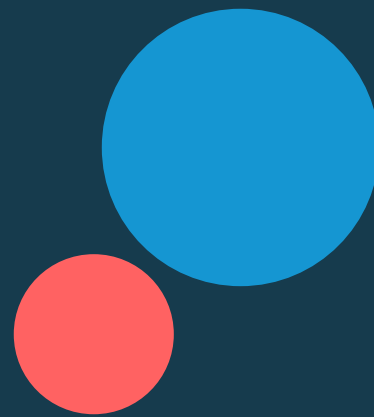




# THE GRADUATE JOB SEARCH CHECKLIST

Everything you need before you click "Apply".

1 PREPARE

2 CV

3 LETTER

4 LINKEDIN

5 INTERVIEW



**SWM Careers**

Part of SWM Services - Two Specialist Brands. One Shared Purpose.



# Welcome

Searching for your first graduate role can feel overwhelming. There are job boards to search, CVs to update, applications to tailor, LinkedIn profiles to improve and interviews to prepare for - often all at the same time.

## THE GOOD NEWS

You don't need to get everything perfect. You just need a clear process.

The Graduate Job Search Checklist is designed to help you slow down, focus on the things that matter and make each application stronger.

Use it before applying for a role, or as a regular review tool while you're job hunting.

## The checklist covers:

- Preparing Yourself
- Your CV
- Your Cover Letter
- Your LinkedIn Profile
- Interview Preparation

## BEFORE YOU FINISH

You'll also find a one-minute Before You Click Apply checklist and an application tracker.

## 1

## Preparing Yourself

Focus your search before you start sending applications.

Applying for every vacancy you see can quickly become exhausting and often leads to rushed, generic applications. A little preparation can make your job search much more focused.

### Know What Role You're Applying For

- ☐ Do I understand what the role actually involves?
- ☐ Am I genuinely interested in the work?
- ☐ Does the role help me build useful experience?
- ☐ Does it fit with the direction I want to explore?
- ☐ Is the location or working arrangement realistic?
- ☐ Am I comfortable with the salary and conditions?

**REMEMBER**

You don't need every role to be your dream job. But you should understand why you're applying.

### My reason for applying

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### Research the Organisation

- ☐ The organisation's website
- ☐ What it does
- ☐ Its products or services
- ☐ Its values
- ☐ Recent news or developments
- ☐ Its social media or LinkedIn page
- ☐ The sector it operates in
- ☐ Its customers, clients or service users

### What interests me about this organisation?

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# Understand the Job Description

Read beyond the job title.

## Essential requirements

What does the employer say you must be able to demonstrate?

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## Desirable requirements

What would strengthen your application, even if it isn't essential?

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## Key responsibilities

What will you actually be expected to do?

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## Important words or phrases

Which skills, behaviours or experiences appear repeatedly?

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## Review Your Skills

Your evidence doesn't have to come from a previous graduate job.

### EXPERIENCE CAN COME FROM MANY PLACES

University projects • Part-time work • Volunteering • Placements • Internships • Student societies • Sport • Caring responsibilities • Freelance work • Community activities • Personal projects

## Skills Evidence Checklist

- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Teamwork
- ☐ Problem-solving
- ☐ Organisation
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Working independently
- ☐ Meeting deadlines
- ☐ Customer service
- ☐ Digital skills
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Analysis
- ☐ Leadership or initiative
- ☐ Adaptability
- ☐ Attention to detail

## CV

# CV Checklist

Make the recruiter want to know more.

**THE PURPOSE OF YOUR CV**

To make the employer want to know more.

## Tailored to the Role

- ☐ I have adapted my CV for this specific vacancy.
- ☐ The most relevant experience is easy to find.
- ☐ My CV reflects the skills and requirements in the job description.
- ☐ I haven't simply sent the same CV I use for every application.

**ASK YOURSELF**

If the recruiter read only the first half of my CV, would they understand why I could be suitable for this role?

## No Spelling or Grammar Mistakes

- ☐ I have used a spellchecker.
- ☐ I have read the CV again myself.
- ☐ I have checked job titles, company names and dates.
- ☐ I have asked someone else to proofread it if possible.

## Clear Achievements

Don't only describe what you were responsible for. Where possible, show what you actually achieved.

**BEFORE**

Responsible for organising university events.

**STRONGER**

Coordinated three student events attended by more than 150 people, managing bookings, promotion and event-day logistics.

### What did I do?

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### What difference did it make?

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### Can I add evidence, numbers or outcomes?

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## CV - Final Checks

Make it easy for the recruiter to find what matters.

### Professional Layout

- ☐ My CV is easy to scan.
- ☐ Headings are clear.
- ☐ Fonts and formatting are consistent.
- ☐ There are no unnecessary graphics or distractions.
- ☐ Important information is easy to find.
- ☐ The document doesn't feel overcrowded.

### Up-to-Date Contact Details

- ☐ Mobile number
- ☐ Email address
- ☐ Location, where relevant
- ☐ LinkedIn profile link, if included

### Correct File Name

#### AVOID

CVfinalFINAL2.pdf

#### BETTER

Firstname\_Surname\_CV.pdf or Firstname\_Surname\_JobTitle\_CV.pdf

### Final CV Check

- ☐ Tailored to the role
- ☐ Relevant skills clearly demonstrated
- ☐ Achievements included
- ☐ No spelling mistakes
- ☐ Professional layout
- ☐ Contact details checked
- ☐ Correct file name
- ☐ Saved in the format requested by the employer



# Cover Letter Checklist

Why this role? Why this organisation? Why you?

## Addressed Correctly

- ☐ I have used the recruiter's or hiring manager's name if available.
- ☐ I have checked the spelling of their name.
- ☐ I have referred to the correct organisation.
- ☐ I have included the correct job title.

## Personalised

- The organisation
- The role
- Its values
- Its work
- A recent project
- Why the opportunity genuinely interests you

## Why this organisation?

## Shows Enthusiasm

### TOO GENERIC

I am extremely passionate about this fantastic opportunity.

### MORE SPECIFIC

I'm particularly interested in this role because it would allow me to develop my experience in...

## Explains Your Suitability

Connect your experience to the vacancy. Think: You need X. I can demonstrate X because...

## Requirement:

## My example:

## Final Cover Letter Check

- ☐ Addressed correctly
- ☐ Personalised
- ☐ Shows genuine interest
- ☐ Explains why I'm suitable
- ☐ Includes relevant evidence
- ☐ Clear and concise
- ☐ Error free

in

# LinkedIn Checklist

Make sure your online profile supports the story in your CV.

## Professional Photograph

- ☐ Clear image
- ☐ Good lighting
- ☐ Face easy to see
- ☐ Appropriate for a professional profile
- ☐ Background isn't distracting

## Strong Headline

### EXAMPLE

Business Management Graduate | Interested in Marketing, Communications & Digital Roles

### EXAMPLE

Psychology Graduate | Research, Data & People Skills | Seeking Graduate Opportunities

## My LinkedIn headline

## Complete Profile

- ☐ About section completed
- ☐ Education added
- ☐ Work experience added
- ☐ Volunteering included where relevant
- ☐ Placements or internships included
- ☐ Relevant projects included
- ☐ Contact information updated

## Relevant Skills

- Communication
- Microsoft Excel
- Data analysis
- Customer service
- Project management
- Research
- Social media
- Presentation skills
- Leadership
- Teamwork

## Grow Your Connections

- ☐ University classmates
- ☐ Lecturers
- ☐ Placement colleagues
- ☐ Previous managers



- ☐ Colleagues
- ☐ Alumni
- ☐ People you've met at events
- ☐ Professionals working in areas that interest you



# Interview Preparation

Preparation makes a huge difference.

If you've reached interview stage, the employer already believes you could potentially do the job. Your task now is to help them see why you're the right person to choose.

## Research Completed

- ☐ What the organisation does
- ☐ Its values
- ☐ The role
- ☐ Key responsibilities
- ☐ The sector
- ☐ Recent developments
- ☐ Why you want to work there
- ☐ Why this particular role interests you

## STAR Examples Prepared

|          |                  |                           |
|----------|------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | <b>Situation</b> | What was happening?       |
| <b>T</b> | <b>Task</b>      | What did you need to do?  |
| <b>A</b> | <b>Action</b>    | What did you actually do? |
| <b>R</b> | <b>Result</b>    | What happened?            |

### Prepare examples covering:

- ☐ Teamwork
- ☐ Problem-solving
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Managing deadlines
- ☐ Dealing with difficulty
- ☐ Taking initiative
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Learning from mistakes



## Your STAR Example

Write it out once so you can talk about it naturally.

### Situation:

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### Task:

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### Action:

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### Result:

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## Questions Prepared

- What would success look like in the first six months?
- What does a typical day in this role look like?
- How would you describe the team culture?
- What development opportunities are available?

## Practical Checks

- ☐ Face-to-face: address confirmed, journey planned and travel time checked.
- ☐ Online: meeting link, camera, microphone and internet checked.
- ☐ Outfit planned and ready the night before.
- ☐ Questions prepared.
- ☐ Get some rest.

### DON'T MEMORISE PERFECT ANSWERS

Understand your examples well enough to talk about them naturally.



## Before You Click "Apply"

Your one-minute final check.

### The Role

- ☐ I understand what I'm applying for.
- ☐ I know why I'm interested.
- ☐ I've read the full job description.

### The Organisation

- ☐ I've researched the organisation.
- ☐ I understand what it does.
- ☐ I can explain why I want to work there.

### My CV

- ☐ Tailored to the vacancy.
- ☐ Relevant skills clearly shown.
- ☐ Achievements included.
- ☐ Spelling checked.
- ☐ Contact details correct.
- ☐ Professional file name.

### My Cover Letter / Application

- ☐ Correct organisation name.
- ☐ Correct job title.
- ☐ Personalised.
- ☐ Demonstrates relevant evidence.
- ☐ Proofread.

### My Online Presence

- ☐ LinkedIn profile is current.
- ☐ Headline reflects my career interests.
- ☐ Contact details are professional.

#### FINAL QUESTION

If I were the recruiter, would this application give me a clear reason to interview me?

#### IF THE ANSWER IS YES

CLICK APPLY.



## Keep Track of Your Applications

Stay organised and save copies of every job description.

| ORGANISATION | ROLE | DATE APPLIED | CLOSING DATE | OUTCOME / NEXT STEP |
|--------------|------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
|              |      |              |              |                     |
|              |      |              |              |                     |
|              |      |              |              |                     |
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|              |      |              |              |                     |
|              |      |              |              |                     |
|              |      |              |              |                     |

### Keep copies of:

- Job descriptions
- Applications
- CV versions
- Cover letters
- Interview notes
- Feedback

Job adverts often disappear after the closing date, so saving a copy can be extremely useful if you're invited to interview later.

# One Final Reminder

A successful job search isn't about sending the highest number of applications. It's about giving yourself the strongest possible chance with the opportunities that genuinely suit you.

## YOUR JOB SEARCH RHYTHM

Take your time. Read the job description. Tailor your application. Check your work. Learn from feedback. And keep going.

Rejection doesn't mean you're not capable. Sometimes there was simply another candidate who was a slightly closer match on that particular day.

Your job is to keep improving your approach and keep moving forward.

## Need Personalised Support?

SWM Careers can help with:

- Career coaching
- CV and application reviews
- Interview preparation
- Graduate career support
- Career planning
- Career change
- Confidence and personal development

## BOOK A CAREER COACHING SESSION

Get practical, personalised support designed around your goals, challenges and next steps.

## Join the SWM Careers Community

Join our free community for more practical career advice, guidance and resources from the SWM Careers team.

- Job-search guidance
- CV and application tips
- Interview advice
- Career-development ideas
- Free guides and workbooks
- New articles and resources
- Updates about workshops and coaching

## YOUR NEXT STEP

Your career doesn't have to follow somebody else's path. We'll help you take your next step.

**SWM Careers Part of SWM Services - Two Specialist Brands. One Shared Purpose.**