Employability Toolkit

Early Careers

Complete guide to applications, interviews and networking.

Abstract

A complete guide to provide students with guidance on each stage of the recruitment journey in early careers, from writing a CV to applying feedback.

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Part One
Your Journey Starts Here

Welcome to our Employability Toolkit!

At Boots, we offer a wide range of amazing Early Careers opportunities, from **work experience**, **apprenticeships**, **internships** to **graduate positions**.

This guide provides you with some useful hints and tips to support you when applying for a job, work experience or another experience relating to employability. From identifying your skills, understanding the importance of building a network to some practical advice on building a great application and preparing for an interview, everything you need to take that first step in your chosen career.

Introduction to Boots and Early Careers

Boots is the **UK's leading pharmacy-led health** and **beauty retailer** and has been blazing a trail over the last **170 years caring for customers**, patients and colleagues.

We have a real unique place in the heart of the communities we serve across the UK. Our business is grounded in the **care** and **wellbeing** of everyone that comes into our stores or visits us online. With **over 2,300 stores across the UK**, ranging from small community pharmacies to large destination health and beauty store our customers and patients are never far away from expert advice and support with their healthcare needs.

As a member of Walgreens Boots Alliance (WBA), a global company and leader in retail pharmacy with representation in 9 countries worldwide. Boots offers a wide range of career options across our business from working in Retail, Beauty, Pharmacy and Supply Chain across the UK to our Support Office in Nottingham.

As a team member on our Early Career Programmes, (i.e. apprenticeships, internships or graduate), you are a valued member of the team from day one. We understand the importance of setting up all new colleagues for success and offer all the guidance, support and encouragement they need to help them with their continued learning and development journey and kick starting their career.

For more information on all our Early Careers opportunities and an overview of our recruitment process check out the Early Careers page on our career's website www.Boots.Jobs

Welcome to our Employability Toolkit!

We are committed to living **our purpose**, **vision** and **values to support a healthier and happier world**.

Our Purpose:
More joyful lives through better health.

Our Vision:
To be the leading partner in reimaging local healthcare and wellbeing for all.

Our Values and Behaviours:
Courageous, Connected, Committed, Curious.

For more information on what is like to work for us, scan the QR code check out "Why Boots".

Keeping your options open

We all know how difficult it can be to decide on what you want to do when you leave school, college or university, so it's important to take time and consider all your options. There could be a career out there that you haven't already considered. Try to do as much research as possible, think about what you enjoy doing, what your strengths are. Why not create a list of some of the careers that may be of interest and start exploring them. Having all this information will help you make a more well-informed decision.

Remember there is more than one path to your dream career and through keeping your options open you can be super-flexible in the way you build your career. To understand more about your options, look out for university/college/employer open days, listen to podcasts or TED talks from influential leaders/people, attend careers events and explore the internet. One of the best ways to find out if a career is right for you is to gain some work experience in your area of interest. Why not take a look at our work experience programme at Boots by scanning the QR code to the right. This invaluable experience will provide you with a great overview of what it's like to work for us, give you some excellent transferable skills and provide you with some self-confidence in deciding your next career move.

Deciding what to do next?

Upon leaving school or college you may want to continue in education (i.e. go on to university or start another qualification) or decide to go into employment. There are lots of options our there; apprenticeships, traineeships, T levels all of which will give you great practical experience and, in some cases will allow you to gain a qualification whilst you start earning; Apprenticeships provide you with the opportunity to learn and study whilst on the job working.

To find out more about apprenticeships, traineeship and T Levels and apply why not visit the following websites:

https://www.gov.uk/find-traineeship
https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/students/find

Thousands of employers offer apprenticeships, traineeship and T levels why not check out some of the companies you are interested in to see what they have on offer. Here at Boots we offer some great Early Career options, check out www.boot.jobs to find out more.

Skills

Skills, knowledge and behaviours are things that you learn and help you to do things. Everyone has a skill, which can be based on your interests, natural abilities, personal qualities and technical skills. Skills can expand your knowledge and attitude which will help you do a task well.

Knowledge is about learning about aspects of a role or skill. A skill is about applying the knowledge learnt and behaviour is about how to conduct yourself. You can then continue with the elaboration of skills that you have already got.

This section in the guide will help you identify the different types of skills you have through reflecting on previous activities and experiences.

What types of skills are there?

Basic Skills: These fundamental skills are broadly known as literacy, numeracy and basic digital knowledge skills that are utilised for everyone in day-to-day life.

Essential Skills: There are the transferable skills that everyone needs to do almost any job, they can be referred to as core skills or employability skills.

Examples for the different types of essential skills are outlined below:

Listening
Ability to listen and understand information.

Presentation
The oral transmission of information or ideas.

Problem Solving
The ability to find a solution to a complex situation or challenge.

Creativity
The use of imagination/ generation of new ideas.

Staying Positive
The ability to use tactics to overcome setbacks and achieve goals.

Aiming High
Ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a route to achieving them.

Leadership
Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal.

Teamwork
Working co-operatively with others towards a shared goal.

Technical Skills

Technical skills are the skills that demonstrate the abilities and knowledge needed to perform a specific task. They are practical and often relate to a specific profession. For example, IT, scientific skills, mechanical and data analyst.

Here are some examples of technical skills:

- Programming - specific programming languages may be required for certain software engineering jobs.
- Project Management
- Operating manufacturing systems
- Technical writing
- Data analysis

Skills

Transferable Skills

Employers aren't always looking for previous work experience or specific academic qualifications, they are often looking for a variety of skills and attributes which you might have or have potential to gain. Transferable skills are the way in which you can a apply a set skill to multiple activities. For instance, a skill you might have demonstrated from an extra-curricular activity, such as teamwork, can be an essential skill for a job at a workplace working in a team to reach a common goal. These skills can often be referred to as soft skills.

When starting out in your career, employers are looking for potential and evidence that you would succeed in the job. If you demonstrate some of the core skills required, they can teach you the more technical, role-specific skills the job requires.

Now it's time for you to identify some of your transferable skills!

To make it easier for you to reflect and identify the transferable skills you're already developing, grab a pen and have a go filling out the table below. In the first column, start to think about previous activities and positions you've held, and the tasks involved. Then, reflect back to the essential skills listed before as examples and plot in the skills you demonstrated. The example below shows how being part of a sports team at school can transpire into transferable skills through the tasks involved.

To further understand and recognise your transferable skills visit Skills Builder, a fantastic website to help you develop your transferable skills and has some great resources and tools to help you.

https://www.skillsbuilder.org/

Position	Key tasks involved	Skills demonstrated
Member of my school netball team.	Practicing and competing as part of the team representing my school.	Teamwork

Skills

Preparing for the virtual world of working

As the use of technology has and is rapidly increasing in both work and education, the need to develop digital skills is increasing. As companies around the world are switching to hybrid working models, remote working and learning is becoming increasingly popular. There are ways in which you can develop your digital skills to help you adapt to advances in technology which may become a core skill for future employment, such as:

- Upskill yourself through an online digital course - different free online courses can help you develop your digital skills and the qualification is something you can add to your CV to demonstrate how you have been pro-active in wanting to upskill yourself.
- Develop methods of communicating online with others - make sure you have an email address from an easy-to-use service. As well as being able to effectively communicate online via emails, organisations also use video software such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Skype. Utilise downtime by getting familiar with the software and exploring its capabilities.
- Increasing online presence - Having an online presence is slowly becoming a key component in how individuals communicate and see what is going on. Applications such as LinkedIn is a great tool for this.
- All in all, the best thing to do is practice your skill, this will help you develop and give you a great boost in confidence.

Top tip:

When applying for a job or to higher education try to identify the skills they are looking for or what is required in the job description and think of an example where you have demonstrated this. This will highlight you can transfer the skill gained from a previous experience to the position you are applying for.

Networking

How to network effectively

Networking can be defined as interacting with other like-minded individuals in a professional or social context, with a view of exchanging information that can support your ongoing development or career aspirations.

What are the benefits to networking?

- Improve current skills/create new skills
- Learn about a position or career of interest
- Connections lead to more connections
- Access to more resources and opportunities
- Build great relationships

Preparing to network

Starting conversations with people you do not know, especially in person can be scary; however, here's some steps you can take to make the most out of any networking opportunity:

- **Prepare** – consider the context of the networking opportunity and what you want to get out of it? Think about who will be attending and the questions you want to ask.
- **Introduce yourself** – at the start of any meeting make sure you briefly introduce yourself.
- **Ask open ended questions and listen** – ask open ended questions to allow the others the opportunity to give detailed answers and then show active listening skills and remain engaged.
- **Continue the relationships** – if you would like to continue the relationship, seek the chance to exchange contact details or make a connection with them via social media so that you can continue the conversation.

Where can I find networking opportunities?

Networking opportunities can present themselves in many different settings and can be formal or informal. Here are some situations or settings that can provide great networking opportunities:

Informal – day to day networking:

- Social media - this is a quick, far reaching and effective method of networking. See our social media section in this guide for more information on this.
- Online forums or groups – conduct a search and join relevant networks that are of interest to the direction you want to go in.
- Building ongoing relationships with existing contacts including family, friends, colleagues, tutors or peers.

Formal - proactive approach:

- Attending clubs or societies which could be social or professional in nature.
- Volunteering or through work experience.
- Face to face industry open days, events or talks.

Whichever setting or method you chose to conduct your networking activities, the aim is to make valuable and relevant connections.

Networking

⭐ Networking Top Tips!

Effective networking takes time and commitment, so it is essential that you approach it in the right way. Here's some top tips to help you succeed:

- **Build trust by being honest** – this is key. Be open and honest about your skills and intentions to help build the trust.
- **Respect the relationship** – ensure you show respect to those you meet, especially if someone offers to give up their time to help you.
- **Maintain confidentiality** – it is possible that your connections may share sensitive information with you. Always maintain confidentiality and never share information of this nature with others.
- **Invest your time** – prepare for networking opportunities or for conversations with your connections to ensure that you are getting the most out of the opportunity.
- **Be clear** – if there is a particular purpose you wish to achieve through networking then be clear and open about these expectations or aims so that the right person can be identified to support you.
- **Share something back** – networking and the relationships you build should be mutually beneficial so also ensure that you share any information or insights back to your network when you are able to do so.
- **Quality not quantity** – it is impossible to effectively maintain relationships with a large network. Identify those individuals or groups that are mutually beneficial and can help you to achieve your goals, then continue to build those relationships on an ongoing basis.
- **Review** – at times your goals or aims will change. When this happens, review your network to establish whether you need to branch out in a new direction.

Create a networking checklist

Through keeping your networking accounts in one document it can help you keep track of what communication you have had with which companies. When it comes to you wanting to apply for a job, you can refer back to this and reach out to any relevant contacts you have.

Networking event/ opportunity	Date	Contact information (including email)	Context/what was discussed	Date sent follow-up email	Connected on LinkedIn?

Networking - LinkedIn

How To:
Linked in

What is LinkedIn and why should I use it?

- LinkedIn is a professional networking site.
- Build your professional reputation and online presence.
- Opportunity to network and connect with colleagues and industry peers.
- A place to share positive company news, achievements & reasons why Boots is a great place to work.
- Keep up to date with industry news.
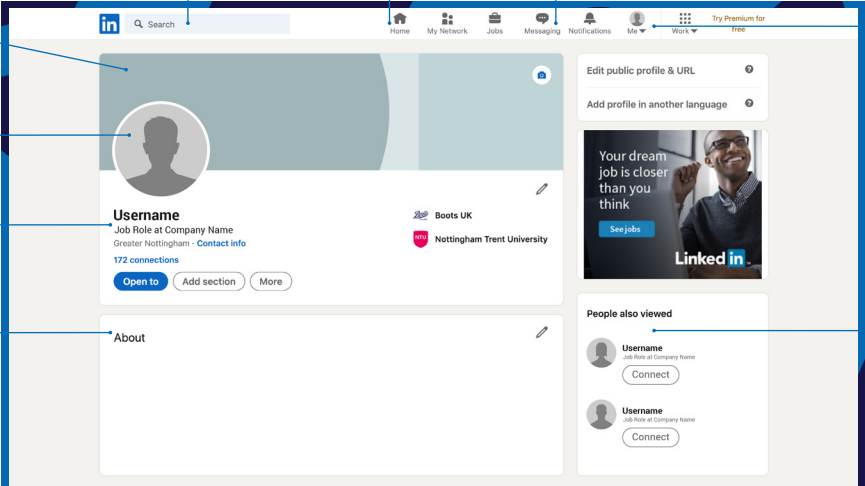- Minimum age of 16 years old to create an account.

How to create a LinkedIn account

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network on the internet. You can use LinkedIn to help you find the right job, network with employers and learn about the skills you need to succeed in your career. Follow the checklist below when setting up your LinkedIn, to ensure you have covered all aspects and it will strengthen your profile. Reference your CV when setting up your profile, as sections such as experience, education and your profile can be drawn from there. Once you have set up your LinkedIn account, keep your profile up-to-date with any job changes as you progress in your career!

Profile Checklist:

☐	**Name**	☐	**Company** Your profile should say who you currently work for.
☐	**Location & Industry**	☐	**Education** List your education e.g. University and/or School attended.
☐	**Profile Picture** Use an up to date, high quality headshot.	☐	**Experience** LinkedIn recommend listing at least 3 recent jobs with descriptions of duties & accomplishments.
☐	**Job Title**	☐	**Connect** Connect with past and present colleagues and friends.

Networking - LinkedIn

Profile

Search bar allows you to search for people, jobs, posts & more.

Home will take you to your news feed.

Here you can see your messages with other LinkedIn members.

Customisble header banner.

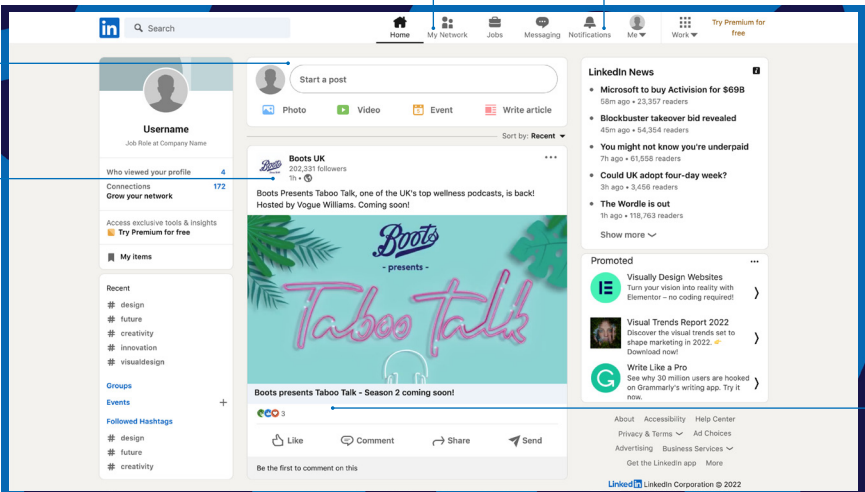Your profile picture should represent who you are as a professional.

Job title and company.

About section and rest of profile follows (see guides on profile best practice for how to complete these fields).

Here you access settings, help, & can manage your accounts.

LinkedIn shows other LinkedIn members who have been viewed by the people who have viewed your profile.

Home Page

My Network. Here you can see who has sent you a connection request and recommended people.

Notifications. Here you can see who has liked, shared or commented on your post.

Click here to write a post. The icons are to add photo & video to the post.

This is your newsfeed where you can see posts from people you are connected with.

Under posts you can see how many people have liked it, like it yourself, comment on the post or share the post with your network.

Grow your LinkedIn network

Now you have created your profile, here are our top tips for growing your professional network online:

- **Increase your connections:** connect with employers you are interested to work for and connect with those in roles that maybe of interest. If you have completed some work experience with a company, why not connect with the company and some of their employees. Personalise your connections, letting the individual know what areas of careers you are interested in.
- **Be active:** like, share, comment and post to demonstrate your likes and interests. Through posting sharing your achievements or re-sharing articles/posts it keeps you visible to your connections.
- **Keep your profile up-to-date:** when you further your education, employment or volunteering make sure you update your profile to share this with all the people/employers you are connected with.

Social Media

Social media has been fully integrated into every day modern life, with many people being active on a number of different social media platforms on a daily basis. With almost unlimited information at our finger tips, sometimes the amount of information can be a bit overwhelming, and it can be difficult to know where to start and which sources are credible.

This section of our guide will provide some key information, from how to use it effectively, how to protect yourself online through to the different types of social media channels and their benefits.

How to use social media effectively

Social media is a great tool and when used effectively will help you with your job search and build your professional network.

- Think about the companies that you are interested in working for and find out which social media platforms they are on.
- 'Like' or 'follow' their pages to receive updates on your news feeds.
- Begin to interact with them or their employees by liking, sharing or commenting on their content.
- Send connection requests to relevant company professionals, where appropriate.

Types of Social Media

With so many different social media platforms it can be hard to know where to start. Each platform tends to have a particular feel or purpose.

Below are some example platforms and how companies like to use them.

Facebook

Also known as Meta, tends to host mix content somewhere in-between the more formal approach of LinkedIn and the casual feel of Instagram. Also, a good place to look out for job adverts.

YouTube

Hosts videos content which can include promotional material and more in-depth information/content about the company.

Instagram

A platform for companies to showcase their products, services, employees and can give a real-life snapshot into company life.

Twitter

Great for sharing short messages, announcements and pictures. Many companies will have multiple accounts for different areas of the business such as customer services, recruitment, technical support etc.

LinkedIn

Companies tend to place their biggest focus on LinkedIn and will share stories, job vacancies and company news. This is a great place to start researching a company as this is likely to contain up to date information and content. It is also a great place to build a professional network.

Social Media

Here at Boots we have a number of social media channels, why not check us out and follow:

www.facebook.com/BootsJobs
www.facebook.com/BootsUK/

www.instagram.com/boots.jobs
www.instagram.com/bootsuk

www. twitter.com/Boots_Jobs
www.twitter.com/BootsUK

www.linkedin.com/company/boots

Protecting Yourself Online

- Check your privacy settings. Every social media platform offers ways to control what information you're sharing. Ensure you set your profile to 'private' so that only you are in control of who can see your posts, pictures etc. Don't forget to check your settings regularly.

- Always think before you post; remember, anything you post could be shared or reviewed at a later date. Always make sure that any comments you make on company pages or posts are appropriate. If you are unsure about whether you should post a particular comment, it probably means you shouldn't!

- Only accept friend requests from people you know and that you are sure are from accounts that are genuine. If in doubt do not accept.

- Report people and any inappropriate conversations they may have had with you. Tell your parent, carer, guardian or teacher. Also report to the site administrator of the channel via the 'help' or 'report' tab (if available) and always keep a copy of the conversation as evidence. Always report it!

- Protect your personal details – do not share your contact details, address, password or other personal details online.

- Be careful when checking in places or sharing your location. Remember you are essentially sharing your whereabouts with everyone who has access to what you are posting. Switch off any live location sharing on apps such as Snapchat and consider how someone could locate you from the locations that you are tagged in.

- Look out for suspicious messages and phishing scams.

- Keep an eye on your passwords and follow the guidance on password setting... always create a password that is unique.

For more useful information please refer to:
https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/social-media-guides

Remember to **always protect yourself** whilst online!
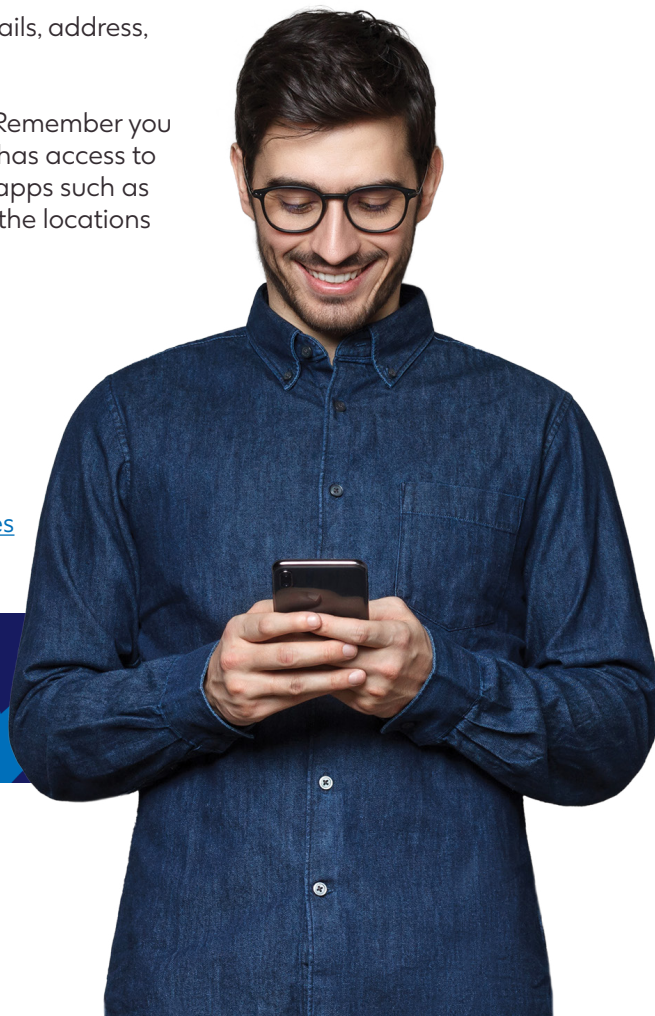
Social Media

FAQs on Social Media

Why should I invest time into social media when conducting my job search?

Company social media sites will usually host the most up to date information and real-life stories and insights. You may also receive updates when job vacancies are posted or when recruitment campaigns go live rather than having to search for this information on the company's website keeping you ahead of the game.

Will potential employers look at my social media accounts?

The true answer is, maybe. Some employers sometimes screen social media accounts before inviting you to interview or offering you a role. Therefore, make sure that you consider what content you are happy share to be viable to potentially your new boss. Also, on sites such as LinkedIn, employers and recruiters may conduct a search for relevant individuals to approach directly for job opportunities.

Is it OK to send connection requests to people I do not know in order to build my professional network?

It is widely acceptable that you can connect in and build a professional network on platforms such as LinkedIn. On other platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, look out for employees that have accounts for business use and connect with those rather than their personal accounts. However, when doing so, remember that they will then be able to see any private content of yours that may be more social in nature.
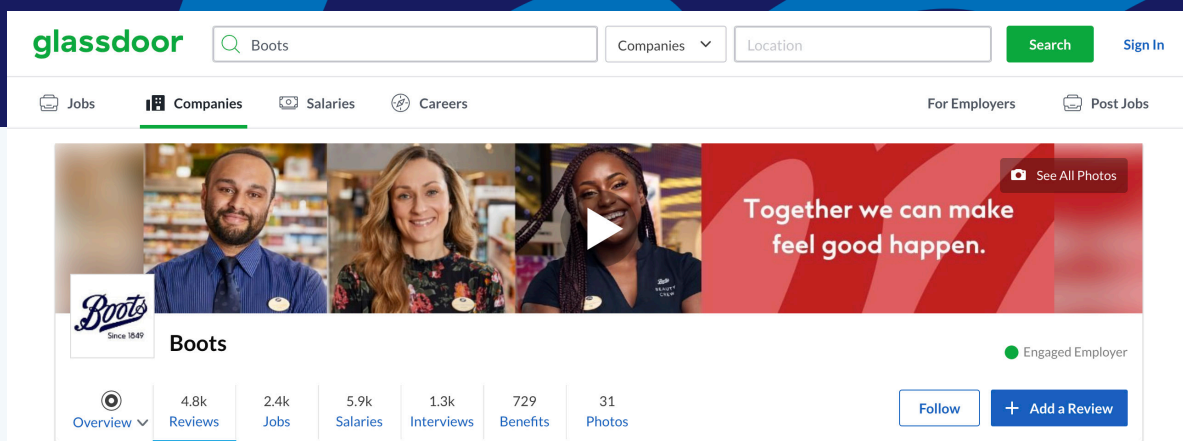
What is Glassdoor?

- A website where current and past employees anonymously review companies.
- A place where you can visit and read reviews on companies and positions you are interested in to help inform your decision on if it's right for you- you can find out what it's like to work there by hearing first hand from current and past employees.
- Glassdoor also offers millions of the latest job listings- you can set up job alerts.
- If you have a work experience or volunteering experience with a company, you can leave a review so future candidates can gain an insight into what it's like to work there.

Stepping into the world of work

When entering the world of work, a big part of any role is all about your relationship with your work colleagues, clients and customers and how you make them feel through your behaviour, demeanour and communication. It's all about treating people with respect and demonstrating good manners in a professional way.

Although some business ways of working can vary from country to country some principles have stood the test of time.

Here are some examples:

Arrive on time
Being punctual will show your respect for others.

Meetings
Arrive on time, be prepared and ready to take notes or present. Stay engaged during and avoid going on your mobile phone or ipad for non-work-related activities.

Speak kindly
to others and show interest in what they are saying.

Don't interrupt
when others are speaking - Interrupting the person who is speaking sends the message that what they are saying isn't as important as what you have to say.

Show appreciation
to colleagues and customers and send thank-you notes.

Use formal modes of address
when communicating online. For example, ending an email with "Kind Regards".

RSVP
and reply to meeting invites.

Treat
everyone with respect and kindness.

Follow the dress code
dress appropriately for business and office environments. (Dress codes should be stated in an employee hand-book, but if unsure check with your manager/point of contact).

Platforms such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor and a company's website can be utilised ahead of any application process or interview to understand the practices and principles of that organisation. Different businesses have different values which can be researched through their website and through talking to existing colleagues.

Part Two

The Application Process

Creating a CV and covering letter

How to write a great CV

As employers, we see hundreds of CVs and applications on a day-to-day basis. That's why yours needs to stand out, for the right reasons. Employers get the chance to only briefly scan your CV before deciding if it's a keeper, so it has to grab their attention straight away. Application processes vary by employer as some may not ask for CV, however, it's good practice to have one and use the information if the application process asks you to input directly.

Your CV and application is the big chance to make that first and lasting impression, so it's worth investing time and effort on content and presentation whilst also ensuring that in contains all the right information.

Writing your first CV

Creating your first CV when you are making the transition from education to the world of work might seem a challenge. But don't worry! Even if you are applying for your very first job, you are likely to have more relevant experience and transferable skills to bring to the role then you may think. There are a number of key skills that employers look for that you will have already started to develop during your time in education:

Listening	**Presentation**	**Problem Solving**	**Creativity**
Ability to listen and understand information.	The oral transmission of information or ideas.	The ability to find a solution to a complex situation or challenge.	The use of imagination/ generation of new ideas.

Staying Positive	**Aiming High**	**Leadership**	**Teamwork**
The ability to use tactics to overcome setbacks and achieve goals.	Ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a route to achieving them.	Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal.	Working co-operatively with others towards a shared goal.

The trick is to bring these skills to life on your CV by providing examples of when you have learnt or demonstrated these skills.

Is there a project, assignments or coursework that was particularly challenging or that you were proud of? This may demonstrate creativity, problem solving, presentation skills and more.

Sharing the details of any societies, clubs or volunteering that you have been involved in is a must as these extra-curricular activities can demonstrate a number of different skills. Refer to the skills section in this guide to help you identify your transferable skills which you can apply in your CV.

Always include any activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award as this will give you the opportunity to touch on a number of the skills listed.

Creating a CV and covering letter

CV Top Tips Checklist

CV Checklist!			Tick once completed!
	Use a clear, simple layout.	Select a CV template that is easy to read, simple and well presented. Make use of bullet points, bold etc to make it easy for the hiring manager to recognise your skills and behaviours suitable for the job. There are plenty of template resources online to choose from. Don't try and make the layout too complicated as this might make it difficult to print or view on different software and use a professional font. (see example on next page).	☐
	Length- Usually 2 sides of A4.	Ideally your CV should be around two sides of A4 so be concise and to the point. You can be selective on what you include, selecting your career highlights with the most relevant and up to date information and experience. Make sure that the text size is not too small and that you leave space between sections, don't cheat by making your font size tiny.	☐
	Demonstrate your sills!	Relate your experiences to skills that will be valuable to the role you are applying for. Draw from experiences such as volunteering, hobbies and achievements outside of work and education which will show you personality too.	☐
	Tailor it- Take the time to tailor your CV for each role you apply for.	When reading a job description, look for any key skills or qualities they are looking for in an applicant, as well as researching the company and their values etc. Draw from your experiences skills that demonstrate why you would be a perfect fit for the job and company.	☐
	Check- watch out for grammar and spelling mistakes.	Make sure you check your spelling and grammar before submitting your CV or ask someone to check it for you.	☐

Creating a CV and covering letter

CV Template

CV Template Guide

Contact Details your name, phone number and email

Personal Profile:

• Introduction to yourself: briefly summarise who you are, what you have achieved to date, your career aspirations are and why the role you are applying for is of interest.

• What are your key strengths and skills?

Employment History: (Paid and unpaid/volunteering work)

• Where have you worked? (Include duration of the work and job title)

• What are the roles and responsibilities? Any key achievements?

Education:

• What qualifications do you have?

• What skills did you demonstrate during your studying which would be relevant to the job you are applying for?

  Tip: Include subjects and grades and order it with the most recent studies first.

Key Skills:

• What skills have you gained through your life experience which could be transferred into the role you are applying for? Include examples to evidence these skills.

Achievements:

• Any key achievements that will make you stand out?

Interests/Hobbies:

• What are your hobbies or interests? Any skills that can be drawn and transferred from these?

References:

• Think about who could write you a good reference - you can always say "available upon request" to save space on your CV. Remember to check-in with your referee to check they are happy to be your reference in advance.

Together we can make feel good happen *Boots*

With you. For life.

Creating a CV and covering letter

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a document which some job applications require alongside your CV when applying for a job. It gives you an opportunity to sell your application and let the employer know why you are a perfect fit for the company and vice versa. You can demonstrate why you're the best candidate for the job through highlighting relevant skills and behaviours through experiences. For each job you apply for you will need to write a new cover letter, as it should reflect the company you are applying for and demonstrate the key skills and responsibilities of the role you are applying for. Cover letters are usually one A4 page long, and usually are made up of 3-5 short paragraphs.

Top tip:

Cover letters are not the same as the personal statement section in your CV, the cover letter should complement your CV but not duplicate it.

How to write a cover letter

Before you start writing your cover letter it is important that you research about the company and gain a good understanding of what skills the role requires that you're applying for.

As a starting point, here is a guide of areas you could research about a company:

- What are the company's values, mission and purpose? Do they align with yours?
- What's the culture of the organisation (check the company website, LinkedIn and Glassdoor for an internal perspective)?
- What is the company's position in the market? Who are their competitors?
- What is the latest news surrounding the company? Are they working on any recent projects? (LinkedIn is always a great source to see what employees are posting about).

Cover Letter Top Tips

- **Tailor to the organisation** - you should write a new cover letter for each job application you apply for. Through tailoring it you can target the company and demonstrate your interest in the job through applying research as suggested above.
- **Have a clear layout** - Keep your font size and style consistent with your CV.
- **Check your grammar and spelling** - ensure you have proof read your cover letter before sending it!
- **Identify your unique selling points** - this is your opportunity to draw from your CV and sell yourself to the employer as the ideal candidate.
- **Include examples** - draw from experiences from school- any extra curriculum activities, volunteering or work experience which can demonstrates your skills.

Creating a CV and covering letter

Here is an annotated cover letter (this example is not on an internal one, it has been used for the purpose of illustrating an example of a clear layout).

Date your cover letter at the top and put your name and contact information.

February 18th, 2021

First & last name
Job role/department
First line of address
City/Town
Postcode

Address a cover letter directly to the person who will be reading it if known. If there isn't a name/contact, you can use a generic greeting such as "Dear Sir/Madam".

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,

Consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.

Opening paragraph - introduce what you are applying for and why.

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Second paragraph - opportunity for you to highlight relevant skills and requirements from the job description - relate this to any key experiences where you have demonstrated this.

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Third paragraph - This is your opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the company. Summarise why you want to work for their company in particular and why you would be a good fit for them. Do you have any traits of skills which can benefit the company?

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Last paragraph - reiterate your interest in the role and summarise the letter.

Sincerely,

Signature

First & last name

Close formally, if you have a named contact, sign off "Yours Sincerely", if you used a general greeting, close with "Yours Faithfully".

For more examples and templates of covering letter and CVs why not check out the internet, there are lots out there.

Online assessments/tests

When you apply to some jobs you may be required to complete an online assessment or carry out an exercise. There are many different assessments out there. Some help identify your skills and knowledge, and some are to assess your ability to think, reason and problem solve.

Many employers use these assessments/tests to help them identify candidates who are the right fit for the role but remember they will also help you identify if the role is right for you. If you require any reasonable adjustments during these tests, such as extra time, please contact the employer.

Whatever assessment you encounter, practice is the key to success. There are lots of sample assessments and exercises on the internet you can try out.

Psychometric Tests

These tests help identify your skills, knowledge and personality. They are often used as part of the second screening stage in the recruitment process, or as part of an assessment centre. They're objective, convenient and a strong indicator of job performance - which makes them very popular with employers. The majority of psychometric testing is completed online, though some paper questionnaires remain. Most tests are timed, but some can be completed in multiple sittings.

There are two main types of psychometric tests: aptitude tests and personality tests.

Aptitude tests

Aptitude tests assess your reasoning or cognitive ability. They are often administered under exam conditions.

Common tests include:

- **Diagrammatic reasoning** - this test asks you to analyse a sequence of shapes, patterns and sometimes numbers. This test is also known as an inductive or abstract reasoning tests, as they assess your ability to identify the rules that apply to the sequence and it to pick your answer.
- **Error checking** - error checking tests are where you demonstrate your ability to identify any mistakes, irregularities and inconsistencies within datasets or text.
- **Numerical reasoning** - numerical reasoning is a test which focuses on maths skills. The tests are usually multiple choice and can include: interpreting data from a range of formats, percentages and proportions, fractions and ratios, estimations, currency conversions. Inflation and rebasing and critical reasoning.
- **Verbal reasoning** - verbal reasoning tests focus on how well you can analyse written information. Usually, they present you with a passage of text which you then answer questions about and sometimes there is a section where you identify grammar and spelling mistakes from a piece of text.
- **Spatial reasoning** - spatial reasoning tests are used to assess your capacity to manipulate 2D and 3D objects, spot patterns between shapes and visualise movements and changes in those shapes.

Online assessments/tests

⭐ **Top Tips!**

Lots of practice

Some companies will give you a practice test before the actual test begins so you know what to expect, if not take a look on the internet there are lots of practice tests out there.

Have the right equipment

E.g. pens, paper, calculator, ruler (if needed), a watch and a dictionary.

Read the instructions

Before starting the test, read the instructions carefully and identify what you are being asked to and how long you've got to do it.

Keep an eye on your emails

Watch out as sometimes an employer will send you a link with a test to complete within a short amount of time such as, 24 hours.

Be aware of time

Make sure you are aware of how long you have for the entire test and work out how long it gives you per question.

Keep Calm

Keep calm and try your best, if you can't answer a question move on to the next and come back to it if possible. It's better to use your time effectively answering questions you can/ could answer rather than pondering over ones you don't immediately know the answer.

Personality tests

Personality tests explore your interests, values, motivations and analyses how your character fits for role and company. There are lots of different personality tests employers use such as the Myer-Briggs Type Indicator, the Occupational Personality Questionnaire and Strengthscope.

When taking a personality test, make sure you:

- Take the test in a familiar, quiet environment
- Read the questions carefully
- Answer honestly and be consistent in your responses
- Trust your initial reaction- answering at pace accurately can help you achieve this.

Assessment Centres

Assessment centres (or assessment days) often involve a combination of tasks and activities that test your suitability for the job. You'll have the chance to demonstrate a wider range of skills. You'll usually be joined by a number of other candidates and you will work both individually and as part of a group on a variety of exercises. It's important to keep focused on your own performance throughout the day and not to compare yourself to the other candidates. Assessment centres are often the final stage of the selection process here at Boots.

Individual Activities

Most assessment centres will contain a variety of individual exercises and assessments.

The most common are as follows:

- **Interview** - you can read our advice about preparing for interviews on our Interview fact sheet (see interview section for guidance on this).
- **Analysis/case study** - this will normally involve reading through various pieces of information and drawing conclusions or recommendations to present back in a written or verbal form.
- **Presentation** - presentations briefs may be given in advance or you may be set a brief on the day under a time constraint. Expectations will be different depending on this but don't forget to ensure structure to your presentation content and to engage with the assessor as you present.
- **Role play exercise** - ensure you are clear on who your 'character' is and also the role that the assessor is undertaking so that you present the information or your response in the right way.
- **In-tray exercises** - this will test your ability to prioritise and respond to tasks in order of importance and urgency.
- **Aptitude tests** - these may be an extension of tests you have already completed during the application process such as verbal and numerical reasoning tests or additional tests relevant to role.

Group Activities

Group activities will require you to undertake different tasks and will be carried out in different formats. Ultimately, any group assessment is trying to establish how you work with others as most company's require a degree of collaboration and team work.

There are a number of different behaviours that the assessors will want to see, so think about how you can demonstrate these within the task you have been set:

- You need to strike the right balance between speaking to much and not speaking enough. Share your ideas and opinions whilst also letting others get involved with the conversations. Don't talk over people, instead allow them to make their point but then find the opportunity to speak up as soon as you can.
- Ensure you speak loudly and clearly. If the assessor cannot hear what you are saying, they cannot give you credit for your contribution.
- Don't be afraid to debate your point and challenge others but always be considerate and respectful. If your idea or opinion is not accepted by the group, then know when to back down and don't take it personally.
- Bring others in to the conversation. If you notice someone has not spoken for a while, ask them directly for their thoughts to get them involved.
- Keep engaged with the conversation and show active listening skills throughout. Don't bury your head into any paperwork or notes.
- Keep track of the time and help the group to structure the task so that you complete the task by the end of the timed activity.
- If you feel comfortable, offer to note take but do not let this get in the way of contributing to the discussion.

Assessment Centres

Assessment Day Checklists!

In preparation/before an assessment centre

Checklist!	Tick once completed!
Read through your invitation to the assessment centre carefully and when you first receive it; it may give you some insight as to what to expect on the day to help you prepare.	☐
Research the company and any key literature available (e.g. finance and Corporate Social Responsibility reports- reporting showing businesses contribution to societal goals such as charity work).	☐
Reflect on your first interview, if you had one, and take in any feedback received. Go through the key skills of the job and re-visit your examples to evidence these.	☐
Note what kind of exercises and activities you will be doing and if you have to prepare anything in advance, such as a presentation.	☐
Check if you need to bring anything with you, such as ID, Certificates etc.	☐
Check what equipment will be available. PowerPoint slides are preferable to a flipchart or overhead projector but keep them simple.	☐
Choose your outfit the night before and try to get plenty of sleep.	☐
It may have been some time since you first submitted your application, so review your CV to make sure all the information you provided is fresh in your mind. The assessment centre will include an interview, and it is likely your interviewer may use your CV as a starting point. So be prepared to talk them through every point included.	☐
Plan your journey, aiming to arrive at least ten minutes early. Completing a 'dry run' if possible, also combats nerves/ If attending a virtual assessment day, make sure you have tested out the online functionality and have your laptop charged.	☐

Additional to this checklist, if you are uncertain about any aspects of the day, contact the employer for more information. Also, always let the company know in advance if you require any adjustments or additional support on the day to give you the best opportunity on the day, such as, if you require extra time.

Assessment Centres

⭐ Top tips for the day of the assessment centre

- Aim to arrive at least 10-15 minutes early/ If online, ensure you are logged on in a quiet room, and have a glass of water.
- On the day, eat a good, healthy breakfast and avoid too much caffeine.
- Be assertive and engaged throughout the whole day.
- Keep your phone out of sight and on silent, even during breaks.
- Don't dwell on any mistakes, instead concentrate on performing well in the next task.
- Don't worry about the other candidates or compare yourself. Focus on doing your best.

- Ensure that you understand the requirements of each task and take the opportunity to ask questions at the start of the task if you are unsure. Always revisit the brief once you have read the whole task through to check back on what you have been asked to do.
- Join in with discussions, even during 'informal' break times.
- Maintain a friendly and polite manner with everyone you meet.
- Take the opportunity to ask questions and learn about the business.
- Relax and let your personality shine through!

Online Assessment Centres

With more companies adapting a hybrid style of working, it may become increasingly popular for businesses to hold assessment days virtually; An online assessment day is similar to an in-person one, it's just virtual! All the preparation in the checklist is still valid except the 'planning your route', instead ensure you have tested and organised to have required technology available. Test your internet connection and make sure on the day you are sitting in a quiet room if possible, to avoid distractions/background noise. Like an in-person assessment day, you may be asked as part of one of the tasks to create a presentation and present back to the assessors. Ahead of your virtual assessment day, take time to get familiar with the technology and have a go sharing your screen ahead of the day.

In summary, here are our top tips to stand out in a virtual assessment day:

1. **Check your technology** -It is important to check your technology beforehand, see if you need to download any necessary software in advance and check you are comfortable with any audio and video requirements. Charge your laptop and keep it plugged in if possible- sometimes the assessment days can run from 9am-5pm.
2. **Clear your space** - Consider your background and environment before attending a virtual assessment centre. Will there be any distracting background noise? Is your background professional?
3. **Follow the instructions** - Carefully read the assessment centre instructions in advance, check if you have been requested to prepare anything/send anything over in preparation.
4. **Communicate in advance** - Notify recruiters if you are having any technical issues such as slow internet. If you consider yourself to have a disability or health condition, share this with them so any necessary adjustments can be put in place ahead of the day.
5. **Dress to impress** - Whilst you may be in the comfort of your own home, still dress smart in professional attire as if you were attending in-person.

Interviews

In this section you will learn how to prepare for an interview.

But before we go into the preparation, let's look at the different type of interviews:

Face-to-face

Most common types of interview could be a one-on-one interview over a video call such as Teams or Zoom. Face-to-face interviews usually last between 45 minutes to 2 hours. Questions may be strength-based or competency-based.

Video/virtual

Video interviews are becoming increasingly popular amongst employers. Video interviews can be either live or pre-recorded and tend to last 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Telephone

This interview is often used by employers in the early stages of the assessment process. Telephone interviews usually last between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Assessment centres

This can be either virtual or in person and can include multiple tasks such as presentations, team exercises, psychometric tests and a one-on-one interview. Assessment centres usually last a full working day.

Star technique for interviews

Preparation is key for a successful interview. Ahead of the interview, pick out key skills and behaviours you think they may ask you about alongside questions about the organisation and why you would be a good fit. For competency-based questions, the STAR technique can help you plan your answers ahead of an interview and provide a structured way which makes it easy for the hiring manager to identify your skills and evidence of these.

S   T   A   R

Situation

Describe the situation you were in or the task you needed to accomplish.

Task

Describe the challenges and expectations. What needed to be done? Why?

Action

Elaborate on your specific action. What exactly did you do and how did you do it?

Result

Explain the result, including your accomplishments, recognition and the outcome.

Star technique for interviews

- School projects/modules.
- Extra curriculum activities/clubs
- Hobbies
- Volunteering experience
- Work experience

Interviews

Here is an example of how you can prepare an answer based on the STAR technique to use when answering competency questions in interview, highlighting key transferable skills which would apply to the position you are interviewing for. Ahead of an interview if you prepare 5-8 STAR examples, you can adapt the action section, which emphasizes the skills applied, to answer the key skill they want demonstrating.

Situation	During school, I had to work on a group project where I had to present to the class. I demonstrated excellent communication skills when confidently presenting my findings to my peers.
Task	The project set was in science class and it was to present in groups the effects of global warming and suggest recommendations to reduce carbon footprint.
Action	• For this I had to communicate effectively amongst the group, defining and deciding our roles within the team and also supporting with the delegation of workload to create and communicate a plan. • I applied research and problem-solving skills to form recommendations to reduce carbon footprint, in a way which would be relevant to the audience. • Created and planned a presentation that would be engaging to the class, including interaction throughout.
Result	• As a result, the presentation received positive feedback and the class was engaged. • Received an A for the presentation. • Students took key builds on how to reduce their footprint.

Now it's your turn!

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

Ahead of an interview if you require any reasonable adjustments or additional needs, it is suggested that you notify the hiring manager ahead of the interview to give yourself the best opportunity in the interview. In some application processes you will be asked during each stage if any adjustments are required and it provides you with an opportunity to give more details if applicable.

Feedback

How to handle a job rejection

No one enjoys getting rejected for a job after you've done a lot of preparing for the recruitment process. With the right mindset, you can turn the experience into a career development opportunity, and here's how.

Asking for detailed feedback

During the recruitment process, you can ask for feedback and take key learnings away. If you get rejected for a job, by getting feedback you can turn it into an opportunity to build on your interviewing skills for next time.

Here are some top tips for receiving feedback effectively:

1. **Be an active listener**.
2. **Ask questions** - If any part of the feedback feels a bit generic and unspecific, don't be afraid to ask for more detail.
3. **Review and reflect** - Reflect on your experience, and self-analysis based on the feedback received. This is a significant learning opportunity for you to ask yourself: What went well? What could I have done differently? Were there any questions you feel you could have answered better?
4. **Identify key learning and build a personal development plan** - From your reflection, try to identify what your development priorities should be. Make a note of it and focus on this next time you are preparing for an interview process.
5. **Be philosophical** - feedback can help you recognise that sometimes rejection is out of your hands and can even ultimately be in your interest. The key with your personal development plan is to focus on things that you can realistically change/work on.
6. **Refine your search** - sometimes the interview and/or feedback process can make you realise that the role isn't quite the right fit for you. Look back through the job description and see if there were aspects that didn't excite you. Use your experience to help you refine your future job searches.
7. **Build your resilience** - Through making a point of taking rejection/feedback in a constructive manor, you are demonstrating you can overcome obstacles on your career path which will increase your chances of landing the right role. Getting turned down from a job happens to everyone, the most important thing is that you learn from the experience.

Did you find these
resources useful?

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