



PART TWO

APPLY

MODULE 8

ENQUIRING AND APPLYING



JOB SEEKING SKILLS



MODULE 8

Enquiring and applying

Phoning about a job advert

You may need to call up an employer to ask for more information about a job you have seen advertised.

Before you pick up the phone – be prepared!

Phoning with confidence is an important skill. This will be your first contact with the company, and if you do well it could help you to get an interview.

You get the chance to ask for more information which will help you decide whether you are interested in applying for the job.

Employers can use the first phone call as an informal interview to help them to decide whether they want to see you in person. So remember, first impressions count.

You will feel much more confident if you are well prepared.

PHONING AN EMPLOYER

Phoning in the morning is a good idea, particularly if you are contacting small businesses that work on jobs at different locations.

- ☒ Make sure you have peace and quiet to make the calls.
- ☒ Plan what you're going to say, write it down and practise.
- ☒ If they don't have time to speak to you when you phone, ask them when would be the best time to call back, or if you could email them.
- ☒ Be prepared to leave a message if you get through to an answerphone.
- ☒ Have a pen and paper for taking notes.
- ☒ Have your CV to hand before calling, just in case you're asked any questions. That way you have something to refer to.
- ☒ Speak clearly and be polite.
- ☒ If you don't hear something properly or don't understand, ask them to repeat it.





WHEN SOMEONE ANSWERS THE PHONE

Sometimes a receptionist answers calls and then transfers you to the right person.

So, when phoning you should ask for:

- a person by name; or
- a person by job title (for example, the Personnel Officer); or
- a department; or
- an extension number.



ALWAYS CHECK YOU ARE SPEAKING TO THE RIGHT PERSON

When the receptionist transfers your call, check you've got the right person.
("Is that?")



SAY WHY YOU ARE CALLING

This part is really worth preparing. Decide what you're going to say before you phone.

Explain briefly:

- the vacancy you are interested in ("I'm phoning about the vacancy for a")
- how you heard about it ("It was advertised on the").



BE PREPARED TO ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS AND GET DETAILS

The employer may only want basic details such as your name and address so they can send you out information or an application form. However, be ready to talk about yourself and ask for more details.

For example, they might ask you to send in your CV. In this case, be sure you get the name and address or email of the person to send it to.

They might even offer you an interview! You'll need to know:

- the date and time
- the name of the person who will be interviewing you
- the correct address
- if you need to bring any particular documents with you (for example, exam certificates)
- directions for getting there.



Questions you could ask:

- What does the job involve?
- When do you need someone to start work?
- What are the hours of work?
- What are the chances of the contract being extended? (If the job is based on a fixed-term contract, limited to a set period of time such as 6 months or 1 year)
- What kind of training opportunities are there?



LISTEN CAREFULLY

- Give the other person time to speak.
- Listen carefully to what they say and take notes, such as the time and place of the interview.
- Don't be afraid to ask the person to repeat something if you don't catch what they have said, or to spell out names that are unusual.
- Don't ask unnecessary questions that have already been answered in the job advert.



In some cases the phone call might turn into a mini-interview, so have your details handy so you don't get into a panic trying to remember dates and results.

Be prepared to talk positively about your skills and personal qualities. This is not the time for modesty!

You could use your CV and a list of your skills and strengths that relate to the job.



CONFIRM

At the end of the call, repeat the details of any arrangements you've made to the person you are speaking to, to make sure that you've written them down correctly.

Finally, if you don't already know it, ask the person you have been speaking to for their name – and thank them for their time.

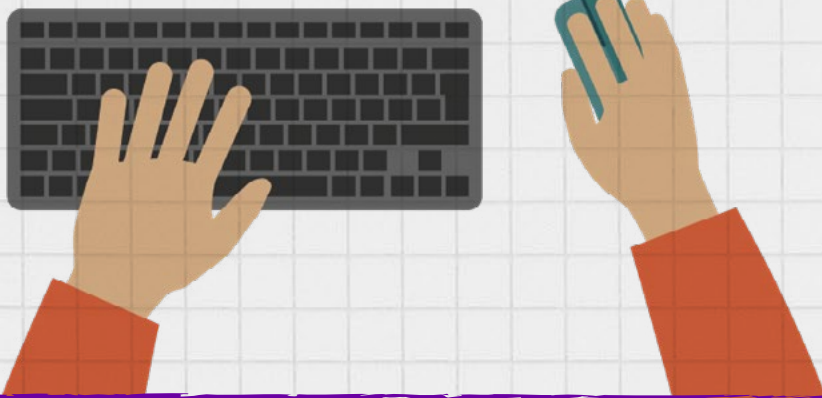


Activity 1: Phoning about a job advert (role play)

Have a read through the role play examples in [Activity 1: Phoning about a job advert \(role play\)](#) then try your own role play activity with a partner.

JOB SEEKING SKILLS





Applying by letter or email

If the method of application for a job is to send your CV, then a cover letter should accompany this.



Employers may ask for your CV and cover letter to be:

- sent by email
- uploaded on their recruitment website
- posted or handed in to the company. If you are completing an application form and posting it to an employer, you should also include a cover letter.

Regardless of the method of delivery, you need a good cover letter that is tailored to the job you're applying for.

The purpose of a cover letter

A good cover letter tells an employer:

- ☒ why you are interested in the job or type of work – your motivation
- ☒ why you're a great candidate – your skills, qualities and experience
- ☒ relevant information you haven't included in your CV, for example, if you are about to sit a driving test.



Cover letter guidelines

The introduction

- Your address, including your postcode, should be in the top right-hand corner.
- The name of the person you are contacting and/or their job title, and the employer's name and address should be below your address and on the left-hand side.
- The date should be under the employer's address.
- Then address the person you are writing to, for example "Dear Ms Green" or "Dear Sir/Madam".
- Give the letter a title or subject heading – put the name or job title and any job reference number (this should be in bold), for example "Re: Travel Services Apprenticeship (Ref. TSMA YP1)".

Now you're ready to start writing the main part of the letter.

Part 1

- Say what you are applying for, for example "I wish to apply for the above post..." or "I would like to be considered for..." or "I am very interested in your recent advertisement for..."
- Say **where** and **when** you saw the vacancy advertised.
- Mention that you have enclosed, or attached, a copy of your CV for their consideration.

Part 2

- Tell them a little bit about yourself, and why you're a good applicant for the job. For example, "I have recently completed my National 5 qualifications and am expected to achieve good grades in all of my subjects." Or, "I completed a one-week placement as an office assistant at a local car hire company, which helped me to improve my telephone and customer service skills."
- Mention your relevant skills and experience, but keep it short. Focus on the skills specified in the advert. Add to what you've said in your CV.
- Say why the job and their company or organisation interests you. As well as saying what you can bring to the company, give a specific example, if possible, of how it would benefit you to work there. Make it clear that you are really keen!

Part 3

Thank them for considering your application, and say that you look forward to hearing from them.

The ending

- Yours sincerely (if you know the name of the person who will be reading the letter)

Or

- Yours faithfully (if the letter is addressed "Dear Sir/Madam")
- Leave a space and type your name.
- If emailing or uploading the letter, you don't need to physically sign it.
- If posting or handing it in, sign the letter above your typed name.

Tips for a great cover letter

- ✓ Be positive about yourself and what you have to offer.
- ✓ Be enthusiastic about the job and the company or organisation.
- ✓ Keep the letter short – no more than one page of A4 paper – around 150 to 250 words should suffice.
- ✓ It's best to type up your letter on a computer, rather than writing it by hand (unless this is specifically requested). Use the same font type you used for your CV.
- ✓ Tailor your letter to the job you are applying for and to the employer.
- ✓ Spellcheck the letter, and then check it again yourself for mistakes. Ask someone else to check it for you.
- ✓ Remember to sign it (unless sending by email or uploading)
- ✓ Don't use a cover letter example as anything other than a guide.
- ✓ Don't forget to attach your CV, or send it by email with your CV.
- ✓ Save a copy of the letter, preferably electronically, for future reference.



Activity 2: Cover Letter Creator

Using the Cover Letter Creator tool on Planit, you can now have a go at creating your first cover letter. Use the same example job that you used in [Module 7: Matching your skills to a job](#).

To complete this activity online, you must log in to your Planit Portfolio, or sign up for one, at www.planitplus.net/Portfolio/SignUp/

Cover Letter Creator

- Select **Cover Letter Creator** from the '**Portfolio**' section.
- Work your way through each section, following the instructions.
- If there are any sections that you want to complete later, you can click through to the next section.
- View the [Activity 2 Sample Letter](#) to see a cover letter for someone leaving school, and how they might include important information.

If you are completing this as a paper-based exercise, use Word to create your own cover letter. Use the Activity 2 Sample Letter to guide you.

SENDING YOUR CV WITH A COVER LETTER BY EMAIL

Applying by email is one of the most common ways of applying for a job where the employer is a small business. It usually involves sending the company an email message and attaching an electronic copy of your CV and cover letter.

The email message

In most cases, the email message is almost like a cover letter, however a little shorter – just three or four short paragraphs. Each paragraph should include only one or two sentences.

The main aim of the message is to persuade the employer that your CV is worth looking at more closely.

Here is what a typical email looks like.

The screenshot shows an email client window with a sample email. Several teal callout boxes with arrows point to specific parts of the email, providing tips:

- Double check the email address - even a small mistake can stop your email getting to the right person.** (Points to the 'To...' field)
- Say what you are applying for, if the vacancy has a reference number add it. Also give your name. The example we've given says exactly what the employer needs to know.** (Points to the 'Subject' line)
- Keep things business-like.** (Points to the salutation 'Dear Mr Thomson')
- Name the vacancy, any reference number and where you saw it.** (Points to the first paragraph of the body text)
- Follow the instructions given by the employer.** (Points to the sentence 'I have attached my CV as requested, and look forward to hearing from you.'
- 'Regards' is also acceptable.** (Points to the closing 'Yours sincerely')
- List your contact details.** (Points to the contact information at the bottom)
- Your email address should be something sensible that is appropriate for a business situation.** (Points to the email address in the contact details)

The sample email content is as follows:

To... john.thomson@sjs.co.uk
Cc...
Subject: Amy McDonald: Application for Clerical Assistant Post (Ref. No. E1276)

Dear Mr Thomson

I am writing to apply for the post of clerical assistant (Ref. No. E1276), as advertised in The Herald on Friday 7 May.

I became interested in legal administration during my work experience placement last year with McSorley & Partners in Buchanan Street, Glasgow. They have offered to provide me with a reference if required.

I will be taking exams on Wednesday 12, Thursday 13 and Monday 24 May but am available for interview at all other times. I would be available to start work at any time after 28 May.

I have attached my CV as requested, and look forward to hearing from you.






Yours sincerely

Amy McDonald
Tel: 0978 345 789
Mobile: 02786 654987
Email: amy.mcdonald@test.com

Things to remember



First impressions count!

-  Don't use casual language. This is a business email, so write it in the same formal way as you would a business letter.
-  Use an email address that incorporates your name, so that the employer can link it with your application.
-  It's best not to use your school email, as once you leave you won't have access to it.
-  Make sure you know exactly what the employer wants to receive by email. For example, is it your CV, your CV and a cover letter, an application form or all three documents?
-  Don't hit the 'send' button until you have checked that your CV is attached, and any other relevant documents. It's very easy to forget!



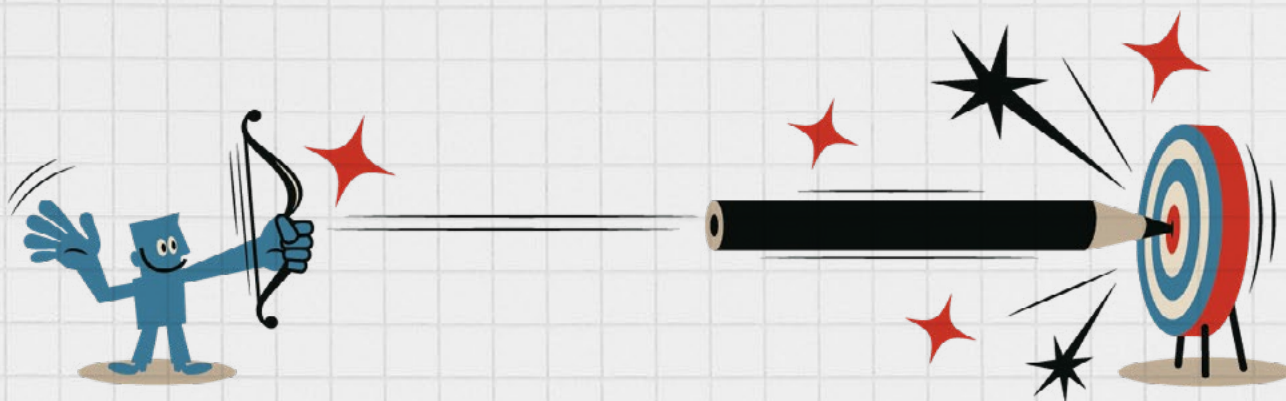
UPLOADING YOUR CV AND COVER LETTER



Some employers may have an online facility for uploading a CV and cover letter. You will need to register on their website first, inputting your personal and contact details.

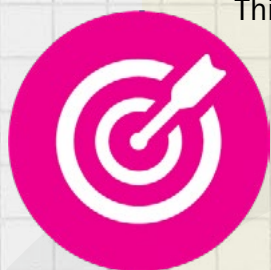
Employers advise the file format they prefer you to upload, with Microsoft Word being the most common. There is usually also a file size limit, for example 2MB.

Make sure that you follow the instructions and that you don't make any mistakes when inputting your contact details, as you will receive a confirmation email once your application is received.



Making speculative job enquiries

Employers sometimes fill vacancies without advertising, so it can be well worth contacting them directly about any future employment opportunities.



This is particularly true if you are applying for:

- popular Modern Apprenticeship opportunities where you need to find an employer to sponsor your training, like the construction trades
- entry level jobs in sectors that rarely advertise, like the media and creative industries
- specialist companies or organisations that attract a lot of interest, from airports to computer games developers.

PREPARATION

First, you need to do some research and it's important to be thorough.

You need to show that you:

- know about the organisation
- understand what it is that they do and who their customers are
- have valuable skills and abilities to offer.

You should have a good understanding of what your skills, strengths and interests are from completing [Module 1 - All about you](#) and you practised researching companies in [Module 4 - Where to look for work: Using websites](#).

JOB SEEKING SKILLS



Use your research to make a list of the companies and/or organisations you plan to contact and keep a record of those you do contact.



It's a good idea to list their address, phone number, what they do, the date you contacted them, the name of your contact and the outcome of your call.

- Check how to spell their name if you're not sure.
- This could be the owner if it's a small business, the human resources manager or the head of a department. You may be able to find the right contact name on their website, or by phoning and asking them who deals with recruitment.

Next you need to think about how to contact the company.

SPECULATIVE PHONE CALLS

Once you've researched a company it can be a good idea to give them a call.

This allows you to:

- make initial enquiries
- find out the right person to send your CV to possibly speak to the person responsible for recruitment.

When making the phone call, follow the guidelines and advice already covered in the section 'Phoning about a job advert'. As you're not phoning about a specific job advert, you obviously won't be asking questions such as 'what does the job involve', but rather enquiring if there are any vacancies.

Here are some examples of opening lines:



- "Hello, Mrs Green? My name is Alison Turner. I'm looking for a Modern Apprenticeship in retailing and wondered if you might be recruiting in the near future?"
- "Hello, can you put me through to Recruitment and Staff Development please?" "Hello, I wonder if you can help me. I'm about to leave school and I'm looking for an entry level job in administration. Are you recruiting at the moment?" "Can I send you my CV in case openings come up in the future?"
- "Good morning, my name's Usman Anwar. I'm interested in finding out about your accounting apprenticeship programme. Who would be the best person to speak to?"

Speculative Letters or Emails

When writing to a company 'on spec' in the hope that they may have a suitable vacancy, always include a copy of your CV, which is tailored to the type of job you are looking for.

For example, if you're looking for an administration post, highlight any skills and experience that shows good communication skills, organisation skills, using a computer and working as part of a team.



Where possible address your letter to a named person in the company. The letter should state clearly:

- ☒ the type of job you are looking for
- ☒ the skills and qualities that you can offer
- ☒ some reference to the work of the company you are approaching
- ☒ why you are interested in working for the company.

This shows you have done some background work and makes a good impression on the employer.



If you phoned the company prior to sending them your cover letter and CV, also mention that in the letter or email, including the date you called, and the name of the person you spoke to.



Sample speculative letter

26 Red Crescent
Whitefield
West Shire WS3 3AS

Telephone 01927 777 777

13 June 2025

Mr B Gray
Sales Director
XYZ Ltd
5 Main Street
Whitefield
West Shire WS1 5SA

Dear Mr Gray,

I read on the West Shire Record website this week that your motor spares company has plans to expand due to increasing customer demand and record profitability.

I am writing to enquire if, as a result of your planned expansion, there might be an opportunity for someone with my background in the parts department.

I have successfully completed a Modern Apprenticeship programme run by the West Shire Car Components Training Association and have achieved an SVQ Automotive: Vehicle Parts Operations at SCQF Level 6.

You will note from my enclosed CV that I have also had 2 years' experience in the Parts Department of Car City Garage. I am enthusiastic and motivated towards securing further experience and a full time position in parts.

I would be pleased to attend for an interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

GRAHAM JONES



Activity 3: Writing a speculative letter

Think of a company that you would like to work for and the job you would like to do and have a go at creating a speculative letter. You can use Word or the Cover Letter Creator tool in Planit, which you used in Activity 2. Although it includes fields for a job title and reference, you can ignore these.

Use the sample letter provided as a guide.

If you were contacting a company by email, you would follow the guidelines from this module, but make sure that the email states the points mentioned.

Now you know more about writing cover letters and emails,
you can move on to

[Module 9 - Application forms and online application systems](#)

Or [click here](#) to return to the main screen.