

The logo for the National Literacy Trust, featuring the text "National Literacy Trust" in white on a red background with a yellow-to-orange gradient border.

National
Literacy
Trust

Changing life stories

A collection of white line art illustrations on a dark blue background. The art includes a large, stylized face with a wide smile, a rainbow, a starburst, a network of nodes, and various abstract shapes and patterns.

WORDS FOR WORK

**16+ employability
skills handbook**



Hello,

This activity pack is designed for students aged 16 and over. It has been put together by the National Literacy Trust, a charity changing life stories by improving literacy skills in communities and supporting schools and nurseries.

These have all been designed to help you engage in literacy activities and focus on employability and communication skills. This booklet is packed with advice and activities on preparing yourself for the world of work. All you will need is something to write with. This booklet is yours, so you can make any notes or complete any activities in the booklet if you like.

For further ideas on school-holiday activities visit [wordsforlife.org.uk/zone-in](https://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/zone-in) for lots of literacy-based resources you can complete at home.

We hope these will be useful!

Best wishes,
The National Literacy Trust team



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CV writing

A CV, also known as a curriculum vitae or a résumé, is a written overview of your skills, education, hobbies and work experience. You will often need a CV when applying for jobs, internships, apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities.

WHAT SHOULD A CV INCLUDE?

While there are no strict rules on what a CV should cover, there are certain key pieces of information that all CVs should reference.

- 1. **Your personal details.** This should include your name and a professional email address
- 2. **A personal statement.** A brief summary of who you are and what your aspirations are
- 3. **Relevant key skills.** This could be additional languages, digital and creative skills
- 4. **Work experience.** Information about your paid or unpaid experience, with the most recent first
- 5. **Education and qualifications.** All your formal qualifications, with the most recent first

FORMATTING A CV

The presentation of a CV is just as important as its contents. Make sure it is clear, concise and easy to read by following these five rules:

1. **Be logical**
2. **Keep it succinct**
3. **Check spelling and grammar**
4. **Choose a professional font**
5. **Use headings and bullet points**





TOP TIPS FOR CV WRITING

- 1 **Make sure your CV stands out from the crowd.** A good CV should demonstrate your unique blend of skills, qualifications, work experience, hobbies and ambitions.
- 2 **Keep it simple.** Recruiters read through hundreds of applications every day, so make sure yours gets to the point by being succinct and engaging.
- 3 **Don't be generic.** Tailor your CV to match the job you are applying for by using the buzzwords included in the job description. This will clearly demonstrate that you are qualified and ready for that position.
- 4 **Keep it to two pages.** The standard length of a CV is two pages. Make sure your CV is brief – it's better to be concise than to ramble. If you are at the start of your career, an employer won't expect you to have years of experience yet.
- 5 **Ensure the formatting of your CV is consistent throughout.** This will make it look professional and well-planned. Font size should be between 10 and 12 points. Too small or large fonts will make your CV look cluttered and unprofessional.
- 6 **Keep it professional.** Avoid providing irrelevant personal information.
- 7 **Explain any employment gaps.** Taking time away from work shouldn't hold you back. Use your CV to explain any gaps and summarise what you accomplished during this time.
- 8 **Be proud of what you have accomplished and be honest.** If you are resorting to untruths on your CV to match the job specifications, you are more than likely not ready for that position. Also, this is likely to come out in an interview.
- 9 **Make sure you know your CV.** A recruiter will base their interview questions on the information you have provided in your CV so make sure you can talk about all of the examples you have included.



ACTIVITY - WRITING YOUR OWN CV

Using the template below, write your own CV and send it to us at wfw@literacytrust.org.uk for some constructive feedback from industry experts.

CONTACT

Address:

Phone:

Email:

LinkedIn:

PERSONAL SUMMARY

EDUCATION

ACHIEVEMENTS

WORK EXPERIENCE

Job interviews

DIFFERENT TYPES OF JOB INTERVIEWS

There are several different ways to conduct a job interview. How you need prepare for them will vary.

Phone

Instead of inviting candidates in for an interview, many employers host their first round of interviews over the phone. It is a quick and cost-effective way to whittle down a list of candidates.

Tip: Whilst you won't need to worry about your body language or dress code, a telephone interview will test your social and telephone skills.

Video

Video interviews have grown in popularity over the last few years. It is a quick and easy way to connect people in different locations.

Tip: It is a good idea to prepare for a video interview in the same way as you would for a face-to-face interview. Dress for the occasion, do your research and remember to think about your body language

One-to-one

One-to-one interviews are slightly less formal than a panel interview but it is still important to prepare well. A one-to-one interview means you are more than likely to be directly questioned by someone in charge. It is a good idea to think of some strong questions to ask at the end of the interview. *What does progression look like for school leavers? Or What professional development do you offer?*

Tip: Try to build a friendly rapport with the interviewer whilst keeping it professional. Remember, if they like you as a person then you are more likely to be offered the job.

Panel

These are popular with larger companies and will involve a group of interviewers taking turns to ask questions. This can sometimes feel intimidating so it is vital that you prepare in advance.

Tip: Treat all of the people on the panel with equal respect, you may not know who is in charge and has the final hiring decision. When answering a question, focus on the person who asked it.

Group

A group interview will involve multiple candidates being interviewed at the same time. It is often used when employers are looking to hire more than one person for a role. This interview style is popular for industries like food service, retail and hospitality.

Tip: Try to include everyone in a group activity. Whilst your leadership skills are being assessed, it is also important to show the interviewer that you can work well in a team

TOP TIPS FOR NAILING AN INTERVIEW

Be prepared for the question, “What do you know about us?” or “Why do you want to work for us?”. Research both the company and the wider industry. You should be able to find out information about the company’s history, mission and values, staff, culture and recent successes on their website. Social media is a useful place to find out about the organisation’s most current work.

- 1 **Be on time.** If your interview is taking place in an unknown area, practise your route to guarantee you do not get lost.
- 2 **Try to stay calm and relaxed.** If you need to take a moment to think about an answer rather than using ‘umm’ or ‘er’ (fillers).
- 3 **Know your CV.** Your interviewer will prepare their questions based on the information you provided on your CV or application. Remember to be positive about your skills and experiences.
- 4 **Prepare.** Research common job interview questions and practise your answers. This will help you feel more relaxed going into the interview.
- 5 **Practise.** The more familiar interviewing feels to you, the more relaxed you will come across. Meet with mentors, colleagues and friends for mock interviews to gain confidence in answering routine interview questions.



- 6 **Plan your outfit.** Make sure your clothes are smart but comfortable. It is always better to be too smart than too casual. If you have purchased a new outfit, consider wearing it before your interview to ensure you feel comfortable.
- 7 **Follow up after the interview.** This should be a short email within 24 hours of your interview to thank the interviewer for their time.

THE STAR METHOD

The STAR interview method is a structured way of answering a behavioural-based interview question by outlining the specific **Situation, Task, Action** and **Result** of the example you are describing.

Behavioural-based questions about the way you have handled certain work situations show the interviewer how you might apply your skills and experience to a similar situation in the future.

	S: SITUATION	T: TASK	A: ACTION	R: RESULT
	Describe the event or situation you were in	Explain the task you had to complete	Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task	Close with the result of your efforts
Describe a time you showed initiative:	<i>Whilst working as a retail assistant, we were faced with hundreds of disgruntled customers as we headed towards the busy Christmas period.</i>	<i>To ensure that all the customers left the shop feeling satisfied, I was tasked with reducing the customer queuing time by 30%.</i>	<i>I effectively supported with the recruitment and training of three new members of staff to support the team. I also introduced an extra queuing line to combat overcrowding.</i>	<i>As a result of my actions, we had the most successful Christmas period to date.</i>
Describe a time you worked in a successful team:				
Describe a time you used your communication skills effectively:				
Describe a time you were faced with a challenging situation:				

Presentations

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION

1. **Make your presentation visual.** Use images, charts, graphs or videos to grab your audience's attention. Try to avoid using lengthy sentences.
2. **Show passion.** Connect with your audience and show you care about the topic you are talking about.
3. **Start Strong.** The first two minutes of your speech are crucial for capturing your audience's attention. Remember to always introduce yourself.
4. **Make eye contact.** You might feel nervous but making eye contact will help you build rapport with your audience; helping them to connect with you and your presentation.
5. **Smile.** By smiling, you will feel less nervous and it will help your audience to relax.
6. **Tell stories.** Avoid overcrowding your presentation with facts and numbers, instead use stories that will help your audience relate to your message and engage overall
7. **The rule of three.** Studies have shown that people are likely to remember only three things from a presentation. Plan what these important points might be and build your speech around them.
8. **Practice.** The more confident and comfortable you are with your ideas, the better you will come across.
9. **Speak slowly.** When you are nervous you will be tempted to speak quickly. Take a few deep breaths before you start and remember to pause.
10. **Prepare answers to expected questions.** Although you cannot predict exactly what will be asked, it is a good idea to make sure you feel prepared and research commonly-asked questions ahead of the presentation. Have a think about the best way to answer them.
11. **Be confident.** Remember that your audience want you to do well.





ACTIVITY - WRITING A PRESENTATION

Activity - Write a 5 minute presentation on one of these two topics:

1. One thing I would change about the world and why
2. What is my dream job and why

Introduction

An introduction to you and your chosen topic

Outline your topic

Outline your topic and why it is important to you

Detailed examples to support your topic

Provide examples about your topic to support your point

Closing statement

What is your final message from your presentation? Highlight the key points

Conclusion

30 seconds to thank your audience

Questions

Prepare four questions that your audience might ask about your presentation

Record your presentation and send it to us at wfw@literacytrust.org.uk to receive some expert advice from industry experts.

Social Media

IS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE EMPLOYMENT READY?

Most of us have heard at least one story of someone losing their dream job after sharing something on social media. Here are some simple steps to make sure you're showing your best self.

1. **Make it private.** Social media is your private life. So keep it that way. Your friends may find a post funny but a potential employer may not see the funny side. If you are not sure whether a post is appropriate it is always best to hold back.
2. **Show your best self.** Filter yourself. Even if your profile has all the privacy settings turned on, that doesn't mean that your pictures and posts are completely untraceable. It's a good idea to double check all the photos you post or that others may post of you.
3. **Celebrate your achievements.** Posting about your passions, projects and achievements will show potential employers that you are ambitious, productive and talented outside of the workplace.
4. **Always keep it professional.** Think before you post. We all need to vent sometimes, but putting your problems or arguments down in writing for everyone to see is not always the best approach. You never know who might be reading your posts.
5. **But try not to be too professional.** Holiday posts and snaps about your favourite hobby show a healthy work-life balance..



ACTIVITY: GOOGLE YOURSELF.

As embarrassing as it sounds it is a good idea to occasionally Google yourself.

Enter your full name into a search engine and check what comes up under the image, news and the landing page. If anything appears that makes you feel embarrassed or that you wouldn't be comfortable showing your teacher, gran or potential employer then delete it

Writing styles

FORMAL AND INFORMAL WRITING

When writing a letter or an email, the writing style plays a very important role, especially when you are trying to impress a potential employer.

There are two main writing styles to consider: **formal** and **informal**. The tone, word choice and structure vary according to each option.

Formal writing is used when we do not know the reader or when you're writing for academic and professional purposes.

Informal writing is used for personal and casual communication. When writing informally, you would use a personal and emotional tone and refer to the reader directly with words such as `you` or `your`. It can be found in personal emails, text messages and letters to friends and family.



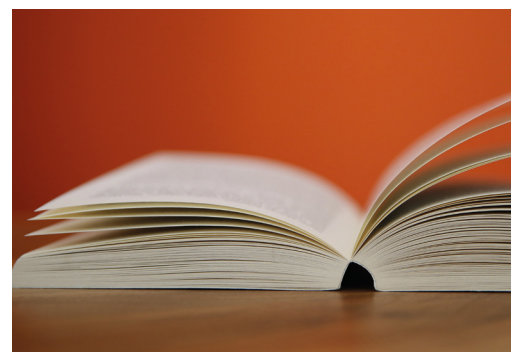
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

	Formal Writing	Informal writing
Purpose	A formal writing style is needed when applying for jobs, work experience and when you are writing to someone you do not know	An informal writing style is used when writing for a personal or casual purpose to a friend or family member
Sentences	Should be long and without abbreviations	Short and simple
Personal pronoun	Third person	First and second person
Tone	Professional and polite	Personal and friendly

Top tips for studying from home

Studying from home may be a new thing for you. You might find it easy to get distracted, procrastinate and without seeing teachers and classmates regularly, you may feel isolated. We've put together some of our top tip:

1. **Maintain regular and consistent hours.** It can be tempting to lie in bed when your alarm clock goes off, and just as challenging to stop studying at the end of the day. Try to keep to a schedule that supports a work-life balance.
2. **Set rules for those that are also working around you.** It can be busy and loud at home, which makes it very easy to be distracted by those around you. Make it clear when you are studying and shouldn't be disturbed.
3. **Create a timetable and set goals.** Putting together a timetable and setting daily goals will help you organise your time better and encourage you to have breaks. Write down your schedule and daily goals so you have something to refer to throughout the day.
4. **Take regular breaks.** It is important to give your mind a rest. Set regular timed breaks for yourself. Make sure you use this time to get up and move around.
5. **Stay connected and not distracted.** We've all fallen down a social media hole and accidentally spent hours watching cat and dog videos, but try and avoid being distracted by your phone while you're studying.
6. **Get dressed for the day.** Although it's tempting to stay in your PJs all day, make sure you get up, shower and dressed for the day. This will help you feel more focused.
7. **Read a book.** Escape the world for an hour or two and read a new book, or revisit an old favourite.
8. **Exercise.** Go for a walk to get some fresh air, or try a work out.





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