



University of Essex

DEVELOPING CAREER SUPPORT

Navigating professional change

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE?

3

Reviewing skills, experience, and professional strengths

CORE STRENGTHS AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Discovering your strengths through KASH

Identifying your values

Exploring meaningful moments

Recognising transferable skills from your role

Uncovering achievements (STAR)

5

5

6

7

8-9

10

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND EVIDENCE

My expertise and specialist knowledge

Clarifying your future career expectations

Understanding your professional value

11

11

12

13

Communicating Your Skills and Experience

TRANSLATING YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE INTO A CV

Using the colour-coding system for your CV

CV DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Suggested CV structure

Key principles of CV design

Transforming your experience into CV-ready sentences

15

15-16

17

17

18

19

Using Digital Tools and AI to Support Career Development

WHAT GENERATIVE AI CAN DO

What is artificial intelligence (AI)?

Prompts to be used with generative AI tools

HOW TO USE LINKEDIN

21

21

21

22

Enhancing your interview skills

PRESENTING YOURSELF PROFESSIONALLY

Top 10 most asked interview questions

24

24

Additional resources and tools

25

NAVIGATING PROFESSIONAL CHANGE

What is the purpose of this resource?

This resource supports individuals as they consider next steps during periods of professional change. It brings together practical guidance, reflective activities, and signposted support to help you recognise your skills and experience, approach job applications with confidence, and make informed decisions as your priorities and opportunities evolve.

Periods of change can affect people in different ways and at different speeds, and priorities may shift as new information or opportunities emerge. There is no single or expected way to respond, and no requirement to take immediate action. This resource is designed to be used flexibly, allowing you to engage with the content that feels most relevant at any given time and to return to it as your circumstances develop.

The content supports different aspects of career

transition, including identifying transferable skills and experience developed throughout your career, guidance on writing CVs and cover letters, practical advice on using AI tools to support the career development and application process, and a list of available internal and external resources. The guidance can be used in any order and adapted to suit individual needs, goals, and circumstances.

The support provided is intended to complement any existing career, wellbeing, or change support available to you. It can be used for short-term reflection, practical action, or longer-term planning, helping you maintain confidence and build momentum during periods of professional change.



REVIEWING SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, AND PROFESSIONAL STRENGTHS

This section helps you recognise how the work you do each day builds skills that can be used in a wide range of roles and working environments.

THIS SECTION CAN HELP YOU WITH:

Identifying key skills, strengths and experience

Reflecting on what you do day-to-day and the value you bring

Highlighting your transferable skills for future roles

Click inside each box to type your answers. Use clear, short statements. You can edit or delete your text at any time. Move through the boxes in any order you prefer.

Core strengths and transferable skills

Discovering your strengths through KASH



This exercise helps you recognise the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits that form your personal and professional strengths. By breaking your abilities into these four simple areas, KASH gives you a clear, confidence-building picture of what you already offer and what you can carry confidently into your next steps.

Task support

Your answers can help with preparing for interview questions (p25).

KNOWLEDGE	ATTITUDES
<p><i>What do you know well enough to explain or use confidently?</i></p>	<p><i>What attitudes help you succeed and build good relationships?</i></p>
SKILLS	HABITS
<p><i>What can you do well that others rely on you for?</i></p>	<p><i>What do you do regularly that helps you perform at your best?</i></p>

Identifying your values

This exercise helps you recognise the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits that form your personal and professional strengths.

1. What is really important to you in your life?

What does this give you / bring you?

2. What else is important to you in your life?

What does this give you/bring you?

3. What do you enjoy doing?

What does this give you/bring you?

4. What annoys you? What gets under your skin?

If this annoys you, have you thought of the positive opposite? What is it that's important for you?



Exploring meaningful moments

Think of at least two moments from any point in your life – not just work – when everything came together for you. Times when you felt “in your element,” fully absorbed, and completely engaged in something you enjoyed or cared about.

Task tips

Your answers can help with preparing for interview questions (p25).

Describe each moment in as much detail as you can.

1.

2.

What made each experience so satisfying?

1.

2.

What are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are abilities and strengths that can be used across different roles, industries, and work environments. They are not specific to one job or subject area, but can be applied in many contexts. Examples include communication, problem-solving, teamwork, research, organisation, time management, and adaptability. These skills are developed through a range of experiences such as education, work, volunteering, and personal projects. Transferable skills help individuals move between roles or sectors more easily, as they show employers how someone can add value even without direct experience in a specific job or industry.

Recognising transferable skills from your role

This activity helps you recognise the transferable skills you use at work by linking your everyday responsibilities to skills that are valued across roles and organisations.

Task tips

Transferable skills can give a talking point in interviews.

EXAMPLE:

Use the transferable skills provided to help you describe the actions and behaviours you use when carrying out each day-to-day task.

Day-to-day task	How I do this (actions)	Transferable skills
<p>Daily responsibilities and routine tasks (What you do regularly as part of your job)</p>	<p>I follow procedures carefully to make sure information is accurate.</p> <p>I prioritise my workload to meet deadlines accordingly.</p> <p>I stay organised by keeping documents updated and easy to find.</p>	<p>Reliability, time management, task management</p>

Day-to-day task	How I do this (actions)	Transferable skills
Daily responsibilities and routine tasks (What you do regularly as part of your job)		Reliability, time management, task management
Planning, organisation, and transformation (How you manage time, deadlines, or workloads)		Planning, organisation, meeting deadlines, learn new skills
Communication and interaction with others (Who you speak to and how information is shared)		Verbal and written communication, stakeholder engagement
Working with information, equipment, or systems (Tools, systems, machinery, software, or records you use)		Digital skills, information management, technical competence
Problem-solving and delivering results (How you deal with issues, changes, or unexpected situations)		Problem-solving, evidence impact improve services
Quality, accuracy, and attention to detail (How you ensure work is done correctly or to standard)		Attention to detail, quality assurance, accuracy
Teamwork, building relationships supporting others (Working with colleagues, supporting new staff, or contributing to team goals)		Communicate, influence, network
Health, safety, and compliance (Following procedures, keeping people safe, meeting rules or standards)		Risk awareness, compliance, responsibility
Responsibility and accountability (What you are trusted to handle or manage)		Accountability, ownership, independent working
Improving ways of working and share expertise (Making suggestions, improving efficiency, or updating processes)		Continuous improvement, initiative, innovation, specialist skills

Uncovering achievements (STAR)

Use this exercise to clearly describe an achievement by breaking it into four parts: the task or situation, what you did, the action and the outcome or benefit.

1. Situation

Describe the context so someone understands what was going on.

What was happening at the time?

Who was involved?

What was the setting or environment?

2. Task

Explain what needed to be done and what your responsibility was.

What needed attention or action?

What were you expected to do?

What challenge or goal were you working towards?

3. Action

Focus on what you did.

What steps did you personally take?

What skills or strengths did you use?

What decisions or solutions did you come up with?

4. Result

Show the difference your actions made.

What changed because of what you did?

Did things improve, become easier, or run more smoothly?

Can the benefit be described or measured in any way?

Professional experience and evidence

My expertise and specialist knowledge

This activity helps you recognise the specialist knowledge, experience, and people skills you've gained through work, training, and real-life situations. By identifying what you know that others might not, you can build a clearer picture of your strengths, confidence areas, and the unique value you bring to any role.

Task tips

Think about your ambitions, values, lifestyle, and long-term goals.

Systems, tools, or methods you know well

E.g. Booking systems, food safety routines, grounds-care methods, cleaning schedules,

Situations where you feel confident

E.g. Opening or closing procedures, preparing stock, safely using equipment, supporting new staff

Knowledge from training or certificates

E.g. First aid, manual handling, data protection, food hygiene, conflict resolution

People skills that set you apart

E.g. Coaching or mentoring colleagues, cultural awareness and inclusion, facilitating meetings or briefings

Clarifying your future career expectations

This activity helps you define what you want from your future career, including the environment, responsibilities, growth opportunities, and lifestyle it should support, so you can move forward with clarity and purpose.

Task tips

This task can guide you toward employers and roles that align with how you prefer to work

What kind of lifestyle, flexibility, and work-life balance would you like a career to enable?

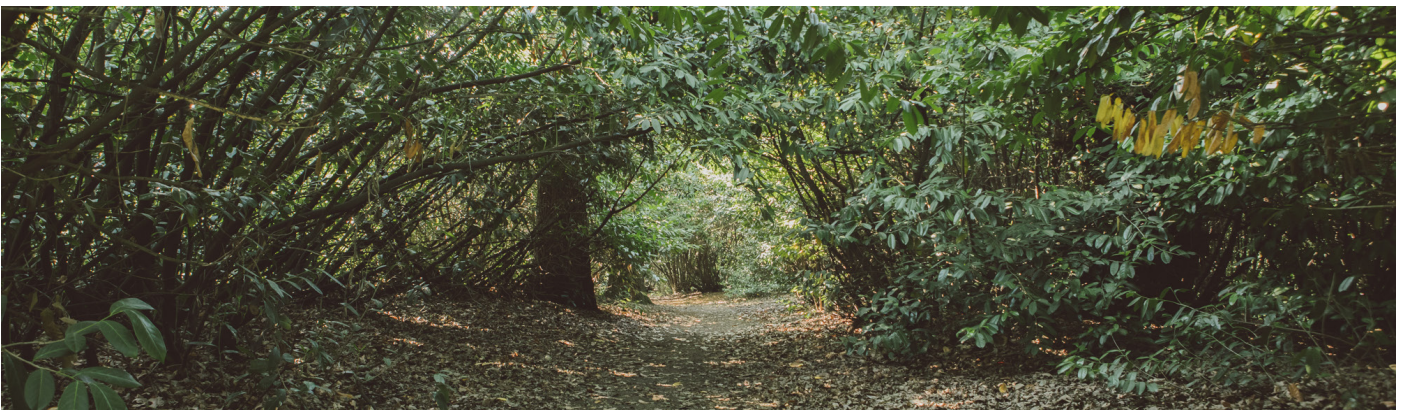
What skills do you have that you'd like to transfer to another career?

What kind of tasks, projects, and initiatives would you like to be involved in?

What kind of company would you like to work for? What are the qualities you're looking for, including size, values, culture, products, and services?

What kind of leadership or advancement opportunities would you like to be considered for?

What are your salary goals?



Understanding your professional value



1. Professional contribution

Reflect on the ways you typically contribute in a work environment.

I add value by consistently contributing to...

In my role, I help maintain momentum or progress by...

In professional settings, I am trusted to handle...

2. Why I am effective in a role

Consider the behaviours, approaches, and qualities that enable you to perform well.

I am effective in a role because I approach work with...

I tend to bring clarity, structure, or confidence when...

My way of thinking (e.g., analytical, practical, strategic, creative) supports effective outcomes by...

I work particularly well in situations that require...

3. Evidence of impact

Think about situations where your approach made a positive difference.

A contribution I made that improved outcomes, supported others, or reduced risk was...

Feedback or recognition I have received that reflects my strengths includes...

An example of where my professional judgement or approach was effective is...

COMMUNICATING YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

This section provides practical advice and guidance on writing CVs and cover letters, helping you present your skills, experience, and strengths clearly and effectively for different roles and sectors.

THIS SECTION CAN HELP YOU WITH:

Structuring your CV with your identified skills and experience

Designing and putting together a CV




Saving and sending your CV

You may find it helpful to open a separate Word document and develop your CV alongside this resource. Use the guidance provided to structure, organise and refine your CV as you progress.

Translating your skills and experience into a CV

Using the colour-coding system for your CV

Throughout this workbook, you'll notice that each activity is colour-coded. These colours link directly to the three main sections of a CV:

-  **PROFILE**
-  **KEY SKILLS**
-  **EXPERIENCE**

Each section of a CV requires different types of information — such as your strengths, skills, examples of what you've achieved, or training you've completed. To make this easier, every activity in the workbook has been clearly marked with one or more colours to show you which CV section it supports.

Tips for writing strong CV content

- Use action verbs (e.g., “organised,” “created,” “supported,” “managed”).
- Show evidence, not just claims (e.g., instead of “good communication skills,” use “communicated daily with clients to resolve queries and provide support”).
- Highlight results where possible (e.g., “reduced processing time,” “improved accuracy,” “supported 50+ learners”).
- Convert informal or everyday experience into employable strengths:
 - Volunteering
 - Caring responsibilities
 - Projects or hobbies
 - Community roles

PROFILE

Activities marked in yellow help you write the Profile section – the short introduction at the top of your CV. You'll find:

- Who you are
- What you're good at
- What motivates you
- How you work best
- What you bring to an employer

These activities provide ready-made statements and insights to help you craft a strong, personal profile. These include activities like the KASH model (p5), Values (p6), Meaningful Moments (p7), and Professional Value (p13), which all contain statements you can use to write your Profile.

KEY SKILLS

Activities marked in blue help you identify the skills you will list on your CV, including:

- Transferable skills
- Strengths
- Technical skills
- Systems, tools, and software you can use
- Habits and behaviours that support how you work

This section helps you gather a complete skills list that reflects both your capability and your practical experience. This includes Transferable Skills (p9), the KASH model (p5), and My Expertise and Specialist Knowledge (p11)

EXPERIENCE

Activities marked in green support the Experience section – the part of your CV where you list:

- Daily tasks
- Responsibilities
- Achievements
- Impact you've made through your work

These tasks help you turn everyday duties into strong, achievement-focused bullet points. Use these to build strong bullets using examples from Transferable Skills (p9), STAR (p10), Meaningful Moments (p7), and Professional Value (p13)

CV design and layout

Suggested CV structure

A clear, well-organised CV helps employers quickly understand your strengths, experience, and career direction. Use this structure to present your information professionally, highlight key achievements, and make your application stand out.

Name and Contact Details

Keep this simple and professional. Use your full name prominently so it is easy to spot at a glance. Include one phone number and a professional email address. Location can be city or region only. Adding LinkedIn is optional but useful if it is up to date.

Profile

This is a short snapshot, not a life story. Use two to three lines to summarise who you are, what you are good at, and the type of opportunity you are seeking. Focus on skills and value rather than job titles, and tailor it for different roles where possible.

Key Skills

Choose skills that match the role you are applying for rather than listing everything you can do. Use clear, plain language and avoid academic or internal terminology. This section should help recruiters quickly see your strengths and encourage them to read the rest of your CV.

Experience

Focus on what you did and the impact it had, not just your duties. Start each bullet with an action word and, where possible, include outcomes such as improvements, feedback, or scale. Experience can include employment, research, projects, volunteering, or relevant study work.

- **If you have 10+ years of experience** – List your last 3–5 roles, depending on relevance.
- **If you're early in your career** – Include all roles, even short ones, because they show transferable skills.
- **If you changed careers** – Focus on the roles that support your new direction and summarise the rest.

Education

List qualifications clearly and in reverse date order. For non-academic roles, keep this section concise. You do not need to include every module or grade unless directly relevant. Highlight key learning or projects only if they strengthen your application for the role.

Additional Information (Optional)

Showcase extra skills or experiences that don't fit neatly into other sections but still add value – such as professional courses you've completed, community work that demonstrates commitment, or language abilities that could be useful in the role. Keep each point concise and focused, choosing only items that enhance your suitability for the position and help present you as a well-rounded candidate.

Key principles of CV design

- **Keep it simple and clear** – Use clean fonts (Arial, Calibri, Helvetica) at a readable size (10–12pt).
- **Make headings stand out** – Use bold or slightly larger text for section titles.
- **Use consistent spacing and alignment** – Avoid clutter—leave enough white space so the CV is easy to read.
- **Keep it to 1–2 pages** – Most roles don't require longer CVs.

EMMA HARTLEY

07724 839 552 | emma.hartley@example.com | Manchester, UK | linkedin.com/in/emma-hartley

PROFILE

A reliable and organised professional with experience in administrative support and learner-focused services. Known for strong communication, supportive teamwork, and maintaining high levels of accuracy in busy environments. Brings a positive, solutions-focused approach and a commitment to helping others access clear information and smooth processes. Seeking a role where I can contribute to effective service delivery while continuing to build my skills in a structured and collaborative team.

KEY SKILLS

- Communicates clearly with learners, colleagues, and stakeholders
- Works collaboratively across departments
- Manages workloads, schedules, and documentation reliably
- Addresses day-to-day issues calmly and efficiently
- Reliable and consistent
- Detail-driven and committed to quality

EXPERIENCE

Administrative Assistant – Learning Services | 2023–Present

- Provided administrative support across the service, ensuring smooth coordination of tasks and timely completion of work.
- Assisted with updating records and preparing materials, helping maintain consistency and quality across the team.

Administrative Officer – Regional Education Trust | 2020–2023

- Managed enquiries, scheduling, and documentation to support efficient daily operations within the department.
- Improved local organisation systems, contributing to faster access to information and reduced administrative delays.

EDUCATION

BA (Hons) Education Studies – Hartley University | 2017–2020

Studied areas including learning theory, support strategies, and inclusive practice.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Training:** Data protection basics, safeguarding awareness
- **Volunteering:** Community learning support
- **Languages:** Intermediate French

Transforming your experience into CV-ready sentences

Try this simple formula to turn your everyday tasks into clear, impactful CV or interview statements:

**ACTION VERB + SKILL USED + WHAT YOU DID
+ RESULT OR POSITIVE OUTCOME**

EXAMPLE:

Organised weekly group sessions for a community project, helping improve attendance and engagement.

This structure helps you communicate your experience in a way that is concise, professional and focused on impact. Beginning with an action verb makes the statement stronger, while highlighting a skill shows what you bring to a role. Explaining what you did and the positive outcome helps demonstrate the value of your contribution. Keep each statement short and specific so it's easy for an employer to understand.

Creating, saving, and sending your CV

When preparing a CV, it is best to use widely recognised programmes such as **Microsoft Word** or **Google Docs**, as these allow you to create clear layouts, edit easily, and tailor versions for different roles.

- Avoid specialist design software unless applying for creative roles.
- Save and send your CV as a **PDF** unless an employer specifically requests another format, as this preserves formatting across devices.
- Use a clear file name (for example, **Firstname_Surname_CV**) and check the document opens correctly before sending.

For online applications, follow upload instructions carefully and keep an editable Word version for future updates.

USING DIGITAL TOOLS AND AI TO SUPPORT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

This section introduces a range of digital tools, including AI, that can support career development by providing practical assistance, new ways of thinking, and inspiration when reflecting on experience and exploring next steps.

THIS SECTION CAN HELP YOU WITH:

Prompts you can use with generative AI tools

Ensuring safe and responsible use of AI

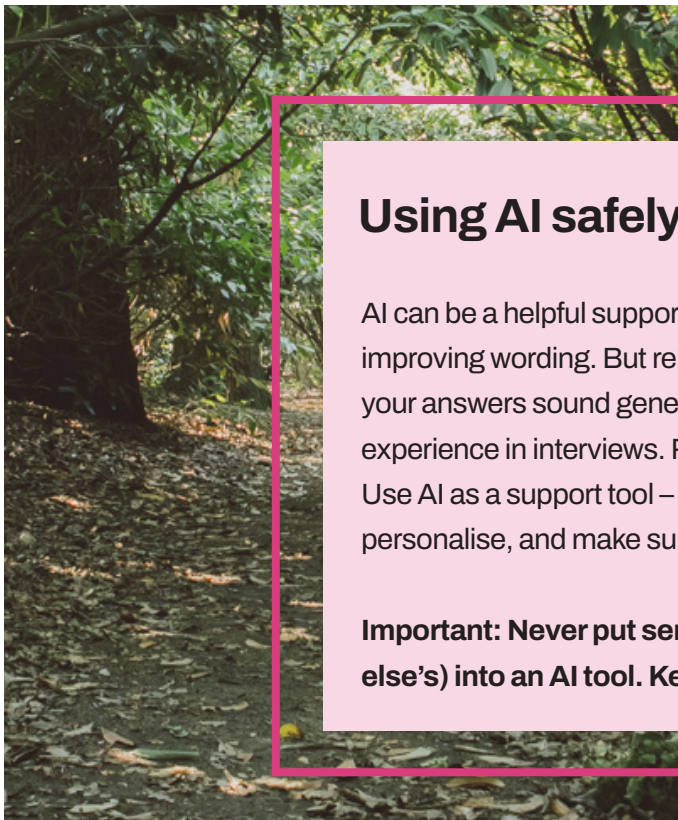
Using AI to identify skills and explore career options

If you've used AI before, feel free to open Copilot and try asking a few questions. This will help you become more familiar with how these tools respond and support your career development.

What generative AI can do

What Is artificial intelligence (AI)?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems that can perform tasks normally requiring human thinking. AI is designed to support people with everyday tasks such as writing, planning, researching, and organising information. Used thoughtfully, it can save time, spark ideas, and help improve the quality of your work.



Using AI safely and effectively

AI can be a helpful support when generating ideas, structuring content, or improving wording. But relying too much on AI during applications can make your answers sound generic and make it harder to talk confidently about your experience in interviews. Recruiters want authentic evidence of your skills. Use AI as a support tool – not a substitute for your own thinking. Always review, personalise, and make sure you can fully explain everything you submit.

Important: Never put sensitive or personal information (yours or anyone else's) into an AI tool. Keep details general and protect your privacy.

Prompts to be used with generative AI tools

Using prompts can make CV writing easier by giving you a starting point when you're unsure what to say. A good prompt helps you turn your experience into clear, professional statements by guiding you on what to include — such as actions you took, skills you used, and the positive results you achieved.

Copy and paste these prompts into AI tools such as Copilot.

- Can you advise on the structure of this CV and how I might reorganise it?
- Based on this job description, what types of experience should I focus on in my CV?
- Can you explain what this requirement is asking for and what kind of examples would meet it?
- Ask me questions that will help me write a strong example for this competency.

How to use LinkedIn

Setting up your profile

A strong LinkedIn profile begins with the basics: **your name, headline** and a **professional photograph**. Add a short summary that explains who you are, what you do and what you're aiming for. Include your experience, skills, education and achievements. A complete, well-presented profile increases your visibility and helps employers quickly understand your strengths.

Searching and applying for jobs

LinkedIn's job search tool lets you browse roles by location, sector and job title. You can set alerts, save roles and apply directly through the platform. Reviewing company profiles helps you tailor applications and prepare for interviews. A well-maintained profile paired with targeted job searching increases your chances of being noticed by recruiters.

Uploading your CV

You can upload your CV either to your LinkedIn profile or directly when applying for roles. Although your profile acts as an online CV, adding a document version gives recruiters an easy-to-download copy. It also allows you to store multiple versions tailored to different roles while keeping your main profile consistent.

Building your network

Start by connecting with colleagues, classmates, employers and people in your industry. Engage with posts to stay active and visible. As your network grows, you'll gain access to more opportunities, industry updates and valuable professional contacts. Building a relevant, well-curated network strengthens your professional presence and helps you stay connected to your field.



ENHANCING YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

This section introduces commonly used interview questions and provides practical tips to help you structure clear, confident answers and demonstrate your skills effectively during different types of interviews.

THIS SECTION CAN HELP YOU WITH:

Answering Common Interview Questions

Preparing and Practising for Interviews

As you work through these commonly used interview questions, take time to think about how you would respond.

Presenting yourself professionally,

Top 10 most asked interview questions

Many interviews include familiar question types designed to understand your strengths, experience, and motivation. These common questions help employers assess how you work, communicate, and fit the role. Don't forget to look back at **PROFILE**, **KEY SKILLS** and **EXPERIENCE** identifiers they can help you choose strong examples and shape clear, confident answers.

“Tell me about yourself.”

A short summary of who you are, your experience, and what you're looking for.

Keep it short, positive, and relevant to the job.
Use a 3-part structure: Past → Present → Future.

EXAMPLE:

Past: your background

Present: your key skills

Future: why you want this job

“What are your strengths?”

Employers want to understand your key skills and what you bring to the role.

TIP:

Pick 3 strengths that match the job.
Give a short example for each to prove it.

“What are your weaknesses?”

They look for honesty and self-awareness, not perfection.

TIP:

Choose a real weakness, not a fake one.
Show what you're doing to improve — employers love growth mindsets.

“Why do you want this job?”

Shows your motivation and understanding of the role/company.

Show you understand the role.

MENTION:

Something about the company

Something about your skills

Something about your career goals

“Why should we hire you?”

A chance to link your skills, experience, and attitude directly to the job.

TIP:

Match their needs to your top 3 skills.
Think: “Here's what you're looking for — and here's how I can deliver it.”

“Tell me about a time you worked in a team.”

Checks teamwork, communication, and collaboration.

TIP:

Use the STAR method: Situation – Task – Action – Result (p10)

Focus on your contribution, not the whole team's story.

“Tell me about a time you solved a problem.”

Shows initiative and decision-making.

TIP:

Show how you:
Noticed the problem
Took action
Made things better

Keep it specific, not general.

“Describe a challenge you faced and how you handled it.”

Tests resilience and coping skills.

TIP:

Pick a challenge that shows:

Resilience
Attitude
Professional behaviour
A good outcome or lesson learned

Stay positive — never blame others.

“Where do you see yourself in the next few years?”

Employers want commitment and future ambition.

TIP:

Show ambition, but keep it realistic.
Employers just want to know you're reliable and motivated — not that you're leaving soon.

“Do you have any questions for us?”

Demonstrates interest, preparation, and confidence.

TIP:

Always say yes.
Ask 1–2 simple questions such as:

“What does a typical day look like?”
“What does success look like in this role?”
“What opportunities are there to learn and grow?”

It shows confidence and interest. Look back at your career expectations (p12) to gain clarification on what you are looking for in an employer.

Top Tips for preparing and remembering key information

- Review your experience and professional strengths and pick a few strong examples to talk about.
- Research the company's purpose, values, and the work they do.
- Use simple tools like STAR to structure your answers and keep them focused.
- Planning ahead helps you feel more confident without memorising scripts.
- Practise saying your examples out loud once or twice, focus on three strengths you want to highlight, and keep short bullet notes to stay natural and relaxed.

Additional resources and tools

CAREER ADVICE, JOB SKILLS & SKILL MAPPING

National Careers Service (UK) – www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

Prospects (UK – careers, job profiles, skill mapping) – www.prospects.ac.uk

My World of Work (Scotland) – www.myworldofwork.co.uk

TargetJobs (graduate careers & examples) – www.targetjobs.co.uk

UCAS Careers Advice – www.ucas.com/understanding-careers

CV WRITING TOOLS & TEMPLATES

Reed.co.uk CV Builder – www.reed.co.uk/cv-builder

TotalJobs CV Advice & Templates – www.totaljobs.com/advice/cvs

Indeed UK CV Help – uk.indeed.com/career-advice/cvs

INTERVIEW PREPARATION & PRACTICE (UK)

National Careers Service Interview Advice –

www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice

Prospects Interview Tips & Questions –

www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips

TargetJobs Interview Preparation –

www.targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips

Reed Interview Guidance – www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/interviews

WRITING & EDITING SUPPORT

Grammarly – www.grammarly.com

ProWritingAid – www.prowritingaid.com

Hemingway Editor – www.hemingwayapp.com