> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Reliability</li> </ul>	Demonstrates reliability and shows the employer that they can trust you and the work you do.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Can-do" approach</li> <li>• Enthusiasm</li> <li>• Commitment</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you are motivated and have a real interest in the job.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good personal presentation</li> <li>• Coping with pressure</li> <li>• <b>Emotional intelligence</b></li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you can recognise, control and adapt your emotional reactions and respond appropriately to the situation.

### Problem-solving skills

Solving problems on a daily basis at work and in your personal life, means that you can evaluate information or situations, consider various solutions and decide on an appropriate resolution.

Elements	Important to employers because it...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention to detail</li> <li>• Negotiation</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Analysis</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you have the right analytical and creative skills to respond to workplace challenges, research and implement change and find a better way of doing something.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiative</li> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Drive</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you have the perseverance to get a task done, without relying on other people to draw appropriate conclusions.

### Working together

Working together with others requires that you can contribute positively to productive relationships and work as a member of a team.

Elements	Important to employers because it...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Co-operation</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you can work well with others to get the job done.

Elements	Important to employers because it...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Involving others</li> <li>• Equality and inclusion</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you can make good connections and develop positive relationships to get a task done.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking responsibility and being accountable</li> <li>• Trustworthiness</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you are honest at all times and that you are willing to say what work you have completed and why you have completed it in a particular way.

**Communication skills**

The ability to get your message across clearly, to a diverse audience, so that everyone can understand what is being communicated.

Elements	Important to employers because it...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal communication</li> <li>• Non-verbal communication</li> <li>• Active listening</li> <li>• Giving and receiving feedback</li> <li>• Presentation skills</li> </ul>	Demonstrates you are able to work with other people to complete work tasks. Excellent skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening are essential for good communication in all areas of life.

**Business skills**

Developing skills to maintain and grow the business where you work improves your ability to contribute to business success.

Elements	Important to employers because it...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial awareness</li> <li>• Customer focus</li> <li>• Service orientation</li> <li>• On-time delivery</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you are able to understand how to provide customers with high levels of service, and your part in delivering the organisation’s promises to the customer.

**Functional skills**

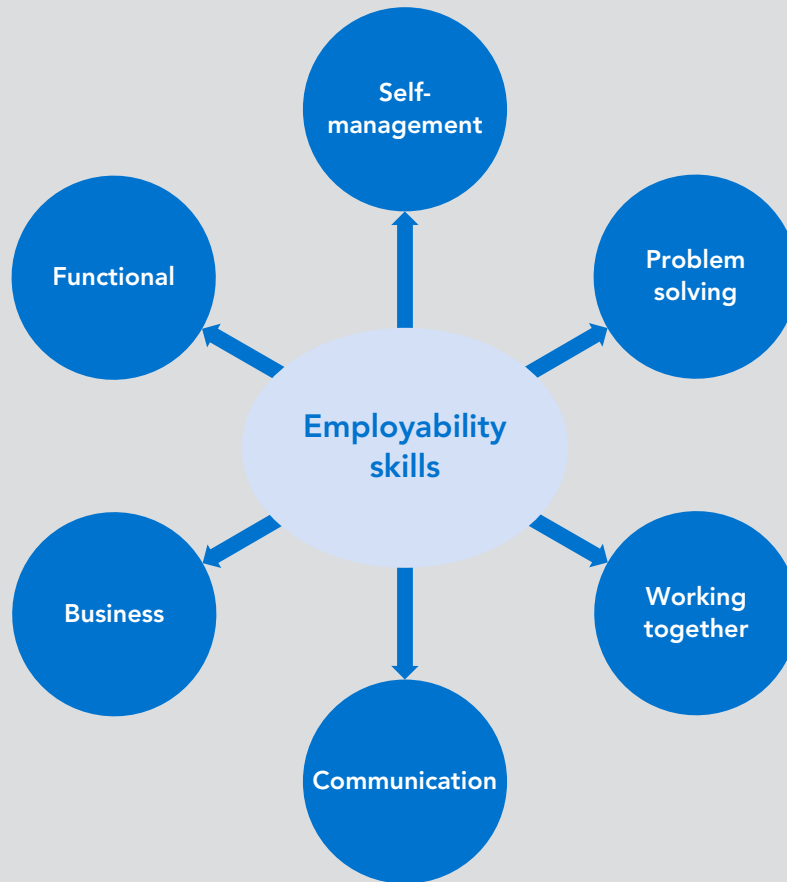
Contributing to the effective execution of tasks requires that you have basic functional skills.

Elements	Important to employers because it...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numeracy</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• ICT</li> </ul>	Demonstrates that you can operate independently and effectively in the workplace.

**Table 1:** Employability skills that employers want in their workers



Developing the right skills will contribute to your overall employability in the job market. Employers will use the job interview to assess your job-specific and employability skills. You will improve your chances of success if you can recognise the employability skills that are most important for the job you are applying for and can communicate how your skills match those required during the interview. If you have desirable employability skills it will increase the likelihood of you getting the job that you want, staying in that job and progressing your career.



**Figure 1:** Employability skills that employers want



## CASE STUDY

### Demonstrating employability skills: working together

Karmaria was a member of her college drama group. Each term, the group would work toward putting on their own version of a play, ending the term with a show for family and friends.

#### Situation

The group was working on a production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Each week they would spend time developing their acting skills and working towards the final show.



A new member, Ravi, had just joined the drama group.

### Task

Karmaria was asked by the drama leader to buddy with Ravi. The idea was to help Ravi to get to know the rest of the group, make new friends and develop acting and storytelling skills for the final show.

### Activity

Karmaria made time outside the drama group to meet with, and talk to, Ravi. During these discussions, Karmaria discovered that Ravi was keen on getting involved in the stage management. Karmaria helped Ravi to connect with the Stage Management Team, which enabled the new member to get involved in the stage lighting for the final performance.

### Result

Ravi was given the role of assistant light technician and given responsibility for the equipment for stage lighting. Kamaria helped Ravi to set up the lighting rig for the final performance and in turn Ravi supported Kamaria in learning her lines for her role.

### Employability skills demonstrated:

- Self-management: “can-do” approach
- Working together: co-operation, collaboration, involving others, inclusion, taking responsibility, trustworthiness
- Communication skills: verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening.



## OVER TO YOU

### Activity 3: Demonstrating problem-solving skills

**Think about an example where you have demonstrated problem-solving skills outside the workplace. Use the structure in the case study and answer the questions outlined in the STAR approach below:**


- **Situation:** What were the circumstances?
- **Task:** What did you need to do?
- **Activity:** What did you do?
- **Result:** What happened as a result of what you did?

## 1.2 Why employability skills are important

Some long-term trends have been identified as impacting employer recruitment activities. These suggest that the way in which employers think about recruitment and selection has changed; see Table 2.

Trends	What does this mean for employability?
Information and communication technologies have transformed the way we work and the type of work available.	This means that effective communication skills are highly desirable.
Competition and globalisation is changing the nature of employment and skills required.	This means that employers are seeking individuals with key transferable skills who can adapt to a fast-moving business environment.
Demographic changes have increased the number of people competing for jobs.	An ageing workforce means that people stay employable for longer, resulting in fierce competition for those seeking employment. This means the job seeker must demonstrate they have the required qualifications and experience.

**Table 2:** Trends impacting on employer recruitment



### For recruitment and selection

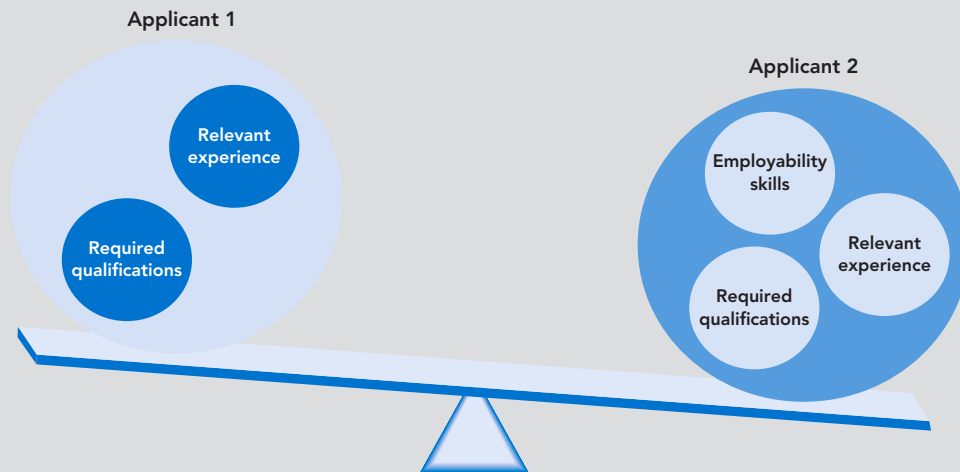
Although qualifications are important when searching for a job, employability skills help employers distinguish between people with similar qualifications and/or experience during the recruitment process. Employability skills are important because they provide you with the flexibility and adaptability to respond to changes in the market place. You can also use employability skills in future roles as they are transferable.

“Employers don’t just value what people know: they value what they can do.”

Rod Bristow – President, UK and Core, Pearson

Having the qualifications and/or industry experience may mean you are eligible to apply for a particular position, and that the employer will consider you as meeting the criteria for interview. But you will need to demonstrate in your **curriculum vitae (CV)**, **application form** and interview that you have the necessary personal skills to carry out the work to the required level. Employability skills are a key ingredient, which can determine whether or not the business recruits you.

Employers consider employability skills to be the key assets needed to close the gap between qualifications and experience and the skills needed to succeed in the workplace.



**Figure 2:** Tipping the balance



Employability skills open up new opportunities for people to achieve employment, develop their careers, improve their earning potential and make the move into more highly skilled work.

The key responsibility for a recruiting manager is getting the right people into the right job. They are concerned about identifying individuals who can perform in the role and contribute to the success of the organisation. **Hard skills** may indicate that you are able to do the job, but **soft skills** will increase your chances of being hired by the employer who is seeking a more rounded candidate.

If you can clearly show that you have a good work ethic and are responsible, reliable, honest and enthusiastic, this will make you an attractive prospective employee for any employer.

A prospective employer will notice the effectiveness of your communication at every stage of the recruitment process, including the quality of your CV and covering letter, telephone exchanges and face-to-face encounters.

 OVER TO YOU

**Activity 4: How do you compare?**

Imagine someone who has similar qualifications and/or experience to you is competing for the same job position that you are applying for and answer the following questions.

**Would you be strongly placed to compete successfully?**

## Why?

### In role

Regardless of the job role you have or want to do, employers believe that behavioural and interpersonal skills contribute to business success. A key result of the CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2016 was that “employers don’t just value what people know: they value what they can do.” The majority of employers emphasise employability skills as a key area of concern because they believe that these skills contribute to business performance.

*“ People and skills are the heart of our economic prosperity. Equipping everyone with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours sets them up for career success, and means businesses can seize new opportunities that drive growth and productivity. ”*

*Josh Hardie – Deputy director-general, CBI*

Employability skills contribute to driving innovation and productivity in the workplace. They ensure individuals are ready for the jobs that need to be done today, as well as those jobs that will need to be done in the future. For business managers this is a key concern for the long-term health of their organisation.

Self-management skills and a “can-do” approach to work mean that the individual, team or organisation can respond positively to the challenges that the organisation faces. Individuals will be ready to play their part, contributing to new ideas and solving problems. They will collaborate with others within the team to see those ideas realised.



 OVER TO YOU**Activity 5: Improving outcomes**

**Think about a challenging situation you've experienced and how you handled it. How could employability skills have contributed to an improved outcome? Read the example and write your answer in the space provided.**

*For example: Completing project work for college, I ended up with three deadlines due at the same time and the work took more time to complete than I had allowed. This meant that I was printing my project out at the last minute. When I came to print out my report, the printer wasn't working, which resulted in me struggling to hand my project in on time. Organising my time properly and planning a schedule of work to be completed would have meant that the broken printer would have been inconvenient, but not a disaster.*

## Future roles

Transferable skills are skills that you can develop in one job role and organisation which can also be transferred to another job role or organisation. From an employer's perspective, transferable employability skills provide workforce flexibility.

 **NEED TO KNOW**

The emphasis on transferable employability skills means that even if you have never had a job, or you are seeking a job in a new field, you may already have many of the skills needed for the new job role. From an employer's perspective, this means that they can be confident in giving someone a role if they have well-developed employability skills, even if they have no direct experience. This increases the pool of people from which they can recruit.

**REVISION  
on the go**

If you can identify and give examples of the transferable skills that you have developed, this will help to persuade prospective employers that you are right for the job.

## CASE STUDY

### A tale of four careers: from sales to people development manager

It is thought that most people will have at least three different careers during their working life. Transferable skills made it possible for Charles to overcome a lack of direct experience in different industries and roles, and to switch careers several times. Note that the words shown below in **bold italics** are the particular employability skills that employers want and that helped Charles to further his career.



#### Career 1: Sales

Charles began as a sales assistant working in a small local food manufacturer. As he gained experience he got another role as a sales representative in a national fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) organisation. **Commercial awareness** and **customer focus** led to Charles being promoted several times, before moving to a national soft drinks manufacturer as a National Account Sales Manager.

#### Career 2: Training and development

Charles was recognised for his **problem-solving**, **flexibility** and ability to **involve others**, and was promoted to a role on a business transformation project. As part of that role, he was asked to train the commercial teams on the new system, and was quickly recognised for his excellent communication skills. After the project ended, Charles chose to take redundancy and switched career to learning and development.

#### Career 3: People and organisation development

Drawing on the business skills gained in his sales career as well as the problem-solving skills developed in his training and development career, Charles realised that he could deliver improved organisational performance through specialising in people and organisation development (OD). The **self-management**, **communication**, **problem-solving** and **commercial awareness** developed over his career gave him the confidence to work collaboratively with others to deliver OD projects, while also developing his knowledge in the field.

#### Career 4: Academic

After several corporate roles Charles started his own consultancy business – drawing on all the employability skills he had developed over his career as well as his expertise and technical skills. As part of his self-employment, Charles chose to share his subject expertise by teaching at a local university. After 12 months working as a visiting lecturer, Charles was invited to become the programme leader of the MA in Human Resource Management, bringing much needed **commercial awareness**, **problem solving** and the **ability to work together** to improve relationships with the local business community.

 OVER TO YOU

**Activity 6: How do you compare?**

**Research two different job roles and consider how your transferable employability skills match the key skills required for the different roles.**

*For example: Supply Chain Manager – negotiation, analysis, commercial awareness, on-time delivery, planning and organising, coping with pressure and attention to detail.*



**Figure 3:** Why employability skills are important to employers



# Chapter 2

## What I Have to Offer

### Introduction

The first chapter identified and explained a range of employability skills that are common in many jobs. This chapter now focuses on your personal skills through a realistic assessment of your own strengths, areas for development and personal preferences. It means you must understand your own capabilities and provide examples that show successful implementation of those capabilities. This will help with future job applications and interviews, as well as highlighting any skills “gaps” and opportunities for personal development.

### Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

- 1 Assess your own skillset in terms of employability and provide examples to support your strengths, preferences and areas of development**

### Assessment criteria

- 1 Assess your own skillset in terms of employability and provide examples to support your strengths, preferences and areas of development**

- 1.1 Identify your own skillset in terms of employability and provide examples to support your strengths and personal preferences
- 1.2 Carry out a “gap analysis” between your current set of employability skills and what is required for specific employment positions

# ABE Level 2 Award in Employability Skills – Making the Move to Work

## Background

Each person has their own unique talents, strengths and skills which can help him or her to be a success in different job roles and contexts. Cristiano Ronaldo's skillset may be outstanding on the football field, but his ability to kick a football means he is unlikely to add much value to an engineering company seeking technical engineering skills.

Understanding your skillset, talents and capabilities will help you to think clearly about what you have to offer to potential employers. This will enable you to state clearly what you have to offer in your CV and application letter and then later face-to-face in an interview situation.

By analysing what you have to offer now, and the job you would like, you can examine the gap and take steps to develop yourself and your skillset. This will help you to make sure you can offer what potential employers are looking for, and that you can meet your goals.



### OVER TO YOU

#### Activity 1: What roles do you currently play?

If you are looking to make the move to work you may think you don't have an active skillset. But like an actor, you still have different roles that demand different things of you.

**Write down five roles you have played in your life, e.g. parent, friend, team member.**

1

2

3

4

5

What skills and activities are associated with playing these different roles?

Write down the kinds of skills and activities that you would like to continue with.

## 2.1 Assess your own skillset

It is possible to believe that you don't have a skillset because the acquisition of knowledge and skills occurs throughout life and is unplanned, but this is not the case. Although it is important to develop and learn the skills and knowledge for the job you want to do, it is also important to have self-awareness about the knowledge and skills that you already have. Conducting an **audit** of your existing skills, and assessing how well you do them, will provide a starting point for your move into work. It will help you to appreciate your strengths and give you confidence when communicating with potential employers about what you can offer.

### Identifying personal preferences

Many of us can find it difficult to describe what their strengths are. Too often, people focus on what they are not good at. They will say: "I'm not a people person" or "I'm afraid to speak in public", but they forget to focus on their strengths.

**! NEED TO KNOW**

To find out what your personal strengths and preferences are, consider the following factors:

<b>Effectiveness</b>	What are you doing when you feel like you are at your best?
<b>Enjoyable</b>	What activities do you actively look forward to and want to do?
<b>Interest</b>	What activities make you feel like you want to know more and where you can focus on what you are learning?
<b>Fulfilling</b>	What activities make you feel satisfied and like the real you?



**✎ OVER TO YOU**

**Activity 2: Like and dislike**

- Consider the tasks that you have done over the last month. Divide the activities into "liked" and "disliked" and write them in the corresponding column – make sure you focus on the things you do, not the things people do to you. We will refer to this exercise later.

Liked	Disliked

**Baseline employability skills**

You should now be starting to think about the range of skills that have been developed in your life, work and education experiences. There will be some skills that you feel more confident about and others that you feel you may lack or need to strengthen. An audit of your transferable skills will help you to establish a baseline for your employability skills.

 OVER TO YOU

**Activity 3: Employability skills audit**

- Complete the employability skills audit below by ticking the boxes. Identify whether you believe that you are inexperienced, a beginner, intermediate or experienced in each skill area.

Employability skill area: Self-management	Inexperienced	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced
Punctuality				
Time management				
Planning and organising				
Self-confidence				
Honesty and integrity				
Reliability				
"Can-do" approach				
Enthusiasm				
Commitment				
Good personal presentation				
Coping with pressure				
Emotional intelligence (understanding yourself)				

Employability skill area: Problem-solving	Inexperienced	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced
Attention to detail				
Negotiation				
Decision-making				
Initiative				
Drive				
Analysis				



<b>Employability skill area: Working together</b>	<b>Inexperienced</b>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Experienced</b>
Collaboration				
Co-operation				
Flexibility				
Responsiveness				
Involving others				
Equality and inclusion				
Taking responsibility and being accountable				
Trustworthiness				
Conflict resolution				

<b>Employability skill area: Communication skills</b>	<b>Inexperienced</b>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Experienced</b>
Verbal communication				
Non-verbal communication				
Active listening				
Giving and receiving feedback				
Presentation skills				

<b>Employability skill area: Business skills</b>	<b>Inexperienced</b>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Experienced</b>
Commercial awareness				
Customer focus				
Service orientation				
On-time delivery				

Employability skill area: Functional skills	Inexperienced	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced
Numeracy				
Language				
Communication				
ICT				

## Analyse current skillset

It is important to be realistic in your assessment when doing an audit. This includes not devaluing your skillset and strengths because you lack confidence. You could discount yourself from work opportunities that you are interested in because you don't believe you have the skills to do it. Be aware of this: it is usually their transferable skills that people undersell. Sometimes, it is worth asking relatives, friends and colleagues for feedback about your skills. This may help you to be more objective when completing your audit.

It may also be useful to compare the areas you highlighted as "Experienced" in the Employability skills areas with the activities and tasks you said you liked in Activity 2. It will highlight how you use these skills to get things done, and should get you thinking about how your areas of skill strength link to your preferences.



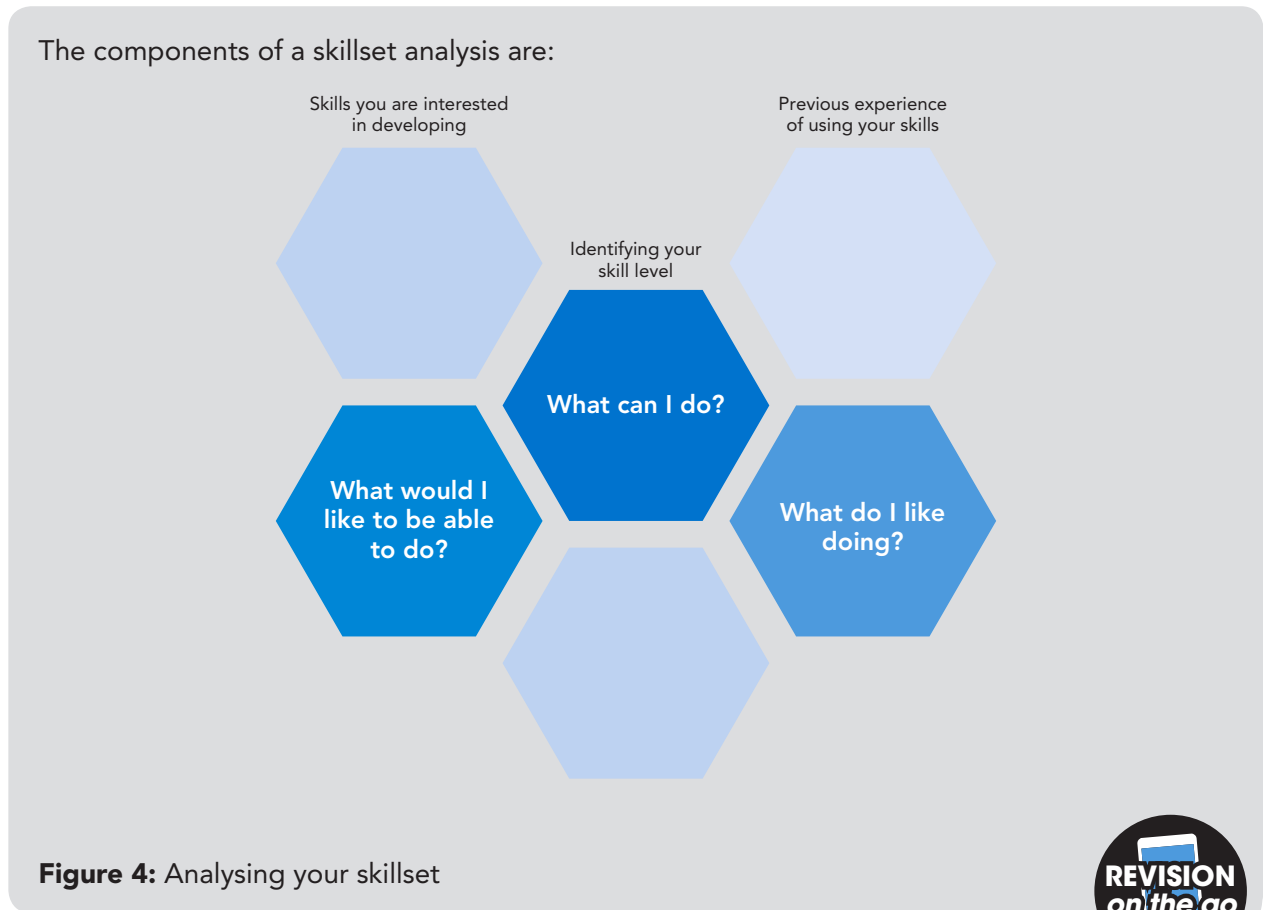
### OVER TO YOU

#### Activity 4: What can you offer?

**Research the skill requirements of different job roles. Consider yourself as an individual and what you can offer to an employer:**

- Research job roles on the internet.
- Write down the key skills, gifts and qualities that you think you can offer in relation to those roles.

**Identify what it is that the other people should know about you in order to get the best from you when working in those roles.**



## Areas for development

The skills audit can be used to highlight those areas that you want to develop for making the move into work. These areas for development will include skills that you have an interest in and, if you successfully develop them, may contribute to achieving your career aspirations.

**OVER TO YOU**

**Activity 5: Skills audit areas for development**

Think about the employability skill category descriptions described in **1.1 Employability skills desired by employers** and compare with the areas identified as Inexperienced, Beginner, Intermediate or Experienced Level in Activity 3.

- Write down which particular skills you would like to develop further in the table.

Skill area	Particular skill you would like to develop
<i>For example: Communication skills</i>	<i>Being confident giving a presentation</i>

## Skills for specific positions

As you increase your self-awareness of what skillset you have, you may have begun to expand your thinking as to what kind of work you might like to do. It is worthwhile putting your skillset into context, and considering the qualities and skills required for specific employment positions.



### OVER TO YOU

#### Activity 6: Skillsets for specific job positions

**Research the skill requirements for a job that you would like to do.**

- **What would you like to do? Write down the job areas you would like to work in.**
- **What skills might you need? Research the skills required for the job area you have identified.**

*For example: Community Arts Worker – creativity, the ability to generate new ideas, communication skills, project management, and planning and organising.*

## 2.2 Gap analysis

A gap analysis provides you with the information you need to put together your **personal development plan**. It examines the gap between your personal skills, strengths and preferences and those required for specific job roles.



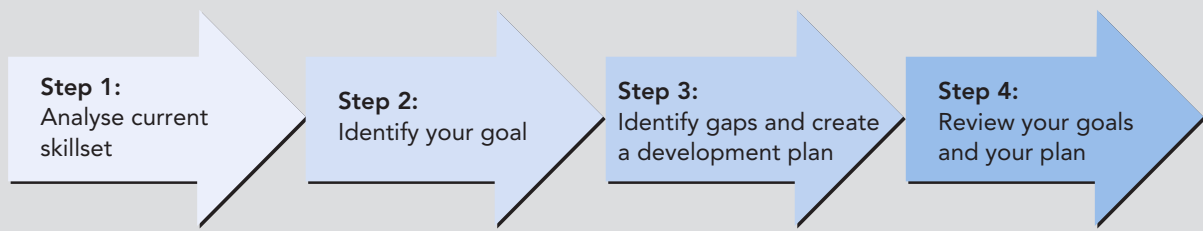
### NEED TO KNOW

A **gap analysis** involves examining the difference between your personal baseline of employability skills, as covered in section 2.1, and what is required for specific employment positions.



The process of gap analysis is designed to help you find out what skills gaps you have. It provides the basis for you to develop a plan to close those gaps to make sure you have the necessary skillset you need for a job role you want.

The gap analysis involves four steps:



**Figure 5:** Gap analysis process



## Step 1: Analyse your current skillset

### OVER TO YOU

#### Activity 7: Personal SWOT analysis

To help organise your thinking for the gap analysis, capture your thoughts from the previous activities in a personal SWOT Analysis.

- Strengths – What are your preferences and areas of strength?
- Weaknesses – What are your areas of weakness and skills that require development?
- Opportunities – What job roles are of interest to you?
- Threats – What barriers are there (skills and education) to you making the move into the job roles that interest you?

Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>For example: Very organised</i>	<i>For example: Numeracy</i>
Opportunities	Threats
<i>For example: Working with people, especially in retail, specifically fashion</i>	<i>For example: Confidence in communicating clearly what I mean</i>

## Step 2: Identify your goal

The second step of the skills gap analysis process involves identifying what work you would like to move into. Review your current skillset and preferences and consider what sort of roles you might be suitable for and that appeal to you.

At this stage don't dismiss possible prospective jobs just because you don't "tick all the boxes". Think about what you would like to do. Identify the skills that you need to develop to apply for that role.

You should also think about your short-term and long-term career aspirations. There might be several steps required to get to the job you really want in the long term. When you understand what you really want to do, you can research different career paths to get to your ultimate goals.

It may help to review your thoughts with a careers service, or someone in your network who may already be doing the job you are interested in. Take time to research different options.

### CASE STUDY

#### Researching career options: Mohammed identifies his career goal

Mohammed wasn't sure what career he wanted. He knew that he was interested in business, having previously worked in his family business, but he wasn't sure what type of business he wanted to work in, or what type of work he wanted to do in business. There just seemed to be too many options.

Mohammed discussed his options with his careers adviser at college and developed a plan for researching different career options. So he:

- approached his network, friends and family to discuss potential careers;
- took an online career assessment test;
- researched different careers online;
- visited a careers fair and discussed options with different exhibitors.



Following his research, Mohammed identified that he was interested in following a career in logistics and supply chain management. This played to his strengths as he was a natural organiser and was interested in both operations and the technical aspects of supply chains within businesses.

### OVER TO YOU

#### Activity 8: Research possible careers

- **Research possible jobs and career paths.**
- **Collect as much information as you can about the skills that are relevant to your desired sector, job or career. Make some notes in the space provided.**
- **If possible, also gather information about the descriptors for each of the skills and write them in the box.**

*For example: Review Career Assessment Tools & Test at <https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/career-assessment>*

### Step 3: Identify gaps and create a development plan

Once you have established a goal, and researched the skillset you will need for that job, you should highlight the gap between the skills you have now and the skills you need for your desired job goal.

There might be a number of areas that require development, so you may need to set priorities as to which personal development needs you will address first. If you have too many development needs at once it is difficult to maintain motivation. Keep to around three development areas at any one time.



#### OVER TO YOU

##### Activity 9: Identify the gaps

**Go through the descriptors for your desired job from Activity 8 and write down your present level for each of the skills: Inexperienced, Beginner, Intermediate or Experienced.**

**It may be useful to review your responses in Activity 3 to help you to identify the gaps.**

*For example: Accounting Skills – Beginner.*

Your personal action plan should include various strategies for closing the gap between your current skill level and the skillset required for your desired role. In order to develop your skills, and enhance your experience, you could try to do some of the following.

- **Volunteering:** unpaid work for an organisation, working in the job you would like to do.
- **Work shadowing:** similar to work experience, but learning about a job by spending the day with a person already in post; temporary and unpaid.
- **Work placements:** formalised placement in a workplace offering the opportunity for you to spend time carrying out duties and tasks in a particular role over an agreed period. This is usually unpaid.

- **Work experience:** unpaid opportunity to work in a specific role to experience what it is like to work in that field.
- **Part-time or full-time work:** paid employment.

There are various strategies you can adopt to develop skills and enhance your experience:



**Figure 6:** Opportunities to develop skills



Developing an action plan, or a personal development plan, is not something that is relevant just for gap analysis. As we have identified in the trends in the labour market, the world of work is constantly changing. As such, the skills that employers are looking for are constantly changing too. Therefore, in order to keep your skillset up to date it is important that personal development planning is something you do throughout your working life. **Lifelong learning** is important for individuals at any level in an organisation.

There are plenty of tools available online to support personal development planning. However, Activity 10 provides a simple template for you to use.

## OVER TO YOU

### Activity 10: Personal development planning

- **Complete a personal development plan to close the gap between your current skillset and your desired job goal.**
- **Consider the different opportunities to develop your skills, detailed on page 27.**
- **You should also consider training programmes and webinars that might assist you to develop your skills.**



My goal:			
What skill are you going to develop? What do you want to be able to do?	How? What action will you take?	What resource or support do you need?	When are you going to do it?
<i>Write concise and effective emails.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Review online sources on effective writing.</i></li> <li>• <i>Practise writing emails to colleagues.</i></li> <li>• <i>Seek feedback from colleagues on my emails.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Colleague support</i></li> <li>• <i>Manager support</i></li> </ul>	<i>Throughout the next month.</i>

### Step 4: Review your goals and your plan

The final part of your gap analysis process is to review and monitor the plan. This requires that you track your progress against your plan. First, you must monitor whether you are completing your action plan objectives. Secondly, you should assess whether your skills are improving and check that the gap between your skillset and the goal is reducing.

When you reach your target, remove that objective from your action plan, and add the next objective for you to develop.

Work and careers are a large part of our lives. Therefore, as much as possible, you should seek to shape your career rather than allowing your career happen to you.

This requires a mind-set of ongoing development. This may seem alarming when you are making the move into work. However, learning how to plan development, and getting into the habit of planning your development, will give you every chance of enjoying the career, or careers, you want.

Lifelong learning is the self-motivated pursuit of the development of new knowledge and skills not just for professional reasons, but because you are motivated to learn new things.

Finally, don't forget to celebrate your progress. Take time to enjoy and reward yourself as you meet your goals and plan objectives. This will help you to stay motivated and to continue to develop your skillset.

# Chapter 3

## Presenting What I Have to Offer

### Introduction

Despite having good qualifications and technical skills, many job applicants often fail to demonstrate their full potential to future employers during the recruitment process and, as a result, may not get the role they are seeking. This chapter builds on the previous two chapters by taking you through a generic job application process and preparing you for each step. This includes developing a personal profile and professional curriculum vitae, as well as helping to prepare for a job interview.

### Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

- 1 **Complete a job application and prepare for an interview based on your skillset**

### Assessment criteria

- 1 **Complete a job application and prepare for an interview based on your skillset**
  - 1.1 Use your skillset to complete job applications
  - 1.2 Use your skillset effectively for pre-interview screening and to prepare for interviews

# ABE Level 2 Award in Employability Skills – Making the Move to Work

## Background

When making the move into work, the idea of getting involved in job applications and interviews can sometimes feel overwhelming. You may also feel worried about the prospect of potentially dealing with rejection.

Most people, regardless of the job position they are applying for, feel the same way. We all want to be engaging and memorable – for the right reasons – and to be wanted; rejection is never pleasant. However, thinking carefully about our experience when we are unsuccessful in a job application can help us to identify areas that need to be improved when applying for the next job role.

If you have completed the activities in the previous chapters you will have a good understanding of what skills you have to offer an employer. Remember, if you lack confidence in what you have to offer, then why would a recruiter have confidence in you?

Some jobs require you to fill out an application form, which is the recruiter's own template that job seekers are required to complete. Application forms typically cover the same information as a curriculum vitae (CV); including previous work experience, education and contact details. You should complete an application form if asked to by the employer.

There are three golden rules when presenting what you have to offer:

- 1 Check and check again for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.** Simple mistakes make you look careless, and create a bad impression.
- 2 Ensure your presentation is clear and uncluttered.** Today, most application forms are electronic, but if you do have to handwrite an application form, write neatly. Make your CV and application letter easy to read.
- 3 Do not lie.** If you secure a job by lying, it is highly likely you will lose your job because you did not tell the truth in your application. Lying about qualifications and grades is a serious offence and could have far-reaching consequences, such as a prison sentence for grade fraud.

Remember, securing a job isn't about luck but persistence. By applying for as many suitable jobs as possible, you increase your chances of getting interviews. The more interviews you have, the better you get at interviewing. The result will be an improved chance of getting a job offer. Continued effort **will** result in success.

## CASE STUDY

### An author's tale: If at first you don't succeed...

You might read this study guide and think, how can this author be so sure that continued effort will result in success?

Around ten years ago I was made redundant. I'm a graduate, with plenty of qualifications, years of experience, and well-developed transferable and technical skills. It would be easy to think that I could walk into a job of my choosing. My previous job-hunting experiences *had* been easy. I would send out a few job applications and then start a new job within weeks of starting a job search.



This time, however, in a job search that took 11 months, I submitted over 800 job applications. Some were speculative applications; others were for advertised roles. I also did a part-time interim role for six-months to gain experience in the specific role that I wanted.

At one point I was told by a recruiter to stop applying because I would "never get a job" in the field I was interested in. It was disheartening and at times I did wonder whether I would ever get a job. But I decided to approach the job search in an organised and systematic way as if it was my full-time job.

Finally, I got two job offers in the same week, and landed the job I wanted. My continued effort meant that, eventually, I could prove that recruiter wrong.

## OVER TO YOU

### Activity 1: Why do you want to make the move into work?

**Until you start applying for jobs you don't know how long it will take you to find the job you want. Write below all the reasons why you are seeking to make the move into work so that, if and when you need some more motivation, you can remind yourself of all the reasons why you started in the first place.**

*For example: Earn enough to get my own place.*

## ! NEED TO KNOW

When applying for jobs, be persistent, check your application carefully, keep your presentation clear and always tell the truth about your qualifications and experience!



## 3.1 Complete a job application

### Developing a personal profile statement

The **personal profile** is an opportunity to introduce who you are and what you can offer to a potential employer. Often personal profiles lose their purpose, which is to make a statement about who you are and what makes you different from competing candidates. It can be used in your curriculum vitae (CV) but also on professional social media sites such as LinkedIn.

Like all elements associated with completing your job application, the personal profile must be authentic while matching to the job you are hoping to get. The best format for a personal profile is to develop a short paragraph of approximately four sentences. The profile is deliberately short because you don't want to bore the potential employer. At the same time you want to interest the potential employer to read more. Table 3 shows some of the qualities and characteristics you may want to describe.

#### What are your qualities and characteristics?

Adaptable	Fearless	Kind	Positive
Analytical	Friendly	Level-headed	Reliable
Assertive	Frank	Logical	Resilient
Committed	Genuine	Loyal	Resourceful
Conscientious	Generous	Mature	Self-confident
Creative	Genial	Methodical	Self-motivated
Decisive	Helpful	Measured	Sincere
Dependable	Honest	Objective	Thorough
Diplomatic	Innovative	Observant	Tenacious
Entrepreneurial	Interested	Open-minded	Tolerant
Enthusiastic	Independent	Personable	Understanding
Experienced	Keen	Persuasive	Versatile

**Table 3:** List of personal qualities and characteristics





## OVER TO YOU

**Activity 2: Developing a personal profile**

**Write a personal brand profile for yourself. Use the qualities and characteristics identified in Table 3 to help you complete this.**

For example: *A highly motivated and committed individual, I have a positive attitude and a keen interest in science. Known for my logical and methodical approach to work, I am seeking an apprenticeship as a laboratory technician. I have an enquiring mind and I am looking for the right opportunity to use my practical and technical skills to help carry out tests, research and investigations.*

**Describe your essential qualities and characteristics in three or four words. "A [quality] and [quality] individual, I have [quality] and [quality]."**

A \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ individual, I have  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**What do other people recognise as one of my core skills? – "Known for..."**

*Known for...*

**What are you looking for – "I am seeking..."**

*I am seeking...*

**What opportunity are you looking for? "I am looking for the right opportunity to..."**

*I am looking for the right opportunity to...*

## Developing a curriculum vitae

A curriculum vitae (CV) or **résumé** outlines your skills and professional experience. It should help you demonstrate to a potential employer that you meet the requirements for the position you are applying for.

### ! NEED TO KNOW

Curriculum vitae	Résumé
Detailed document outlining education, qualifications, experience and achievements.	Concise summary of your curriculum vitae focusing on specifics relating to the employment opportunity.
Expected to be used in the UK, Ireland, Europe, the Middle East, Africa or Asia. Also used in the USA in academia and medicine.	Frequently used in the USA and Canada.
Typically two pages.	Typically one page.

**Table 4:** The difference between a curriculum vitae and résumé

REVISION  
on the go

The terms curriculum vitae and résumé are interchangeable in other English-speaking countries, such as Australia, and also in India.

The important thing to remember about a CV is that it is a marketing document, where the brand you are marketing is yourself! It needs to be written to “sell” your skills, qualifications and experience to potential employers. You should use a CV when applying for a position where an application form is not being used or when sending in a **speculative application** for a vacancy that has not been advertised.

### ! NEED TO KNOW

There are many templates available for writing your CV online, and there is not a single correct format. How you choose to structure your CV, and what you include, will depend on how you want to market yourself. However, unless you are applying for a creative job, adopting a gimmicky approach might not be appropriate.

REVISION  
on the go

When writing and reviewing your CV, put yourself in the shoes of an employer and think about what impression your CV will be making about you as a potential employee.

## What the employer wants to know

*Who are you? How can I contact you if I want to interview you?*

**Personal details:** name, address, telephone and email.

*A CV gives facts that could be about anyone: can you tell me something about yourself that lets me know about you as a person?*

**Personal profile:** a brief personal summary to help you stand apart from the competition.

*What can you do?*

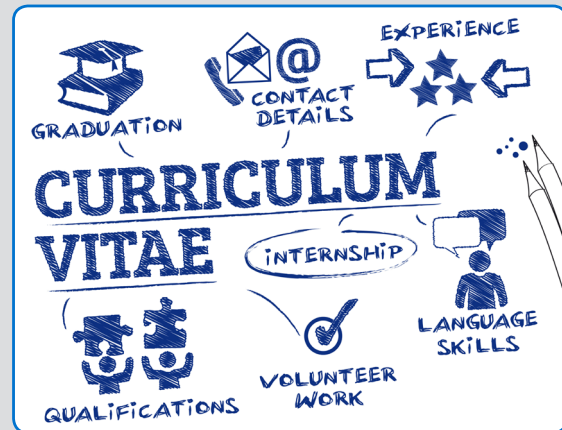
**Key skills:** highlight your employability skills and technical skills which are of relevance to the job you are applying for.

*What have you done? What experience do you have that is relevant to the job you are applying for?*

**Work experience:** highlight your key achievements on what you have done in previous roles, and the end results achieved. Use **accomplishment statements** that are constructed so they begin with a strong action verb and then capture the result of that action in terms of an outcome. For example: I developed and implemented a process that ensured all clients received their documents within three hours of a request being made.

*What do you know? What qualifies you to do this job?*

**Education and qualifications:** include qualifications by title, where you studied and the grade you achieved. Start your list with the most recent first and any qualifications you are currently studying should have an anticipated completion date.



## Buzzwords

For each accomplishment statement describing your key achievements in a role, it is recommended that you use buzzwords, which include strong action verbs which express your skills in regards to actions you have taken.

It is also recommended that you research specific buzzwords that are relevant to the industry and/or role you wish to apply for. This has several benefits.

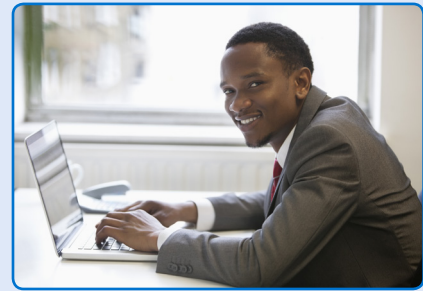
- If you use words in your CV that are in the job role advertisement or description your application will, in the mind of the recruiter, match what they are looking for.
- If you register your CV with an online job board then the key industry terms will be found when recruiters search the CV library.



## CASE STUDY

### Sabhir creates a buzz: seeking out a marketing role

Sabhir was applying for a role in marketing but was struggling to get any interviews. He decided to review his CV and change his employment history to include statements of achievement.



#### Current CV

##### Work history

- 2014 to Present      Marketing Assistant      ABC Design Ltd.
- 2010 to 2013      Marketing Admin      Viva Designs
- 2007 to 2010      Student      University of Glasgow
- 2008 to 2010      Cleaner      The Royal Hotel

#### Tips

- For each position include: the name of the organisation, month/year of start and end dates, job title and main accomplishments in the role.
- Remove irrelevant experience.

#### Revised CV

##### Work experience

#### ABC Design Ltd, Abingdon

**Feb 2014 – Present**

Marketing Assistant

- Facilitated the launch of new products for key B2B clients, generating £50K in sales – 2670 units – within 3 months of launch through the marketing campaign.
- Delivered 39% brand awareness following the implementation of a new marketing plan.
- Organised multichannel integrated campaign plans, resulting in a 24% upturn in client revenue.

#### Viva Designs, Oxford

**July 2010 – Dec 2013**

Marketing Administrator

- Assisted marketing manager with the delivery of marketing strategy to launch a client's new product, which resulted in the most successful launch in the client's history.
- Completed monthly summary reports detailing major client revenues, market share, product positioning and channel development.

**OVER TO YOU****Activity 3: Develop your CV**

Develop your CV by refining your personal profile from Activity 2. Use the following section headings:

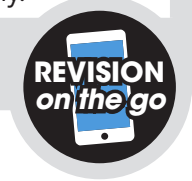
- Personal details
- Personal profile
- Key skills
- Work experience
- Education and qualifications

## Looking for jobs

Knowing how to search for jobs efficiently is a skill in itself. There are lots of different places where you can look for jobs. They include those shown in Table 5.

<b>Online</b>	Look at job sites to find relevant vacancies. Also look at LinkedIn Jobs. Post your CV online, so recruiters can find you.
<b>Newspapers</b>	Read the jobs pages in local newspapers and job supplements in national newspapers.
<b>Journals</b>	Review the job vacancy section in journals relevant to your specific sector. If you aren't sure of the journal for your industry, research this in your local library or online.
<b>Agencies</b>	Sign up with recruitment agencies relevant to the sector you are targeting. Meet recruitment agents to discuss your job aspirations and ask to be kept up to date with any positions that come up.
<b>Job centres</b>	Get job-hunting support, review the vacancies of local employers and identify employers in the local area that you could target speculatively.
<b>Noticeboards</b>	Employers advertise on college and university noticeboards. Take time to scan the noticeboards to see if there is anything relevant.
<b>Websites</b>	Identify organisations you are interested in working for and visit their websites. Review the current vacancies and information relating to careers. You could also identify those organisations that you could target speculatively.

**Table 5:** Where to look for jobs



### Where to find jobs



**Figure 7:** Looking for jobs



## Conducting desk research

The good news is that a lot of your job search can be done without leaving your desk. Desk research uses secondary data to find out information about specific organisations. This information can be found in your local library, online or through your personal contacts who may work for the organisation already.

## Develop a personal action plan

You should develop a personal action plan to search and apply for relevant vacancies. Without a plan, your goal of making the move to work may stay just a dream.

An action plan consists of identifying what actions you need to take in order to achieve your goal. These actions need to be SMART, as shown in Table 6.

<b>Specific</b>	What action are you going to take?
<b>Measurable</b>	How do you know when you have achieved the specific action?
<b>Achievable</b>	Is the action something within your control and which you can do? If not, revise the action.
<b>Relevant</b>	Will the actions you are proposing help you to achieve your goal?
<b>Timed</b>	When exactly will you have completed the actions you have stated?

**Table 6:** SMART actions

**REVISION  
on the go**

Your personal action plan will help you to keep a focus on your job search. Maintaining motivation can be difficult and detailing the SMART actions you will take will help you to continue with your efforts.

## Screen for and apply for jobs

Chapter 2 helped you to identify the skillset that you have to offer an employer. After you have researched suitable potential vacancies, you can start to look in detail at the skills required for each job. Match your skillset to specific job opportunities in order to screen for and apply for jobs.

### OVER TO YOU

#### Activity 4: Occupations that match your skills

**Refer to section 2.1 to review the assessment of your skills. Write down five job vacancies that you have found which are a good fit with your skills.**

Job vacancy skills requirements	My skillset
<p><i>For example: School Administrator</i></p> <p><i>Carry out filing.</i></p> <p><i>Deal with school post and emails ensuring that both are delivered to the correct personnel.</i></p> <p><i>Keep and update records as required and to maintain absolute confidentiality of staff and pupil records.</i></p>	<p><i>Self-management – planning and organising</i></p> <p><i>Business skills – on-time delivery</i></p> <p><i>Self-management – honesty and integrity</i></p>


## Job applications

Your job application is an opportunity to demonstrate to employers that you are the right candidate for the role. The purpose of the job application is to create enough interest to make the recruiter shortlist you for an interview.

### Application letters and/or covering emails

The application letter or email is just as important as your CV. A poor letter is likely to mean that your carefully crafted CV will never even be read. A good letter will make the recruiter want to find out more about you, and highlight what an attractive candidate you are for the position. The three key features of a well-written covering letter/email are that:

- it is tailored to the job you are applying for;
- you can demonstrate that you understand the post that is being advertised;
- it uses clear language and is presented neatly and professionally.

#### What every covering letter needs

*Who are you? How can I contact you if I want to interview you?*

**Your details:** Your name and postal address, in the top right hand corner.

*Who is this letter for?*

**Addressee details:** Title (Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss) name, job title and address of the person you are sending the letter to. In emails, full postal addresses are not required. If you don't know the person's name then write Dear Sir/Madam.

*What job are you applying for?*

**Job details:** Include a job reference number, and/or a given job title.

*How should you begin the letter?*

**Introduction:** Open your letter. For example: Please find enclosed my CV in application for the job of [insert job title], advertised in/on [publication or website]. I believe that I have the required skills and experience, and that my experience in [outline experience] and my ability to [outline key skill] make me the ideal candidate for this post.

*Why are you suitable for this job?*

**Develop a suitability statement:** Structure the main section of the covering letter around the job description. Describe what experience and skills you have that make you suitable for the job. Use examples and be specific on your role in achieving a desired outcome. You should include your personal profile statement within your suitability statement.

*How will you close the letter to leave a lasting impression?*

**Closing:** As well as wrapping up what you have said, it is important that the close of your letter will prompt the recruiter to take action. For example: "I hope this satisfies you that I have the necessary skills and experience for the role of [insert position title]. I look forward to hearing from you."



When you've finished drafting your covering letter/email, review it carefully. It is worth asking someone else to check it for you. A spellcheck won't highlight all mistakes, for example the use of *there* and *their*. Check that you are sending the letter in the correct format, and that it will arrive before the deadline. When you are satisfied, send the letter/email.



## OVER TO YOU

### Activity 5: Draft a covering letter

**Develop a covering letter and remember to include:**

- Your details
- Addressee details
- Job details
- Introduction
- Suitability statement
- Closing

## 3.2 Preparing for interviews

Congratulations, you have been invited to interview for a new job. All that hard work has paid off. However, don't stop now. You still need to prepare to make the best impression you can at the interview stage.

Remember that interviews are a two-way process. Not only is the organisation finding out if you are suitable for the role, but you also need to prepare to find out whether the role and organisation are right for you.

### Pre-interview screening

Pre-interview screening tests may be used for some jobs. These are designed to help recruiters filter out unsuitable applicants before scheduling interviews. There are two main types:

**Personality tests** assess your traits to predict the likelihood of you performing your job in a certain way.

**Aptitude tests** test your ability to do specific job tasks in different situations. These tests are more widely used. Test types include: numerical reasoning, verbal reasoning, logical reasoning, general ability, mechanical reasoning and spatial awareness. For example, if you are applying for a job in design or engineering, you might be asked to complete a spatial awareness test which assesses your ability to mentally manipulate images.

Practising to take these tests will help you become familiar with the types of questions being asked and comfortable with the format of such tests.



### OVER TO YOU

#### Activity 6: Have a go

**Search for aptitude and personality practice tests online and try a few practice tests. Make a note of any websites you find so you can come back and try again at a later date.**

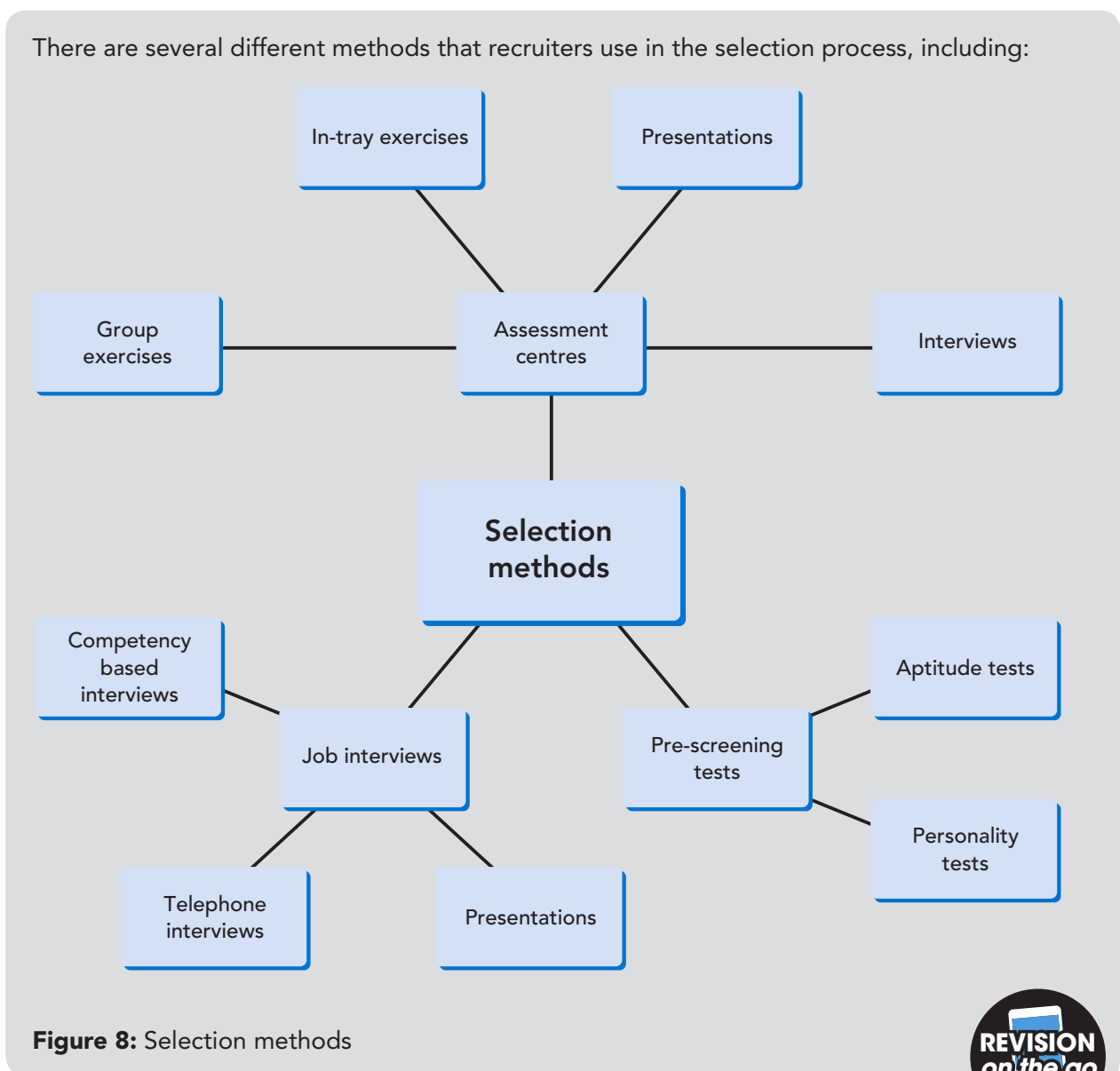
*For example: [www.practiceaptitudetests.com](http://www.practiceaptitudetests.com) or [www.psychometricinstitute.com.au/Free-Personality-Test.asp](http://www.psychometricinstitute.com.au/Free-Personality-Test.asp)*



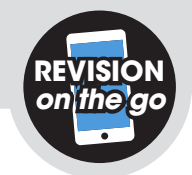
## Assessment centres and competency tests

You might be asked to complete your aptitude or personality test at an assessment centre. Assessment centres are also used by recruiters to observe how candidates perform in a variety of situations that simulate real-work situations. Depending on the job, they may include group work, presentations and interviews. These activities are used so recruiters can test the skills associated with the role that you are applying for. The specific competencies that you will be tested against will be available in the person specification or job description of the position you applied for. It is also worth noting that interviews may be competency based and can be used to explore specific skills against a pre-determined set of criteria.

You will be asked to provide examples of where you have displayed a competency before. For example, you may be asked to describe a situation where you have had to respond to pressure and stress to demonstrate the competency of resilience. The STAR outline, used in Activity 3, can be used to help you prepare for such questions.



**Figure 8:** Selection methods



## Preparing for interviews

The recruiter will assume that if you have applied for a job then you are interested in the organisation. It will not go down well if, in the interview, you have no knowledge of what it is the organisation does, its products, services or any current developments. Find out as much as you can about the company by doing further desk research.

Possible sources of information include those shown in Table 7.

<b>Organisation website</b>	Look for information about the organisation such as vision, objectives and company values.
<b>Company information</b>	Organisations often have a lot of information in the public domain, especially if they are large PLCs. Search online for press releases, marketing campaign information and any news reports on the organisation.
<b>Information pack/ application documents</b>	You may have been sent an information pack as part of the recruitment process. If possible find out how the position you have applied for fits into the organisation.
<b>Friends, family and professional contacts</b>	If you know someone who works at the organisation, try to find out some inside information to help with the interview process.

**Table 7:** Sources of information



## Preparing a job interview plan

The old motto “fail to prepare, prepare to fail”, is probably more fitting for job interviews than at any other point in your job search. It is important that you develop a clear interview plan, including a set of tasks to complete and questions to ask. Your plan should include the details shown in Table 8.

Area	How	Why
Knowledge of the position	Reviewing the personal specification and job description.	You need to be clear about what the position involves and how your skillset matches the requirements.
Questions about the organisation	From your desk research develop a list of questions about the organisation, the work, the team you are working with and the manager you will be reporting to.	Interviews are a two-way process. You need to ask questions too.
Standard interview questions	Prepare for standard introductory interview questions, such as “Tell me about your current job” and “Explain why you have applied for this job”.	You don’t want to sound scripted, but it will give you confidence if you are able to answer the introductory questions well.

Area	How	Why
Competency interview questions (if relevant)	Prepare examples of where you have demonstrated the required competencies, describing the situation in one or two sentences or less.	Again, you don't need to write a script but you will be able to articulate how your skills match the requirements for the job.
Interview day plan	Plan your travel arrangements, what you are going to wear and what you will take with you. Know who you are meeting, as well as where you are meeting them and when.	Planning for the day will ensure that you turn up to the interview unflustered, calm and professional.

**Table 8:** Developing an interview plan



 OVER TO YOU

**Activity 7: Develop your interview plan**

**Develop an interview plan for your upcoming interview.**

## Glossary

**Accomplishment statement** A bullet statement highlighting an achievement and describing actions you took in a particular role.

**Application form** A form to be filled out when applying for a job.

**Aptitude test** A test to help determine a person's ability, skills or knowledge.

**Audit** A formal, systematic review of your skills.

**Behavioural skills** Skills used to interact with others in the workplace to be successful in a job.

**Curriculum vitae (CV)** An account of your education, qualifications and work history to be sent with a job application.

**Emotional intelligence** The ability to identify and manage your own emotions and those of others, including emotional awareness and the ability to control and apply your emotions to tasks like problem solving.

**Employability** Doing work which is recognised as adding value, enhancing your ability to find employment.

**Employability skills** Transferable interpersonal and behavioural skills that make you more attractive to current and future employers.

**Gap analysis** Comparing current skill levels with desired performance.

**Hard skills** Specific teachable skills that can be defined and measured.

**Interpersonal skills** Skills used to interact with other people in order to get the job done.

**Lifelong learning** Formal and informal learning opportunities to continuously develop knowledge and skills need for employment and personal development throughout your life.

**Personal development plan** An action plan based upon goal-setting and planning for personal development for the purposes of career improvement.

**Personal profile** A personal summary at the start of your CV to introduce who you are to a potential employer.

**Personality test** Questionnaire designed to reveal character or personality of an individual.

**Résumé** A summary of a person's education, qualifications and work history.

**Soft skills** Interpersonal attributes that help you to interact effectively with other people.

**Speculative application** An application for a job which has not been advertised.

**STAR approach** Situation, Task, Activity, Result: a structured way to approach problem solving.