



**UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON**

**CAREERS  
SERVICE**

# Top tips for Career Changers

**Changing career is not unusual - it is now rare to have a single 'career' spanning a lifetime of work.**

There are many reasons for changing career. You may:

- Want to change - because you are dissatisfied with your current job/career or have discovered a career direction you prefer to take
- Need to change - because your previous career sector is shrinking or disappearing
- Have the opportunity to change - because new circumstances give you the freedom to move in a different direction for example a more stable financial situation or a move to a new country with more opportunities

Maybe you chose a new career direction and subsequently embarked on your current or recent studies with that focus. Or perhaps you have chosen your studies first and are now considering possible options. This leaflet is designed to help you as a career changer to successfully manage your career transition.

## Talking about your career change

As a career changer it is useful to reflect on how you will tell your career story in a way that is authentic and gives you the opportunity to emphasise your unique qualities as well as the value your experience brings to your new career path. In other words, you need to be positive about and understand your own career journey so you can offer a narrative that is compelling to a recruiter at application stage and at interview.

### Presenting your skills and experience

#### LinkedIn

As a career changer detailing your skills and experience on LinkedIn and in your CV or resume is of key importance.

LinkedIn and other professional networking platforms often offer you the opportunity to publish your own

opinion piece or article and to share research and information that you think peers will find interesting or useful. It can be an extremely effective way to highlight your knowledge and skills, as well as raise your profile. You can also use LinkedIn to identify what key skills and experiences are highlighted by peers or are thematic to your preferred industry or job role.

#### CVs and Resumes

As a career changer, it's reassuring to know when developing your CV that recruiters are very used to seeing a range of different experiences on CVs and applications.

In many situations recruiters don't assume you have to have worked in their sector to have the necessary skills for the job. But they do expect you as a career changer to emphasise skills and knowledge that are relevant to the sector and the job role in your application. It's also a good idea to echo the skills listed by recruiters in your CV and be familiar with and use terminology familiar to that sector. Some

countries and sectors may be more rigid in their recruitment norms and practices. It's important to do some research to get a sense of whether this will apply to your industry sector or the country in which you want to work.

*See also our leaflets [Demonstrating your skills and competencies](#) and [What's next after graduation?](#)*

The following advice on CV format is helpful to deciding how you want to structure your CV as a career changer and what content is most effective to your situation.

## Profile

Starting your CV with a brief profile allows you to point out straight away the unique combination of skills, knowledge and experience you would bring to your next job. That acts as a lens through which the reader reads the rest of the CV.

## Education

If your current studies are the springboard for your change of direction, it usually makes sense to put the education section early in your CV, to give it prominence.

Put a little detail in about relevant modules studied, new skills gained and research project/dissertation topics and methodology, especially if there is a link with the field of work you want to move into.

## Experience

On a CV you can organise your experience in whichever way best conveys the message you want to present, but it is usual to use reverse chronological order (most recent first) within each section.

If you have previous experience that is more relevant to the position you are applying for than a more recent role, try subdividing your work experience, to focus attention on the most relevant.

Separate section such as: "Relevant Experience" and "Additional Experience" can help you highlight your most valuable and relevant experience.

Sometimes it is more effective to use even more specific section headings, such as "Research experience", "Regulatory experience", "Charity experience"

You are 100% in control of what goes into your CV or resume so choose your headings to best suit your purposes.

## Do you have "too much" experience?

If you have many years of experience, it can be hard to condense your CV into two pages (some sectors such as finance even prefer one-page CVs). You need to be ruthless and concentrate on the most relevant skills and experience for your new career. Your aim as a career changer is to ensure your application is concise and readable. A recruiter does not want to wade through lots of information of limited relevance.

For example, if you have as a career changer used the same skills in several jobs, be selective about which you will highlight within each role. There is no need to list similar skills many times.

Similarly, if you've had a period of doing many, similar jobs (perhaps short-term contracts or project-based consultancy), you can group those experiences together under one more generic heading, such as "consultancy" or "student employment". Then you can put a single time period spanning each header and a few bullet points covering the relevant skills demonstrated within that range of positions.

## Does your experience 'restrict' you?

As a career changer it is important to "own" your career narrative/story so that employers can understand how your previous experience relates to their role. This means you must be clear, confident, and positive about the circumstances and reasons leading to your career change. For example, you can highlight how certain duties in a previous role led you to want to specialise in and focus on this new area. Alternatively, it could be that you talk about how a retrenchment gave you the opportunity to pursue a long-standing passion or to further develop a side-hustle.

Being positive about the reason for change and making a clear connection between your current skillset and a new area of work is your responsibility in job search and career change.

As a career changer you can highlight relevant skills by experimenting with a 'skills based' format CV. This requires that you use the skills or competencies listed in the job description/person specification to structure the key job competencies in an upfront skills section.

Each skill sub header should include bullet point evidence from your work experience and studies rather than being included under traditional job headers used in chronological CVs or resumes. This clustering of examples or evidence from various roles under a skill header can strengthen impact.

A brief overview of actual positions held, and dates is then included later in the CV as a summary of your employment history. Many experienced professionals and career changers use a skills-based format to highlight their skills. Done well it helps recruiters easily

identify what a candidate coming from another job sector has to offer.

## Gaps in employment

It's a good idea to account for any extended gaps in your employment history, but no need to give lots of detail. One line indicating the reason is sufficient. For example, career break for family responsibilities.

Short gaps (a few months or so) do not need explanation. If a longer gap was due to ill-health, consider how much information you want to give to a prospective employer at this stage.

In the UK you do not have to disclose health needs or disabilities but if you would like them to be considered (either in the selection process or in the workplace) you will need to inform your prospective employer at some stage. Our *handout Disabled students* may also be helpful. If you are a career changer hoping to work in another country, it's useful to do some country specific research so you know what to expect.

## Age

In some countries, legislation exists to prevent discrimination on grounds of age, but prejudices can remain. For jobs in the UK, you would not usually put your date of birth on your CV, but dates of education and experience usually give an indication. Think what concerns and biases employers might have; do they assume you're not willing to learn? That you'll be expensive or demanding due to increased experience? Address any possible issues by promoting your strengths and experience in your CV and cover letter. Don't forget countries and industry sectors with skills gaps tend to have a flexible and pragmatic approach to recruitment.

## What job level should you aim for?

This depends very much on your prior experience, how much of a change of direction you are making and the type of work you are aiming for.

Networking with people in the sector can help you to gain an understanding of an appropriate job level to aim for. Look carefully at the person specification for jobs that interest you and be as objective as possible as to whether you can meet most of the specification requirements. Weigh up whether there is any specific experience or skills that you lack and if so, be creative in your thinking about how you could fill any gaps.

Sometimes you may have a time period without a regular income if you are starting your own business or need to initially take a step down in role or salary level to make the transition and build sector-specific

skills/experience. It is up to you to decide what you are willing to make a career change. Do remember, your previous experience may mean you make progress faster than someone just starting out.

## Further Resources

See your university student portal for more information.

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