

My employability @ Unisa

A complete guide to preparing
yourself for career opportunities



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The information in this document was correct as of 15 February 2021. Visit the Directorate: Counselling and Career Development website (<http://bit.ly/30yqrll>) for the latest version of this document.

How will this brochure help me?

- You will gain an understanding of what employability is and why it is important.
- You will learn more about the different aspects of employability, including self-knowledge (your skills), and putting together the documents you need to apply for opportunities (career portfolio, CV, cover letters, and application forms).
- You will be able to prepare effectively for interviews.
- You will understand the role of online social media in your professional development.

What is employability?

- Employability is about your ability to get and keep fulfilling work.
- Employability refers to your ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, and obtain new employment if required. In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.

Your employability depends on:

- your knowledge (what you know), skills (what you do with what you know), and attitudes (how you approach things)
- the way you use your knowledge and skills and present them to employers, and
- the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which you seek work.

Employability checklist

The following statements relate to your employability. Complete the checklist to help you identify the things you still need to put in place to prepare for future career opportunities.

		Tick when completed
DISCOVER YOURSELF		
	assessed what kind of work you are interested in assessing your personal characteristics	
	assessed your skills assessed your values	
	identified your educational qualifications (knowledge)	
	assessed your work and other experience	
CHECKED WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR		
	experience and education	
	personal characteristics	
	physical appearance	
	work history	
RESEARCHED		
	identified sources of job information collected job information	
	assessed job information	
ORGANISE YOURSELF		
	planned your job search	
	collected all the required documentation compiled a career portfolio	
	have a job search folder developed a routine	
MADE CONTACT		
	drafted cover letters drafted CVs	
	sent out cover letters and CVs filled in application forms	
	submitted application forms	
PREPARED FOR THE INTERVIEW		
	made sure you know how to get there in good time and made sure that your appearance is neat	

	Tick when completed
made sure that you have all the required documentation prepared answers to possible interview questions	
prepared questions that you want to ask in the interview	
DURING THE INTERVIEW	
you were on time	
you were confident and answered questions directly you showed good body language	
you kept your answers short and to the point you made eye-contact	
you dealt openly and honestly with difficult questions	

Source: Umsobomvo Youth Fund. 2003. Finding work: a guide for young people. Retrieved, 15 June 2007, from <http://www.youthportal.org.za/>.

My skills

What are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are skills you have acquired during any activity in your life that is transferable and applicable to what you want to do in your next job. For example, during your volunteer work at a community centre, you helped the social worker to organise play activities for children. This experience helped you to develop your planning skills – a skill that is necessary for your next position as a facilitator of youth activities at another community centre.

Why transferable skills?

Knowledge of your transferable skills is important in compiling your career portfolio, curriculum vitae, and cover letters, and for devising interview strategies. You need to be able to identify your skills, assess how you can demonstrate them, determine how you can develop them, and communicate them to employers.

How can you identify your transferable skills?

Think of everything you have done and how this is transferable to what you want to be doing. If you are replying to an advertisement in the newspaper, emphasise the skills that the employer is asking for. Analyse any jobs (full-time, part-time, voluntary), your studies (formal and informal), projects, parenting, hobbies, or sports in terms of skills that you have acquired. Remember that no experience is insignificant.

Exercise

Read the list of skills on the next page. As you read:

1. Tick the skills you feel you have developed
2. Highlight or underline the skills you feel you still need to develop

COMMUNICATION	
	read and understand information in different formats (words, graphs, diagrams)
	clear writing skills
	speaking so that others understand
	presentation skills
	share information through different mediums (e-mail, fax, letter, voice)
	team-work skills
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	
	find and gather information using various methods
	organise and synthesise information for others to understand
NUMERICAL SKILLS	
	make estimates and check calculations
	decide what needs to be measured and how
PROBLEM-SOLVING	
	assess situations and identify problems
	identify the root cause of the problem
	seek different points of view and integrate them
	identify solutions to a problem
	evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions
	implement solutions
WORK WITH OTHERS	
	flexibility: be open to different ideas and thoughts from different others
	lead or support when appropriate, motivating a group for higher performance
	accept and provide feedback in a constructive and considerate manner
	contribute by sharing information and expertise
	manage and resolve conflict appropriately
	punctuality: not delaying the work of others
	personal management skills
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS	
	feel confident
	deal with people, problems, and situations with personal integrity, honesty, and personal ethics
	recognise your good efforts
	recognise the good efforts of others

	show interest, initiative, and effort
PARTICIPATION IN PROJECTS AND TASKS	
	plan, design, and complete a project from start to finish
	work to agreed quality standards
	select and use appropriate tools and technology for a task or project
	adapt to changing requirements and information
	monitor success of a project or task
	think of ways to improve a project or task
BE RESPONSIBLE	
	set goals and priorities balancing work and personal life
	plan and manage time
	plan and manage money
	manage risk
	be accountable for your actions
	be socially responsible and contribute to your community
LEARN CONTINUOUSLY	
	be willing to learn continuously
	work independently
BE ADAPTABLE	
	assess personal strengths and areas for development
	reflect on your learning
	set your own learning goals
	identify and access learning opportunities
	plan for and achieve your learning goals
	carry out multiple tasks or projects
	be resourceful
	learn from your mistakes
	accept feedback and adjust accordingly
	cope with uncertainty
	cope with change

Source: The Conference Board of Canada. *Employability Skills 2000+*. Available:

<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/nbec>

Summarise a list of your skills and an example of when you used this skill

Skill	Example

Write down the two skills that you wish to develop in the next six months and indicate how you are planning on developing these.

Skill	Plan to develop

Knowledge

You have learned information by attending classes, working on projects, independent reading, and travelling, to name just a few methods.

Formal education

Make a list of the institutions that you attended. Include points on tertiary and secondary education, courses, projects, papers, and theses. Discuss your specialisations; subjects you liked most and least, and why; certificates, diplomas, and other awards obtained.

Other education

List the knowledge you have gained through other educational opportunities. Include dates, companies/organisations, and topics for both formal and informal training. Include training provided by employers on and off their premises; training through volunteer organisations; training received in other ways.

Informal education

This is what I have learned through travel and my research.

Create a career portfolio

What is a career portfolio?

Your career portfolio enables you to keep track of your career development, as well as highlight your accomplishments. A well-thought-out and up to date career portfolio will help you to prepare effective CVs and to perform better at job interviews. It will also make it possible for you to manage your career proactively by recording your ideas about how you are preparing for future career opportunities.

A career portfolio is:

- a powerful visual tool that provides a complex and comprehensive view of your skills;
- a purposeful collection to provide evidence of your achievements, efforts, and growth;
- a collection of examples of the best work that you have produced.

From this description, it should be clear that a career portfolio is not merely a collection of documents but that it consists of carefully and purposefully selected items, depending on the purpose of your portfolio. You can develop a career portfolio in printed or electronic format, depending on how you would like to use it.

Why do I need a portfolio?

- You use the portfolio to write a current CV and to secure a job interview.
- You prepare for interviews and during an interview, you can support claims that you make about your abilities.
- Your career portfolio is a unique reflection of who you are and why you are different from the rest; it indicates where you could contribute.

Why is a career portfolio effective as a career management tool?

A career portfolio:

- highlights your abilities;
- grasps the attention of the interviewer as you can show concrete examples of completed work or reports on activities;
- creates a more personal atmosphere during interviews which reduce stress;
- enables you to include authentic samples that provide evidence of your unique abilities;
- enables you to influence the questions asked during the interview;
- has a growth focus – it allows the portfolio developer to show how growth and development have taken place over time.

What does the portfolio consist of?

The portfolio consists of two parts:

1. a document centre where you gather information. Use an expander file or box to store certificates, samples of your work, and your reflections, or store these documents online. Examples of online storage services include Microsoft 365, Google Docs and Dropbox, and a
2. presentation file (consisting of relevant and logically ordered information selected from your document centre). Use a file with plastic pockets or create an online portfolio. Examples of online services include Google Sites, VisualCV, Jobrarity. You could also use blogging services such as WordPress and Blogger to create your portfolio online.

What is the suggested format for your portfolio?

The contents of your career portfolio can be organised in several ways namely

1. chronologically according to specific dates;
2. according to specific categories or themes (e.g. by skill)
3. according to specific categories or problems or concerns; or
4. according to a combination of these three structures.

Contents of the portfolio

1. Statement of originality: A statement claiming the portfolio as your work and that all contents should be regarded as confidential.

2. Work philosophy: A brief description of your beliefs about yourself and the world of work.
3. Career goals: Your professional goals for the next two to five years.
4. Skills areas: Sections containing information on your skills & experience related to a specific area. Examples of skill areas are leadership skills; language skills (written & oral); planning skills; organisational skills; research skills; interpersonal skills; information/ knowledge management; supervisory skills; computer skills; marketing & sales; problem-solving. Each skill area may contain work samples: physical examples of your work, for example, reports, documents, reports. You can also choose to include letters of recommendation and letters of support of reference that verify your abilities in this skill area.
5. Works in progress: A brief list of work, activities, projects, or efforts you are in the process of completing.
6. Community service: Work samples, letters of recognition, photos of projects completed, programs, and brochures related to community service projects.
7. Professional memberships: Membership cards and letters related to professional organisations.
8. Your CV: A copy of your CV.

What are the benefits of a portfolio?

- It motivates you to take ownership of your career learning.
- It assists you to attach value to your work.
- It creates opportunities to learn from experiences and promotes self-reflection.
- It showcases unique gifts and talents.
- It increases self-knowledge and develops insight into personal strengths and weaknesses.

What steps are involved in the portfolio process?

1. MAKE A CAREER PLAN Take time to develop and refine a work philosophy, as well as your career goals, and write them down.
2. GATHER INFORMATION Develop an attitude of documenting experiences and reflecting on them to determine what you feel about the experience, what you have learnt from it, and what you will do differently in similar situations. File all your experiences and samples of work in your document centre. This will be your working

portfolio. You can then compile your presentation portfolio by selecting specific items aimed at a specific audience. Include enough samples and items to illustrate your skills and competencies.

3. UPDATE CV & REFERENCES Update your CV and references to determine and emphasise (or obtain) the skills and competencies necessary for the job you want.
4. DEVELOP A CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SPECIFIC ITEMS Ask specific questions to facilitate reflection: What is the purpose of my portfolio? Why am I including this specific item in my presentation portfolio? What skill do I wish to illustrate?
5. ASSEMBLE THE PORTFOLIO AND ASK A MENTOR TO REVIEW YOUR PORTFOLIO BEFORE AN INTERVIEW Based on the feedback received, refine and adapt your portfolio.

Further career portfolio resources

Articles and presentations

- The Secret Weapon that Anyone Can Bring to an Interview to Stand Out
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-secret-weapon-that-anyone-can-bring-to-an-interview-to-stand-out>
- Go beyond a resume and create a career portfolio
<https://idealistcareers.org/career-portfolio-2/>
- Student portfolio: How-to and samples (also includes a list of possible sites to use to create your online portfolio)
<https://www.bgsu.edu/business/business-career-accelerator-office/students/additional-resources/PORTFOLIO.html>
- Developing a career portfolio
<https://aiha-assets.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/AIHA/resources/CareerAdvantage/How-to-Develop-a-Career-Portfolio.pdf>

How-to guides

- A guide to building a career portfolio
http://www.manitobacareerdevelopment.ca/cdi/docs/bldg_portfolio.pdf

Job searching

Your job search does not happen in isolation. Your ability to find work could be influenced by the following factors:

Experience

Employers assume that more experienced workers are less likely to make mistakes and that they understand the workplace and its challenges better. Many job-seekers are faced with the difficulty of being asked to have job experience, but how can they develop work experience if they cannot find a job? How can you gain experience, when you have just completed grade 12, or your certificate, diploma, or degree? Some options to consider include temporary work, volunteering, learnerships, and starting your own business. Remember that the above experiences will only have value in terms of your future career development if you treat these as professional opportunities.

The following are suggestions for approaching any kind of work experience so that it can add meaningfully to your career development:

- Education. Expand your knowledge by reading about or enrolling in a course that is relevant to your career development.
- Attitude. Employers appreciate employees who have a positive approach to their work. Always try to do more than what is expected. Show interest and apply continuous improvement. Read about the industry that you are working in and see where you can make a difference and improve on your performance.
- Behaviour. Always dress and behave appropriately.
- Timekeeping and absence. Be punctual. Manage your time at work so that you complete tasks on time. Remember that sick leave is in emergencies only – it is not something to be planned.

Educational qualifications

Many jobs require a specific qualification(s). Begin with your career plan to identify which qualifications you will need to complete to improve your chances of obtaining employment in your desired field.

Skills

Do a skills-check regularly to determine which skills you have developed and which ones you still need to develop.

Labour market conditions

The number of jobs and the types of jobs, available in the job market will affect your ability to find employment. The modern economy is knowledge-based, meaning that there is an emphasis on delivering services and working with information. This requires a higher level of skills and knowledge to get jobs.

Job-hunting essentials

Here are some essential steps to a well-planned job search:

- Have focus. Your career plan should act as a compass for job searches
- Preparation. Know yourself, and research the labour market, jobs, and companies
- Be confident. This flows from knowing yourself and what you want
- Use many ways of researching job opportunities – don't limit yourself just to advertisements in newspapers or the Internet
- Have a carefully written CV. Remember to customise your CV for each job application
- Develop good interview skills. Prepare and practice
- Remember to network. Establish connections with as many people as possible
- Develop a job search plan. Plan your job search step by step and evaluate your methods frequently

Cover letters

- Good cover letters are essential to getting your application noticed.
- Well-prepared cover letters and application forms create a good impression of you – even before you are invited for an interview.

What is the purpose of a cover letter?

A good cover letter will persuade the reader to take a further look at your application (including your CV). The cover letter aims to introduce yourself and to convince an employer that they should interview you.

Tips for writing a cover letter

- Write clearly and to the point: one A4 page is enough.
- If you know the name of the recruiter, you should end the letter with "Yours sincerely" and your name and signature. If you do not know the name of the recruiter, you should end the letter with "Yours faithfully" and your name and signature.
- Check the letter for content, spelling, and grammar – if you feel unsure, ask someone else to read the letter and comment.
- Always keep a copy of the letter.

Structure for a cover letter

1. Introduction: what job are you applying for and where you heard about the job. If you are writing speculatively (in other words, not in response to a specific advertisement), then you should indicate what kind of position you are seeking.
2. Paragraph 2: Give a short overview of your strengths and most relevant attributes, for example, academic qualifications, work experience, skills, interests, referring the employer to the detail on your CV or application form.
3. Paragraph 3: Link what you can offer in terms of skills and experience and the organisation's requirements that you have identified. Show why you want a specific job. Demonstrate knowledge of the organisation by referring to aspects which interest you, for example, products, services, and opportunities for staff development.

4. Conclusion: Close the letter on a positive, confident note offering to supply more information if required.

Further cover letter resources

- How to start a cover letter
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/31-attentiongrabbing-cover-letter-examples>
- The perfect cover letter template to show off your skills
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-perfect-cover-letter-template-to-show-off-your-skills>
- This is the cover letter advice everyone misunderstands
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/this-is-the-cover-letter-advice-everyone-misunderstands>

Application forms

- Read the form carefully before you complete it.
- Complete the form in full – even if the information is on your CV that you included. Always use a blue or black pen, or type in the answers.
- Write neatly and clearly.
- Answer all the questions – if a question does not apply to you, write Not Applicable or N/A. Don't fill in areas marked "For office use".
- After completing the form, read and check your answers.
- If you make a mistake and you do not have another form, neatly correct it.
- Sign the form, if asked to do so.
- Remember to include all documents as requested on the form.

Your CV

- Your CV is your marketing tool.
- Your CV should be a true reflection of who you are and what you have achieved to date.
- You cannot compile your CV a day before you need to submit it. Crafting a CV should be a carefully considered process that takes time.

What is a CV?

Curriculum vitae is a Latin term that means "course of life" – in other words, a reflection of your work experience, educational background, and skills. Your CV is the marketing tool that will secure you an interview – not a job. The more effort you put into this marketing tool, the better your chances that your CV will reflect the "true you" and the better your chances of being invited to an interview.

A good CV is not just a standard template that you use to apply for any position, but it should be adapted to match each position that you apply for.

Keeping in mind that your CV is a marketing tool, you will need to think about how you can help the recruiter understand who you are and what you have achieved so far. Also, how you could potentially contribute to their organisation.

What should your CV focus on?

Your CV should focus on your achievements and accomplishments – avoid "shopping list" descriptions of positions held, and education completed. You should illustrate how you are different from other applicants with the same qualifications as yourself and how you will add value to the organisation.

Why a CV?

CVs are used by recruiters to screen applicants and to select a few candidates for an interview. It could also be used to identify the strengths of different applicants. Never lie on

your CV – if you are appointed and it is established that you did embellish qualifications and/or skills, then you could be dismissed.

Before you start compiling your CV

Think about the following:

1. Why am I compiling this CV? You aim to introduce yourself in the most effective way to a prospective employer. Mainly, you will highlight your strengths and accomplishments. You will, therefore, need to do a careful analysis of your skills and provide examples of your accomplishments.
2. How can I target my CV? Put yourself in the shoes of the recruiter. What kind of skills and experience and qualifications are needed for this job? What is the culture of the organisation? Am I addressing all the requirements for the job in my CV (if you are responding to an advertisement)?
3. What should I include in my CV? Your CV should present evidence of your life experience in a positive way. Do not simply list all your work and educational experiences – demonstrate clearly what you have achieved and the skills you have developed. Maintain a balance between too much information (this will bore the reader) and too little information (this will not do your skills justice).
4. How should I present my CV? Think about your layout, the kind of paper you want to use, and whether you will be submitting this CV online. What kind of CV is needed – a 1 or 2-page CV, or an extended CV with more detail about your skills?

Format of the CV

- Use a consistent layout (for example, all headings in bold and font size 14, and all normal text font size 12)
- Check spelling and grammar – use a dictionary and ask someone to read the CV for you if you feel unsure Keep it simple – it is not necessary to use fancy fonts and coloured paper

Effective vs ineffective strategies for your CV

There are many ways of compiling and presenting your CV, but the following strategies are effective (or ineffective) in terms of CV-writing:

Effective strategies	Ineffective strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your CV reads easily (comfortable font and font size used. Use the arms-length test to determine this: hold your printed CV an arm's length from your eyes and read it to see if it reads easily). • You highlight your accomplishments. • You show what you know (your strengths). • You use strong keywords (verbs) to describe your accomplishments (e.g. managed; organised; planned; directed). • Your CV is neat (no marks or dirt on the paper; no crumpled paper). • You took care to edit your CV for grammar and spelling mistakes. • Your CV shows your interest in and enthusiasm for the organisation and the position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your CV is cluttered and too lengthy. • Your CV contains irrelevant, personal information (such as your age, dependents, religious affiliation, and so on). • You provide incorrect contact details, or you are not contactable on those details you provide (ensure that your voicemail greeting/ the individual(s) who will answer your phone sound professional). • Your CV is decorated with borders and irrelevant images. • Your CV is clearly a bulk mail effort and not targeted for a specific application.

Activity: What's wrong with this CV?

Look at the following CV and indicate what you would change – how can this CV be made more effective?

YOUR NAME

082 851 0023 seaylip@Hotmail.com

Marriage status: Single
Religion: None
Allergies: Wheat

Education
2001 Matric
2002 Diploma in Accounting (XYZ School of Accounting)
2010 Degree in accounting (XY University)
Subjects: Accountg

Work experience
2005-2006: Acme Company, Retail assistant
Tasks: Take stock, chat with customers, cleaning
Jan 2007-Dec 2007: ZZ Enterprises (Admin assistnt)
Tasks: Doing admin
2008-current: ABC Milling (Admin mngr)
Tasks: Managing office, making coffee, recieve invoices, make payments

Skills
Computers
I can speak, read and write 5 South African languages

Interests
Watching TV, walking, boxing, listening to music

Your notes

Activity: CV self-assessment

1. If you have a CV, review your CV by using the criteria in the CV self-assessment that follows.
2. If you do not have a CV yet, draft a CV by using the guidelines provided.
3. Based on your assessment, make changes to your CV.
4. Ask someone to review your CV for you and give you feedback. This could be a mentor, friend, or family member who is working, or a student counsellor.
5. Make changes to your CV based on the feedback that you received.

Name:		Date	
What is the target for this CV: (e.g. career field, specific internship/job posting, graduate programme, etc.)?			

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT (3)	AVERAGE (2)	UNACCEPTABLE (1)	COMMENTS
<p>Style, Appearance, & Tone Goal: To ensure your strengths are highlighted for your specific audience and that the CV is polished & easy to read. Comments:</p> <p>Score:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fills 1-2 pages without overcrowding Margins are acceptable Font style & size is readable Formatting is consistent Relevant info appears on the top half of the first page Section headings reflect content & content substantiates headings (section titles & descriptions are relevant to targeted opportunity) CV is targeted to an internship, job, or programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The page appears crowded but does not exceed 1-2 pages Less than two formatting errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exceeds 1-2 pages Does not fill the majority of one page Margins are too narrow or too wide Font style is unreadable Text size is not between 10 and 12 Text not aligned correctly 	
<p>Grammar, Spelling, & Punctuation Goal: To ensure your CV is polished. Comments:</p> <p>Score:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Error-free spelling Error-free punctuation Error-free spacing Grammar is appropriate (e.g. verb tense, pronouns) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contains 1-2 minor errors (punctuation or spacing) Has a pattern of a single error (e.g. some bullets have periods, some do not) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CV contains 3 or more individual errors Has a pattern of 2 or more of the same type of error 	

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT (3)	AVERAGE (2)	UNACCEPTABLE (1)	COMMENTS
<p>Contact Information Goal: To ensure a reviewer can easily reach you. Comments:</p> <p>Score:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes name, address, email, phone Name stands out on the CV Provides professional email address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name does not stand out Email used is too casual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing name, email, address, email, or phone number Email used is inappropriate or unprofessional Personal information (e.g. marriage status) is included 	
<p>Education Section Goal: To convey academic qualifications and training. Comments:</p> <p>Score:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entries are in reverse chronological order Qualification full name is provided Major(s) (if declared) and graduation month/year are indicated Coursework listed is relevant Each institution includes name, location, & dates Relevance of additional activities, research, & honours are revealed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification is abbreviated (BA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entries are not in reverse chronological order Degree listed is something other Missing declared major(s) Entry is missing details (name, location, dates) Irrelevant or outdated high school info is listed Relevance of additional activities, research, & honours is not revealed 	

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT (3)	AVERAGE (2)	UNACCEPTABLE (1)	COMMENTS
<p>Experience Section(s) Goal: To contextualize your skills & qualifications, showing relevance to the position desired. Comments:</p> <p>Score:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries are in reverse chronological order • Organization name, position title, location, & dates are included • Bullets begin with strong action verbs and are incorrect verb tense • Personal pronouns and extraneous words are omitted • Bullets are concise, direct, & indicate accomplishments • Results are quantified • Bullets are listed in order of importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries are in reverse chronological order • Entries have a pattern of one type of error (e.g. locations are omitted) • Action verbs are weak • Verb tense is incorrect for 1 entry • Bullets are not concise or direct and do not indicate impact • Bullets are written in complete sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries are not in reverse chronological order • 3 or more entries do not include organization name, dates, position title, or location • Bullets are written in complete sentences • Verb tense is incorrect for 2 or more entries • Bullets are wordy, vague • Bullets are not listed in order of importance to the reader • Results are not quantified when appropriate • Irrelevant or outdated information is listed 	
<p>Skills & Interests Goal: To reveal relevant or interesting information that does not appear elsewhere on the CV. Comments:</p> <p>Score:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listings are relevant to the reader • Listings are concise • Level of proficiency is indicated for language or computer skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items are wordy • Items are vague or irrelevant • Level of proficiency is not indicated for language or computer skills 	

Further CV-Writing resources

- Action verbs: <https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/action-verb-samples>
- Action verbs per skills category: <https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/action-skills>
- The Quintessential Guide to Sure-fire Resumes for New Graduates and Other Entry-Level Candidates: <https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/Quintessential-Careers-Press/Surefire-Resumes>
- Job-Seeker Accomplishments Worksheet: Brainstorming and Documenting Your Career Successes: <https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/accomplishments-worksheet>

Interview skills

- Preparation is the key to good interviews.
- You are marketing yourself as an asset to the organisation – make sure that you know why you are applying for a specific position within a specific organisation.
- You have a few seconds to make a good first impression – a bad first impression will most likely stay with the interviewer.

For the employer	For you (the job seeker)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you meet the requirements of the position in terms of skills, abilities, and competencies?• Will you fit in with the company's culture?• Is there a match between your career development needs, and the demands and priorities of the company?• What is the level of your interpersonal skills, and are you an all-rounded person?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will you fit in with the company's culture?• You find out more about the company• Can you picture yourself working at this company?• You get the opportunity to provide examples of your skills, abilities, and competencies you claim to have on your CV

Before the interview

Research on the organisation

Knowing more about the organisation will create a good impression because it shows that you are serious about this position and genuinely interested in this organisation. Find out more about the core business of the organisation, its mission and values statements, different business areas, and locations. You can find this information in the annual report, as well as sales and promotional literature. You can research this information on the Internet and in financial magazines and newspapers. You may also phone the company to ask for company literature available to the public. Research about the position. Find out more about a specific type of position by talking to individuals who work in similar positions (informational interviewing) or by researching the information on the Internet, or in magazines, newspapers, or books.

Prepare

Think about strategies to answer different kinds of questions. Practice answers to questions by looking in a mirror, or asking a friend, family member, or mentor to "interview" you.

Your questions

Prepare a list of questions you might want to ask if given the opportunity. Examples: What will this job entail? To whom would I have to report? Would I be working more in a team or more alone? What are the main challenges I will encounter in this job? Are there any mentoring programmes in place? When am I likely to hear whether my application has been successful? What kind of training and development programmes are available for entrants?

Sleep

Get enough sleep the night before – look rested and not as if you were partying the night before.

Dress

Dress appropriately (not under- or overdressed). Avoid excessive perfume or aftershave and too much jewellery. Look well-groomed (clean shoes, clean fingernails, and clean and neatly styled hair). What to take with you. Take supporting documents with you. This could include

a copy of your CV, certified copies of qualifications, testimonials, and letters of reference. All these documents can be included in your career portfolio that you can also take with you.

The interview

- Do not be late – you should have confirmed the date, time, and venue of the interview. Remember to consider possible delays (for example, public transport, and traffic). Arrive about 5-10 minutes before the interview, take a deep breath and try to relax in the reception area.
- Remember that your interview starts as soon as you enter the premises of the organisation – greet everyone politely – they may be asked later to comment on your behaviour.
- Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake, smile, and look him or her in the eye. Greet him or her by name and introduce yourself. For example, "Good morning Ms. Zulu. I am John Smith."

What will typically happen in an interview?

STAGE	WHY?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting • Getting comfortable • Icebreaker question (e.g. Tell me about yourself) • Background of the company • An outline of the position • Probe your experience • Probe your abilities • Probe your competencies • Invite you to ask questions • Wrap up the interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that you are relaxed • To get you to feel comfortable about the interview • Give you an idea about what the company does • So that you know something about the position • Establish if your experience matches that which is required for the position. • Establish if you can perform the duties required by the position. • How proficient are you and will you cope? • Have you prepared any questions? • Do you need clarity on certain issues?

DO

- look enthusiastic and energetic
- apologise if you are late for the interview
- wait for the recruiter to lead you where you need to be and wait to sit
- follow the lead of the interviewer in terms of formal vs. informal
- get to the point and answer the questions directly maintain appropriate eye contact (don't stare or look away all the time)
- ask the interviewer to clarify/ rephrase a question if you did not understand the question
- be factual and honest
- sit still. If you struggle to sit still, cross your legs and rest your hands on your lap – a recruiter will get distracted if you are restless and concentrate on what you are doing, rather than on what you are saying
- relax your shoulders (tense shoulders look uncomfortable)
- speak with emotion. Avoid monotones and vary your speaking speed and tone

DON'T

- be too formal or informal when conversing with the interviewer
- answer yes/no to all questions – if you do not answer the questions, you cannot give a good impression
- mumble
- babble (give only the necessary detail)
- get personal with the interviewer
- bring up politics or religion
- ask about salary and benefits, unless the interviewer mentions it
- argue or lose your temper
- run-down or complain about previous employers or supervisors
- slouch in your chair. Slouching could project laziness, and this is not a quality you want to reflect at a job interview
- sit with your elbows on the table, or rest your head on your hands
- speak too softly or too loudly

Difficult interview questions

Be honest when dealing with difficult questions. For example, being asked why you did not complete grade 12. Give a short reason for leaving, and then add something positive. "I did not do well during my last of school and after consulting with my parents, I decided to find a job to gain some practical experience where I could serve customers. I enjoy dealing with customer complaints and learnt a lot during my first six months at XYZ Discount Store".

If you have a criminal record and you are asked about it, you could focus on the positive. For example, "When I was young, I made some wrong choices, I have learnt from my mistakes, and I want to be responsible. I want this job so that I can provide for my family because they are very important to me."

Behavioural competency interview questions

Employers use behavioural questions to evaluate your experiences and behaviours, so they can determine your potential for success. Some of the characteristics which companies might find desirable are: analysis, assertiveness, communication (oral), communication (written), decision-making, independence, management, planning and organising, and teamwork.

Examples

1. If appointed, part of your job would be to deal with unhappy customers. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example (negotiation/ resilience/ listening).
2. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead (initiative).
3. Describe a specific problem you solved. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome? (analysis/ problem-solving)
4. Can you work under pressure and do you have the time management skills to meet deadlines? Give an example to demonstrate.
5. Give me an example of a time in your life when you had to make an important decision. How did you go about making that decision and how does it affect you today? (decision-making)
6. Please give me an example of a task that you had to accomplish as part of a team. (teamwork)

7. Describe times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?
8. Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
9. How well do you work with people? Do you prefer working alone or in teams?
10. What do you do when people disagree with your ideas? Describe a situation.
11. Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who did not like you. How?
12. Do you consider yourself a leader? What are the attributes of a good leader? Give me an example of when you had to show good leadership.
13. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
14. Can you tell me about an important written document you were required to complete?

NB: Think of possible questions that could be asked about the requirements for the position. For example, if “excellent teamwork skills” is one of the requirements for the position, what type of questions could be asked? Think about the context of the organisation. For example, if the organisation is a contact centre, then what type of teamwork skills would be important?

Preparing for behavioural competency-type questions

You can analyse each of the above questions according to the STAR principle:

- Situation or Task: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish (briefly). Describe a specific event or situation and give enough detail for the interviewer to understand.
- The action you took: Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did – not the efforts of the team. Do not tell what you might do – tell what you did.
- Results you achieved: What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Example question:

What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example (negotiation/ resilience/ listening).

Answer:

Situation/ Task: A client was unhappy because her delivery was late

Action: I gathered information about her order and payment from the relevant personnel responsible for orders and payment and informed the client that delivery is confirmed for later that day.

Results: The client wrote a letter to the branch manager to congratulate her on my fast and efficient service.

Other possible questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your greatest strengths? And weaknesses? Why do you want to work for this organisation?
- Why should I hire you?
- What are your short- and long-term goals?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- What would you consider an ideal work environment?

Further resources to develop your interview skills

- Interviewing for job articles (The Muse): <https://www.themuse.com/tags/interviewing-for-a-job>
- Search YouTube for videos related to job interview skills

Networking

Networking is about the quality of relationships and not about how many contacts you have. Informational interviewing is an effective way to find out about jobs and to clarify your career path.

What is networking?

Networking means developing a broad list of contacts – people you've met through various social and business functions – and using them to your advantage when you look for a job. People in your network may be able to give you job leads, offer you advice and information about a specific company or industry, and introduce you to others so that you can expand your network.

Networking involves the cultivation of trust and confidence. Making "contacts" without following up or genuine interest will most likely lead to dead ends (and a large collection of worthless business cards). An initial meeting or contact with someone does not establish a connection unless there is a follow-up of some kind.

Where do I start?

The best place to start developing your network is with your family, friends, and neighbours – and with their family, friends, and neighbours, but do not stop there. Talk to co-workers, colleagues in your industry, and those you meet at industry gatherings, such as trade shows and conferences. Talk with former co-workers, bosses, and teachers.

What do I need to start?

The key to successful networking deciding to put the energy needed to make it work. First, you need to be organised (for example, keeping a business card file, written notes, or an electronic database). Second, you need to stay in contact (for example, through regular phone calls, e-mail, and holiday greetings). Third, you need to set goals for yourself (such as five new contacts per week).

Steps to successful networking

- Develop a firm grasp of job search basics. This means updating your skills with regards to researching company information, writing letters to request information, going to interviews, writing cover letters and thank you notes.
- Conduct a self-assessment. An honest review of your strengths and weaknesses is vital. You should also make some decisions relating to the types of jobs you want and the types of companies and industries that interest you.
- Prepare a well thought out CV. If you do not already have a CV, now is the time to develop one.
- Decide how to organise your network. For example, are you going to have a file with business cards and notes, or an electronic database or spreadsheet?
- Communicate with your network. It is extremely important to stay in touch with your network, which you can easily do by phone, mail, or email.
- Initiate informational interviews. Remember that the purpose of the informational interview is to obtain information, not to get a job.
- Follow up with your network. The key is keeping your network informed of your situation and thanking them for their efforts. Never take your network for granted.

Further resources to develop your professional networking skills

- Designing your career: The networking reframe (Stanford Life Design Lab): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8cfh6WdHn0&list=PLjwFGCpXfsbcwkoYIMtonFbC7qmxqNovT&index=3>
- Networking is not working (TEDx Talks): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reCX9LDQVKw>
- The Art of Active Networking (TEDx Talks): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljSPfGsaC3g>
- Networking articles (The Muse): <https://www.themuse.com/tags/networking>
- Search on YouTube for videos related to professional networking skills

Informational interviews

- It is an interview designed to produce information.
- It involves the process of spending time with a person in a highly focused conversation.

Why do informational interviews?

- To explore career options and clarify goals.
- To expand your professional network.
- To build confidence in a non-threatening environment.
- To access up-to-date information.
- To identify personal strengths and areas for development.

Guidelines for informational interviews

- Identify one or more occupations and industries and jobs you are interested in:
Assess your interests, your abilities and skills, and your values
- Evaluate the labour market and labour trends
- Prepare your questions: Make a list of topics that you need more information about, as well as where you think you would be able to find this information.
- Identify people to interview
- Start with a list of people you already know (family, friends, colleagues); locate alumni from your institution; use organisation directories; ask lecturers; visit Career Offices; search the Internet Schedule your meeting by letter or by phone
- Do this with a purpose: Introduce yourself. Explain why you are contacting him or her specifically. State what your interest and experience in this field are and why you would like to converse: explain that you need information and advice
- Research before the interview: Thorough company research to increase the quality of your interview. Resources available to you: Company websites; annual reports; company brochures; Career Office material; professional society magazines; magazines and newspapers

The Day Before

- Phone to confirm your appointment. Send a copy of your CV for context.
- Plan route to arrive 10 minutes early – allow for possible delays. Have a notebook and pen ready.
- Think about what you are going to wear.

On the day

- Pretend you are a reporter. Be enthusiastic.
- Listen carefully and show interest.
- Share information about yourself.
- Use your time allocated effectively – if your appointment is only for 15 minutes, do not go over this time. As you listen, try to link the information to what you already know and ask questions based on the answers you receive.
- Ask for one other contact.

And the day after

- Send a thank you letter (always include your contact details).
- Record, analyse, and evaluate information by answering these questions:
- What did I learn (positive and negative)? How does what I learnt fit with my interests
- As you listen, try to link the information to what you already know and ask questions based on the answers you receive.

Sample informational interview questions

If you wish to find out more about a specific career and/ or job:

- What is your typical day like? (ask about the percentage of time spent on different activities). What are your duties/ functions/ responsibilities?
- What do you enjoy most about your job? What do you enjoy least about your job?
- What do you like and dislike about working in this specific industry (for example, manufacturing, education, retail, mining)?
- What frustrates you most about your job?

- How did you obtain this position? What jobs/ experiences led you to this job? What sort of changes is happening in your occupation?
- What are the educational requirements for this job/ occupation? What other types of credentials or licenses are required? Can you recommend any training institutions for this occupation?
- What abilities or personal qualities are important for this occupation?
- What skills are most important for your kind of work? Where did you obtain these skills? What work-related values are most important in this type of work (for example, security; creativity; education)?
- From your perspective, what are the problems you see with working in this field?
- These are my strongest assets (skills; personality traits; values and areas of knowledge): Where would they fit in this field?
- Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field? Are there any professional organisations or professional journals that could help me find out more about this occupation?
- What kinds of experience would you recommend for anyone interested in this occupation?
- Do you have any suggestions as to how one could gain experience in this field (for example volunteer work; internship programmes)?
- What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions for this occupation? What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
- What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field? Is there a salary ceiling?
- If you could do things over, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change? How is the economy affecting this occupation?
- What can you tell about the employment outlook in your occupational field? How much demand is there for people in this occupation? How difficult is it to be employed as an entry-level employee in this occupation? Is there much demand for people trained in this field?

If you wish to find out more about a specific company:

- What are the various jobs in this organisation? (specify for what type of occupation, for example, finance). Why did you decide to work for this company?
- What do you like most about this company?
- How does your company differ from its competitors? Why do customers choose this company?

- What does the company do to contribute to the professional development of its employees? How would you describe your work atmosphere and the people you work with?
- Is there a basic philosophy of the company (for example is it a service-, product- or people-oriented business)?
- What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
- What is your average length for an employee to stay in the job you hold? Is there a high or low turnover of staff?
- How is the economy affecting this company?
- Where could I read more about your company? (for example, books, magazines, annual reports, website).

Activity

- Watch these two videos about informational interviews:
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixbhtm8l0sI>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6Pa4ZB4mvQ>
- Identify someone you would want to have a conversation with
- Draft an e-mail that you will send to this person to arrange for an appointment
- Ask someone to give you feedback about your e-mail
- Send the e-mail and wait for a response
- Prepare questions you want to ask
- After the interview, make notes about what happened, what you observed and learnt, and what you will do differently the next time.
- Identify two more people you would want to interview and arrange for appointments.

Social media and your employability

Online social media can play an important part in developing your employability. For example, you can use social media platforms (e.g. Facebook) to engage with other professionals in your field (or envisaged field), or you can use them to establish your “brand”, for example by sharing information about you and your skills. What you share online can also affect your career development. For example, posting inappropriate images of yourself or others, or commenting online could affect how others view you.

Activity: Who am I online?

1. Search for your name online
2. Take note of the search results – if someone else is searching for you, what will they find?
3. Make notes of how you can improve your online presence for professional purposes.

Activity

Answer the following questions:

1. Which social media platforms are you currently active on (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)?
2. What do you mostly use these platforms for?
3. How are you using each platform for your career development? If you are not using it for your career development, what do you think you can do on each platform to help you develop your career?

Platform (e.g. Facebook)	What do I use it for?	How am I using this platform (or imagine using this platform) for my career development?

Further resources to develop your employability through social media

- Designing your career: The networking reframes (Stanford Life Design Lab): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8cfh6WdHn0>

Counselling and career development services at Unisa

The Unisa Directorate: Counselling and Career Development offers career-, academic- and personal counselling services to Unisa students and the broader community. You can talk to a counsellor about:

- **Career decisions.** I am not sure which career path to follow; I don't know which qualification would be best; I want to change my career direction...
- **Career information.** How can I find out more about a career in ...?
- **Employability.** How do I market myself to employers? How can I look for work? How can I compile an effective CV? How do I go about networking with others? How do I put together my career portfolio? How can I meet potential employers? How can I improve my interview skills?)
- **My studies at Unisa.** How can I get started with my studies? How do I plan my studies? How can I study more effectively? I don't feel motivated to continue with my studies... I feel worried about preparing for/ writing the exams. I failed my exams – what now? I need to improve my reading/ writing/ numeracy skills
- **Personal issues.** How can I have better relationships with others? How can I cope more effectively with issues that affect my studies?

Visit our website at <http://www.unisa.ac.za/counselling> to access many self-help resources, or talk to a counsellor by e-mail to counselling@unisa.ac.za.