



This project is part funded  
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# GET JOB READY

A handbook to accompany the employment programme  
of the International Rescue Committee, UK

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SPRING 2022



# International Rescue Committee

Since 1933, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world’s worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. In more than 40 countries and over 20 U.S. cities, our dedicated teams provide clean water, shelter, health care, education and empowerment support to refugees and displaced people. The IRC has recently launched programming in the UK, working in partnership with local councils, to provide integration support to refugees including Afghans in South East England.

Visit <https://www.rescue-uk.org/topic/RISE> to learn more about our work in the UK.

## Table of Contents

- Supporting you on your path to employment ..... 5**
- Employment in the UK ..... 6**
  - Your strengths .....7
  - Your skills .....8
  - The UK job market .....9
- Job Hunting ..... 10**
  - Searching online ..... 11
  - Offline connections and networks .....12
  - Overcoming practical barriers .....13
- Job Applications ..... 14**
  - Creating a CV .....15
  - Cover letters .....16
  - Making applications relevant .....17
- Acing an Interview ..... 18**
  - Getting your English ‘job ready’ .....19
  - Common interview questions and the CAR technique .....20
  - Non-verbal communication .....21
- Starting a new job ..... 22**
  - Your legal rights .....23
  - UK work culture and your wellbeing .....24
  - Managing your finances .....25
  - Your first day .....26
- Annex ..... 28**
  - Budgeting Template .....29
  - Important Vocabulary .....30





Jonathan Amissa is a resettled refugee from Cameroon. He has had many jobs from being a lifeguard, running a tailoring business, to being a firefighter. He completed two years of college and is currently the Director of Operations/Owner of a medical transportation company.

# Supporting You On Your Path To Employment

After completing our course, all clients are invited to receive 1:1 coaching support from a Refugee Employment Specialist for up to 90 days. The 3 values listed here reflect how we approach this process.

## **Integrative Coaching**

Our approach includes an integrative coaching model — that is, we embed 1:1 coaching sessions before, in between and after sessions of our course. Before the course begins, we have two interviews with each client. In one interview, we'll explore if you're right for the course. Later we will have a longer discussion where we'll discuss your hopes and aspirations for the future. During the sessions of the course, we also have breakout sessions where smaller groups can ask questions and practise real skills, such as answering interview questions. In between and after sessions, clients have tailored support available to them to help them in their job search — creating an excellent CV, for example, and tailoring these for different job applications. By having 1:1 support for up to 90 days, we also reaffirm and reinforce the lessons learned in the course.

## **Celebrating Diversity**

We provide personalised employment support service that is tailored around your needs. We celebrate, rather than merely tolerate, diversity. Every individual has different life experiences, strengths, needs and job goals. Our aim is to instill confidence and independence through helping you recognise your strengths. This is why we begin our course focussing on strengths and personal qualities. We believe that refugees, by having lived through challenging circumstances, have developed endurance and resilience. All migrants also bring fresh perspectives and ideas, and diversity of thought can help employers to be more innovative.

## **Fostering Independence**

We set boundaries. We are available for support via email and phone calls during working hours on weekdays only. We do not provide other services such as housing advice, training courses or mental health support. We are very happy, however, to connect our clients with other services that they might need. Our Job Readiness course equips clients with both knowledge and skills, and every session includes some 'I can' statements outlining what you should be able to achieve by the end of the time. By sharing these explicitly we want to involve you to be an active participant in this course, rather than a passive recipient of information.

If you have a concern, question or want to speak to another member of IRC staff about anything, you can phone or email [emery.igiraneza@rescue-uk.org](mailto:emery.igiraneza@rescue-uk.org) / 07436 035299 (in English). You can also send us a letter to International Rescue Committee, 100 Wood Street, London EC2V 7AN.

If you are concerned about something and want to be anonymous, you can call 0800 032 8483 where a specialist from another team will log a report (English only). Alternatively, you can email (with your real email address or a new one you've created to remain anonymous) [integrity@rescue.org](mailto:integrity@rescue.org).





# Employment in the UK

## YOUR STRENGTHS

## YOUR SKILLS

## THE UK JOB MARKET AND FINDING THE RIGHT JOB FOR RIGHT NOW

## YOUR STRENGTHS

It is easy to feel lost and demotivated in a new place. Many refugees do not realise how much they have to offer. At the International Rescue Committee we know that refugees bring with them many strengths. To help identify what these are, we've listed some that UK employers are particularly looking for — many of which you may have without even realising it.

### POSITIVE ATTITUDE

All employers want to work with someone with a positive attitude. In the UK, this does not only mean someone who is happy to follow instructions. Often it means — because of the informal British work culture — cheerful and enthusiastic, but also calm in a crisis.

Sentences to try:

- *I am an enthusiastic person, who is willing to help.*
- *I am a resilient person, who is calm in a crisis.*



### TEAM PLAYER

Showing that you can work in a team is especially important if you want to work in a fast-paced environment like the catering or hospitality industry.

Sentences to try:

- *I am a reliable person, who is always punctual.*
- *I am a considerate team player, who is helpful to my colleagues and always dependable.*



### FAST LEARNER

If you're new to the UK you will have lots of things to learn. Your employer will be reassured if you can explain that you are eager to learn and can pick up new things quickly.

Sentences to try:

- *I am very independent, and I can learn quickly.*
- *I have excellent listening skills, and I am always willing to try new things.*





YOUR SKILLS

As well as strengths, you have many vocational skills. Some of these (in pink text below) you might have just picked up over time in your personal and family life, like having good listening, organising, or even cooking skills. Others (in orange text below) you might have gained during specific work experience, either in the UK or abroad. Think about your skills across the three types of work outlined below, and how you can describe them to employers.

PEOPLE SKILLS

Working well with people is really useful if you want to work in hospitality (e.g., receptionist or waiter/waitress), retail (e.g., shop assistant), social care or health care (e.g., carer or nurse) or education (e.g., teacher or childminder). State which skills *specifically* you have.

Sentences to try:

- I like persuading people, I am good at sales.
- I like helping and serving people, I have good customer service skills.



helping



teaching



caring



persuading



serving / customer service



listening


PEOPLE SKILLS

INFORMATION SKILLS


Talk about how you manage information if you want to work in an office or warehouse. You can describe your skills in administration, ICT, finance, journalism, logistics, academics, government and many others.

Sentences to try:


- I like tidying, I am good at organising things.
- I like researching, I am good at writing reports.




computing




organising




calculating




printing / photocopying




problem-solving




tidying



keeping records



posting



filing / writing reports

INFORMATION SKILLS

CREATIVE SKILLS

Name specific skills if you want work in catering (e.g., as a kitchen assistant or chef) or beauty (e.g., as a hairdresser or barber). Sometimes in construction (e.g., labourer or electrician) or agriculture (e.g., fruit picker or gardener) these are called 'manual skills'.

Sentences to try:

- I like sewing, I am good at designing clothes.
- I like fixing things, I am good at repairing cars.



cooking



gardening



designing clothes



assembling




repairing / fixing



doing hair / makeup


CREATIVE SKILLS

THE UK JOB MARKET



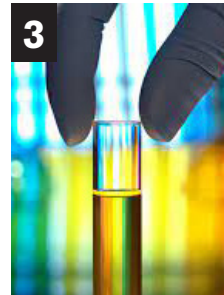
1

HEALTH




2

HOSPITALITY



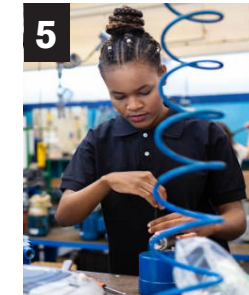
3

SCIENCE



4

RETAIL



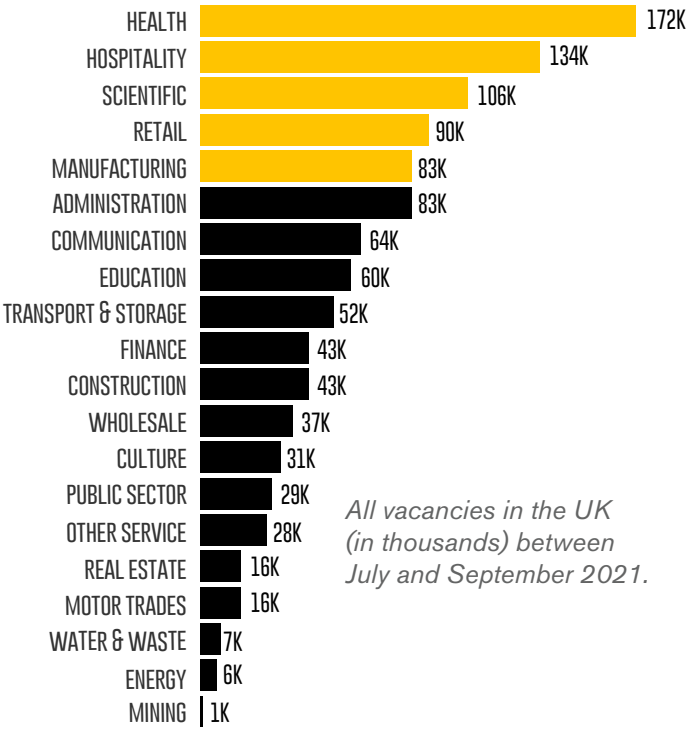
5

MANUFACTURING

What can you do in the UK? Above are the 5 industries in the UK with the most vacancies: where you will be in most demand.

- Health
- Hospitality
- Science
- Retail
- Manufacturing

As the graph below shows, there are about 172,000 vacancies in Health at the moment. This might include work in hospitals and GP surgeries, but might also include social care work too, like caring for older people. Many jobs don't require formal qualifications. See what's available in your area at [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)



All vacancies in the UK (in thousands) between July and September 2021.



Your first job might not be your dream job

When you first come to the UK, you might have imagined that you would immediately find a well-paid interesting job. You've probably now discovered that UK employers really want to see that you have experience of working in the UK. For this reason, it's worth getting a job right now, although it might not be perfect. It might not be glamorous, and it might be boring or low wage, but there are many advantages of getting a job as soon as possible:

- Build your CV with UK experience
- Get a good reference for your next job
- Practise your English
- Build new skills and learn about UK life
- Meet local people and make new friends
- Feel positive and proud about yourself





# Job Hunting

## SEARCHING ONLINE

## OFFLINE CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKS

## OVERCOMING PRACTICAL BARRIERS

## SEARCHING ONLINE

Nowadays, most jobs are advertised online in the UK. It's really important to familiarise yourself with the most common job search websites. Here are 5 tips on how to use the internet to find your next position.



### SEARCH

You can search for jobs on Google, but there are also many specialist employment websites you can search. Try: [uk.indeed.com](https://uk.indeed.com); [findajob.dwp.gov.uk](https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk); [jobs.theguardian.com](https://jobs.theguardian.com); [jobsite.co.uk](https://jobsite.co.uk); [monster.co.uk](https://monster.co.uk); [reed.co.uk](https://reed.co.uk); [totaljobs.com](https://totaljobs.com). If you're not sure what to look up, try naming the place you want to work and add the word 'assistant'. For example, 'kitchen assistant', or 'warehouse assistant'.



### UPLOAD

You can upload your CV to some of a website like [cv-library.co.uk](https://cv-library.co.uk) so that interested recruiters can see you. Be careful! Don't put your full address or photograph on your CV. Sometimes agencies may contact you. Don't give them any money! In the UK, the employer pays the agency if it finds the right candidate, not you. Some websites like [uk.linkedin.com](https://uk.linkedin.com) allow you to 'build' a CV directly online by prompting you to answer questions.



### DOWNLOAD

Got a smart phone? Download an app to help you look for a job. Some of the websites above also have apps but here are some others: [snagajob.com](https://snagajob.com); [careerbuilder.co.uk](https://careerbuilder.co.uk); [glassdoor.co.uk](https://glassdoor.co.uk). You can get instant notifications if a suitable job becomes available.



### SOCIAL MEDIA

Find information about companies that you want to work for via social media. You can even contact them. But before you do anything, check that your public posts are suitable for work! Employers might check them. If in doubt, make your accounts private while you job search.



### EMAIL

Got a CV? Send it to some companies you like by email. Use a professional-sounding email address! You can also find out the specific name of someone who works there ([LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com) is good for this) and then email them to ask for an 'informational interview'. This is where you meet someone informally to ask about their career — how they got their job and if they have any practical tips for you, or professional associations that you should join. They might even let you 'shadow' them for a week to get a taste of their work.



## OFFLINE CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKS

There are still many ways to find a job without using a computer. The best way is to find out what is happening locally — if you get out and meet people you're likely to hear of opportunities. If you volunteer locally this sometimes also turns into a paid job.

### PAPER

You can find jobs in the back of newspapers — local ones are best for this but be cautious: anyone can advertise in a newspaper so if the company is unknown to you, be careful: don't give them any money or originals of your ID. Look also on the noticeboards by the tills at the supermarket, or in windows of small shops.

### FACE TO FACE

If you want a job in a shop, print out some copies of your CV and go and give it to the shop managers! Don't be shy: make sure you're dressed smart. Walking around a big shopping centre is a great way to do this. You can also introduce yourself at conferences or events related to your industry: [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) or [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) are great for this, especially for technology experts. Visit a 'job fair': a big hall where lots of companies have come to set up a stall to find new staff. Some job fairs are even online now. Try searching on [ukcareersfair.com](https://www.ukcareersfair.com).

### EMPLOYMENT & RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

Employment agencies are paid to find you work! Register with as many as you can: there's no limit to how many you can join. Never ever give them money, even when you get the job: their fees are paid by the employer so free for you. The biggest agencies in the UK are [hays.co.uk](https://www.hays.co.uk), [reed.com](https://www.reed.com) and [adecco.co.uk](https://www.adecco.co.uk). There are also large specialist ones: for example [bluearrow.co.uk](https://www.bluearrow.co.uk) have lots of catering jobs.

### CHARITIES THAT SUPPORT REFUGEES

There are many organisations like International Rescue Committee that exist just to help refugees and migrants, and some of them have people whose job it is to help find you work. They can also offer you wider advice and support. Try contacting [breaking-barriers.co.uk](https://www.breaking-barriers.co.uk) or [renaisi.com](https://www.renaisi.com) or [sonacircle.com](https://www.sonacircle.com). If you have specialist training in engineering or architecture try [transitions-london.co.uk](https://www.transitions-london.co.uk).

### YOUR NETWORKS: FRIENDS & FAMILY

Don't be embarrassed to tell people you're unemployed, people will be impressed if you show you are keen to work. You might have college friends from your ESOL class, team mates from a sports team, friends from your mosque, church or temple, or even just friendly local neighbours. If they don't know of any jobs they still might be able to help in other ways: like check your CV for English spelling mistakes or practise some interview questions with you. People love being experts — just ask!



## OVERCOMING PRACTICAL BARRIERS

When you start looking for jobs, you'll notice some are 'full-time' and some are 'part-time'. Some jobs require you to work in shifts or do 'antisocial hours' (like at night). It's worth starting to think about how you will manage your working life in practical terms.

### Childcare

15 hours of free childcare is available for all families in England for 3 and 4-year-old children. You can use it at nurseries, schools, childminders, playgroups, Sure Start Children's Centres and after school clubs. If you claim government benefits, you may be able to claim 15 hours for 2-year-olds, and a further 15 hours (30 hours in total) for 3 and 4-year-olds. For more information: [childcarechoices.gov.uk](https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk).

You might be able to share childcare needs with people you know. Talk to parents at your child's school: they might be able to help with pick up at the end of the day. Even if they can't help regularly, they could be an emergency 'back up'. Remember you can offer to help them too!

### Digital Access

While you're applying for jobs, you might need access to a computer and internet. Some of the International Rescue Committee's programmes in the UK can give you some hardware if you need it: just ask! If not, you might be able to get cheaper hardware from secondhand UK high street shops like [CEX](https://www.cex.co.uk). You could even see if you can get some free hardware on [trashnothing.com](https://www.trashnothing.com).

Sometimes you might be asked to interview online, so plug in via ethernet rather than wifi if you can, and have a back up internet option like your phone. If you need the internet just to do some job searching, you can access free internet in your local library [www.gov.uk/local-library-services](https://www.gov.uk/local-library-services).

- When you create a CV, save a back-up copy so you don't lose it, for example, by emailing it.
- Need a bit of help using your computer? There are lots of places where you can learn new skills either in person or online. Try [nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](https://www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk).

“Involvement in Early Childhood Education and Care programmes develop parenting skills, provides opportunities for socialising outside the home and may also provide the time needed for education, training and employment opportunities.”

— University of Cambridge, 2018,  
*Refugee Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in the UK*

### Transport

If you claim government benefits, ask your DWP Work Coach about having a JobCentrePlus card. This will entitle you to a 50% discount on some train and bus tickets. They also might be able to offer you help from their 'Flexible Support Fund' to help with the cost of travelling to an interview, or for the first months of travelling to work.





# Job Applications

CREATING A CV

COVER LETTERS

MAKING APPLICATIONS RELEVANT

## CREATING A CV

To apply for jobs, the first thing you'll need is a CV. This is a document summarising your professional education, skills and experience. It's sometimes called a 'resumé' in America. It stands for 'Curriculum Vitae', Latin words which mean "life's course".

### Include:

- ✓ The town or area you live in
- ✓ Your mobile phone number
- ✓ A simple and clear email address
- ✓ Excellent spelling: Ask a native English speaker to check it for you

### Do not Include:

- ✗ Your full address
- ✗ A photograph
- ✗ Your age or date of birth
- ✗ Your marital status
- ✗ Your nationality
- ✗ Gaps in between years:  
Explain what you were doing even if you were in a difficult situation e.g., caring for family

### Noor Habib

noor.habib@email.com  
Brighton - 07469 682573

#### SKILLS

- This list is not vital but it can make it very clear for employers to find what they want
- List all languages that you speak
- Include skills useful to all jobs – such as ICT skills
- Write down specific vocational skills you have that are relevant to the job, such as cooking or good customer service skills
- Look at the job advertisement: what are they looking for? See if you have anything that matches what they want and include it.

#### PROFILE

This summary of yourself is optional, but why not use it? Introduce your main skills to the employer and don't forget your personal strengths e.g. positive work attitude and being a team player.

#### EDUCATION

2010-11 If you don't have a lot of formal training ...  
2006-09 But you have lots of experience, you can put the 'Experience' section first to highlight that.

#### EXPERIENCE

2018-19 Remember to write everything backwards, in reverse chronological order...  
2016-18 So your most recent job goes first.  
2010-16 Yes, you can include relevant voluntary work as long as you make it clear it was voluntary and unpaid.

#### INTERESTS

If you don't have space, leave this out. However, if you have interests related to the job you're applying for (perhaps you play football on Sunday and you're applying to work in a sports shop) then include it.



COVER LETTERS

In the UK, people often attach CVs to emails. In this way, the email becomes a kind of cover letter and you should aim to cover the main points below in the same way. Otherwise, if you attach a separate cover letter (or post or upload one) then in the UK you should lay it out like a formal letter. Below is an example. More tips are here: [nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk).

Write to a specific named person. If you cannot find a name, write 'Dear Sir/Madam'

Why this job? Outline your relevant knowledge, skills or experience.

End with 'Yours Sincerely'

Pierre Dubois  
15 Fantastic Lane  
Bognor Regis  
FA8 5ON  
pierre.dubois@email.com  
07469 682573

23 June 2022

Sally Smith  
HR Director  
Big Company Ltd  
Burgess Hill  
BN0 8AD

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing to apply for the position of Gardening Assistant which I saw advertised in the Burgess Hill Chronicle newspaper.

I am excited about this role because I love gardening and would love to use my horticulture skills locally. I worked as a gardener for 4 years previously so have experience of working with a range of plants.

I admire the work of Big Company Ltd, especially the way that it tries to be environmentally sustainable. I am a very cheerful, energetic and helpful person, and would be happy to work the large teams that I know you have at Big Company Ltd.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Pierre Dubois

In UK letters, your name, address, contact details and date go on the right. Only use your full address if you are applying to a specific job.

Say where you heard about the job

Why this company? Do some research and explain why you think you'd be a good fit.

MAKING APPLICATIONS RELEVANT

Every time you apply to a job, you should make a different CV and cover letter. Read the 'Job Description', especially the 'Person Specification' which is the part detailing the type of person the employer is looking for. If you don't have everything on the 'Desired Criteria' part, don't worry. Make sure you completely cover everything on the 'Essential Criteria' otherwise it's unlikely you'll get an interview. Look at this example of the same person ([Rami Malek, an IRC supporter](#)) making two very different applications.



RAMI MALEK

EXPERIENCE	SKILLS	EDUCATION/ KNOWLEDGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Used to deliver pizza</li><li>Worked in a shawarma sandwich cafe</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Good at making falafel</li><li>Speaks Arabic</li><li>Won 'Best Actor' oscar</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Studied theatre in America</li><li>Traveled a lot</li></ul>

PERSON SPECIFICATION JOB 1

WAITER IN HOLLYWOOD CAFÉ

Essential Criteria:

- Good customer service skills
- Experience in hospitality or catering

Desirable Criteria:

- Any languages to deal with the tourists

PERSON SPECIFICATION JOB 2

ACTOR IN HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

Essential Criteria:

- Can work with a wide range of people
- Understanding of acting and theatre

Desirable Criteria:

- Able to deal with fame

Dear Ms. Hollywood:

I am writing to apply for the role of Waiter which I saw advertised on monster.com

I am excited about this position because I love talking to people. It makes me happy when I can offer good customer service. I speak fluent Arabic as well as English and I have enjoyed meeting new people from all over the world in my travels.

I would enjoy working for Hollywood Café because I know that it is very fast-paced and I have previously worked for a café so understand how to prioritise orders.

Yours sincerely,

Rami Malek

Dear Mr. Oscar:

I am writing to apply for the role of Actor which I saw advertised in Fame Weekly.

I am excited about this position because I love acting. I studied theatre in America for many years, and have acted with many different types of people.

I would enjoy working for Hollywood Studios because I know that you make a lot of exciting big action films. I have an Academy Award ('Oscar') for Best Actor and now I'd like to try making films where people don't have to think, and become an action hero.

Yours sincerely,

Rami Malek





# Acing An Interview

## GETTING YOUR ENGLISH 'JOB READY'

### COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND THE CAR TECHNIQUE

#### NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

## GETTING YOUR ENGLISH 'JOB-READY'

Grab a pen and notebook, a dictionary or an online translator, and write down a list of key English words that they might use in the place where you want to work. Below are 3 steps to help you plan the vocabulary you might need: People, Things, Actions.

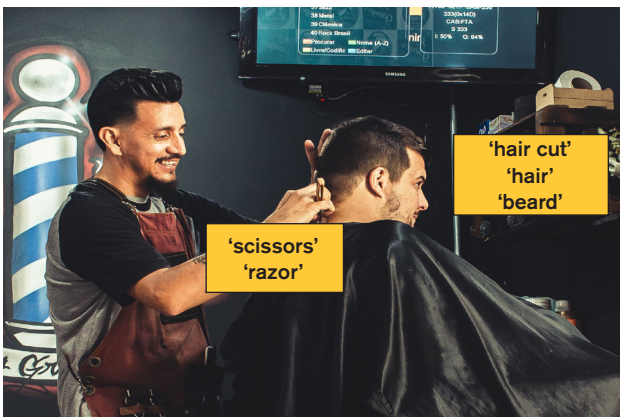
### PEOPLE: What are the words for the staff and the people served in your work place?

In a school, the staff are called 'teachers' and the people served (children) are called 'pupils' or 'students'.



### THINGS: What are the words for products (like things to sell) or services (like haircuts)?

In a school, the staff are called 'teachers' and the people served (children) are called 'pupils' or 'students'.



### ACTIONS: What are the words for common actions that people do?

In a school, common actions might include words like 'teach' or 'learn'.





COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & THE CAR TECHNIQUE

There are 2 very common interview questions in the UK, listed below. The best way to answer these — and ANY interview question — is to give evidence that you can do the job. Below is technique called CAR (Context, Action, Result) to structure your answers.

“ Why do you want this job? ”

“ How would you deal with a difficult customer? ”

They might also say ...

“Why do you want to work here?”

“What interests you about this role?”

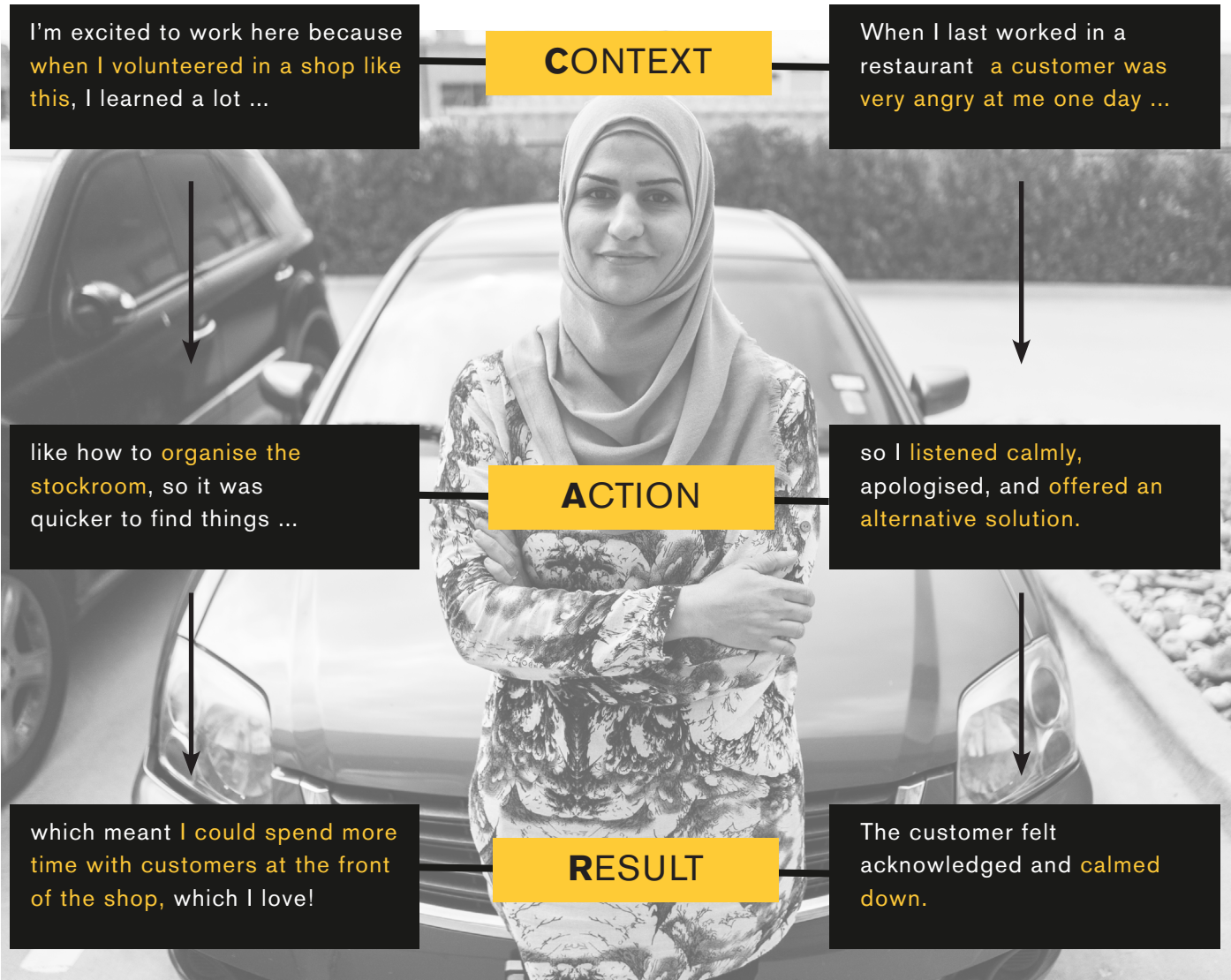
or even “Why should we hire you?”

They might also say ...

“How do you deal with conflict?”

“Do you have good customer service skills?”

“Have you dealt with difficult customers?”



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Whether you're handing out CVs, attending an interview for your job, or just talking to people on your first day, non-verbal communication really matters. UK cultural norms are quite unique so here are some top tips.

**DRESS SMARTLY**

Don't wear trainers or sportswear. Iron your clothes. Polish your shoes. In the UK, people don't tend to use a lot of perfume or cologne, but of course smell fresh!



**MAKE EYE CONTACT**

In some cultures, eye contact is seen as disrespectful, but it is expected in the UK. Without it, the employer may think you lack confidence or are not trustworthy.



**DON'T FIDGET**

Swiveling on your chair, tapping pens, touching your face a lot, playing with your hair: these can make you seem nervous or chaotic. Be still and calm.



**SIT UP STRAIGHT**

Don't lean back or slouch, or rest your head in your hand. It might come across as though you don't care. Stay alert and focussed on what the person is saying to you.



**SMILE**

Statistics show that interview candidates in the UK who smile (versus those who frown or have a neutral face) are more likely to be hired. So smile!



**KEEP HANDS OPEN**

Closed or clasped hands or arms might suggest stress to a UK employer. Keep your palms open and don't be afraid to use hand gestures to explain yourself.







# Starting a New Job

## YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

### UK WORK CULTURE AND YOUR WELLBEING

### MANAGING YOUR FINANCES

### THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR FIRST DAY AT WORK

### YOUR FIRST DAY AT WORK

## YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

Before you start a job, your employer might ask to check your 'Right to Work' (you can prove it here [www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work)) or ask for a 'DBS check' (see 'Important Vocabulary' section in the Annex). You may have to show your ID but they should not keep the originals and you should not pay them (directly) to do any checks for you. Refugees and migrants are at high risk of labour exploitation so speak up if you're confused. If you're not sure about something, you can get good trusted advice from: [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk); [equalityhumanrights.com](https://equalityhumanrights.com); [modernslaveryhelpline.org](https://modernslaveryhelpline.org); [acas.org.uk](https://acas.org.uk).

### Minimum Wage

From 1 April 2022, everyone aged 23 and over should receive at least £9.50 an hour salary. If your employers offers you less, they are breaking the law. You can see the full rates here: [www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates](https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates).

### Annual Leave

Under UK law, you should be given at least 5.6 weeks' paid holiday per year, up to a maximum of 28 days. This can include public holidays. There is no automatic right to take time off on a 'Bank Holiday' (public holiday). So, if you work 5 days a week, you should get 28 days holiday a year (which might be 20 days plus the 8 public holidays). If you work only 4 days a week, you are entitled to 22.5 days a year.

### Statutory Sick Pay

Check your contract or ask your employer what the procedure is and who you must tell if you need to take time off work because you are sick. They may require you to provide medical evidence, like a note from your doctor. Excessive sickness absence might trigger your employer's 'capability procedures' (where they assess if you are capable of work. It could lead to warnings or, ultimately, you being dismissed. However, as long as you usually earn at least £96.35 a week, you are legally entitled to Statutory Sick Pay after 3 days' absence, for up to 28 weeks.

### Notice Period

If your employer sacks you, your contract should explain that you are entitled to have some notice. So even if they ask you to leave immediately, you might still be entitled to pay for time missed. In the UK, you are legally entitled to at least one week's notice for every year of employment, whether or not it's in your contract.

### Contract

A contract is a legally-binding document that you and your employer sign laying out the terms of your employment. They keep a copy and you keep a copy. It is essential that your contract includes: your name, job title, salary and place of work. It should also include the length of your contract (even if your work is temporary or fixed term). It should state your holiday entitlement, and how many hours a day you will be expected to work. The hours of your work should also be detailed, including details of any variable hours. The contract should include details of what happens in case you are unable to work, and details of any sick pay you are entitled to.

In addition to the essential things above, your contract might include: whether or not you will have a probationary (trial) period to see if you're right for the job, and what happens if you fail this. It could also include what your notice period is, whether you have any necessary training, and what the discipline and grievance procedures are. It might also outline your entitlement to various types of paid leave, such as maternity/paternity leave, or include details of any other benefits you're entitled to, such as reduced-price food in the workplace canteen.



UK WORK CULTURE AND YOUR WELLBEING

Do you have any needs that you think your employer might need to be aware of in order to better support you? You might be entitled to help under UK law through a process known as ‘reasonable adjustments’.

There is a law in the UK called the Equality Act. It says that your employer has a duty to make **reasonable adjustments** if you’re placed at a **substantial disadvantage** because of your situation, for example if you have a disability. You do not have to tell your employer before you are offered the job. Once you are in the role, you can ask about reasonable adjustments if needed.

Substantial means more than minor or trivial. The change must be practical, affordable and will not harm others. The employer does not have to change the basic nature of the job – i.e. they can’t make it a paperwork-only job if the job is working on the phone in a call centre and they have no paperwork-only jobs.

A reasonable adjustment could involve making changes to:

- the workplace. e.g., providing an accessible car parking space near the office entrance so someone with a wheelchair does not have to travel far distances.
- equipment or services provided (both current or new services). e.g., an appropriate keyboard for someone with arthritis.
- the ways things are done. e.g., an employee with epilepsy might struggle with low energy levels in the mornings so their employer could adjust hours so they can start and finish later in the day.

How to ask for adjustments

If you want to ask your employer about all this, you could write them a letter and attach it to an email that you send to them. Explain your situation and how it affects your ability to do tasks. Explain that under Section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 they have a duty to help employees at a substantial disadvantage, for example because of a disability. Explain what changes you think would help you and how they will help you overcome your challenges. Outline also why you think the adjustment is reasonable — for example, it is not expensive or impractical. Finally, ask them to respond to your request within a certain timeframe (for example, 14 days) and offer to discuss it with them in more detail if necessary. You might also suggest that you are willing to be referred to an Occupational Health practitioner to assess your needs if necessary. For a letter template and advice, visit [www.toynbeehall.org.uk](http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk).

If you are not comfortable sharing your needs with your employer, think about how you will overcome any problems that might come up.

- You might have to stand up a lot in your work. Do you have comfortable shoes that you can wear?
- You might have a condition that makes you feel different at different times of the day. Could you ask to start later and finish later to avoid problems before they start?
- If you have specific dietary requirements, do you need to bring your own lunch with you, and if so where will you store it?
- Perhaps you have other needs, e.g., religious? If you want to pray on specific days/times, or in a specific place, have you thought about how you will word this conversation with your new manager?
- If you have a frequent childcare problems, who can you call to help to avoid you repeatedly missing work?
- What else might go wrong? Plan ahead to avoid problems later.

MANAGING YOUR FINANCES

While you’re looking for work, or even when you’re in work, it can be tricky to manage your money. Here is an example of how to work out your family budget — and some other tips to help you increase your income and decrease your expenses.

INCOME		£	INCOME TOTAL
Job salary			
Government benefits			—
Profit from business			
INCOME TOTAL			
EXPENSES		£	EXPENSES TOTAL
Rent/Mortgage			
Utility bills (gas, electricity, water)			
Other bills (e.g., contents insurance)			
Council tax (+ income tax if self-employed)			
Childcare			
Food			
Transport (e.g., car, train tickets)			
Phone and data			
Internet			
Clothes			
Any other essential costs?			
EXPENSES TOTAL			
ADDITIONAL EXPENSES		£	ADDITIONAL EXPENSES TOTAL
Emergency fund			
Long-term savings			
ADDITIONAL EXPENSES TOTAL			
			BALANCE
			BALANCE
			SPENDING BALANCE

Use this budget template found in the Annex to show how to work out your monthly balance.

Increase Your Income

Before you rush out and spend all of your salary, make sure you have paid your essential bills first AND put some money aside for savings.

- There is a government programme called Help 2 Save that adds 50p to every that you spend. [www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income](http://www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income)
- You can often still work part-time and claim benefits. Ask at the Job Centre.
- You might be able to get money for things like a work uniform through the Job Centre's 'Discretionary Fund' — just ask.
- They also have a Refugee Integration Loan which you could ask about. You can apply for it alone (not with your partner) but you will have to pay it back.

Decrease your expenses

- Older people can get a winter fuel payment from the government [www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment](http://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment)
- Younger people (under 18) can often get free or reduced dental care
- Ask your Job Centre Work Coach if you’re eligible for a travel discount card to get reduced train (and some bus) tickets.
- Did you know you can get lots of secondhand things for free locally? Furniture, clothes, even bicycles! Try [trashnothing.com](http://trashnothing.com).
- The Trussell Trust run a lot of foodbanks across the country [www.trusselltrust.org/get-help](http://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help). If you need help, they can give you a free food parcel of three days’ emergency food that you can take home and cook yourself
- If you’re struggling regularly, talk to your local council. They may be able to help you access an interest-free ‘budgeting loan’ [www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits](http://www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits).





## THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR FIRST DAY AT WORK

Go to bed early! Sleeping regularly for 8 hours will you happier and healthier. When you start work, keep a consistent routine and try and sleep plenty, eat healthy food, and get some exercise if you can.

### PACK YOUR SMARTPHONE IF YOU HAVE ONE

You can check your travel route, keep an eye on the time, use an online dictionary, store emergency numbers in case you need them. Don't forget your charger!

### PACK SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU SMILE

You might be nervous. Perhaps a nice soft scarf to keep you warm, a nice mug to make tea or even a little toy on your keyring. If you get stressed on the day, breathe to the count of 5, and check your 5 senses to stay grounded: what can you see, hear, feel, smell, taste? Maybe some birds outside! Remember, you can text SHOUT to 85258 if you want support, call Samaritans on 116123, or look for local support at [hubofhope.co.uk](https://www.hubofhope.co.uk).

### PACK YOUR ID AND DOCUMENTS

Bring your ID and documents with you in case they need to be checked again. If you speak to the HR (Human Resources) department, make sure you get a contract giving you the right to minimum wage, annual leave, and sick pay.

### PACK ANYTHING YOU MIGHT NEED

Wear comfortable shoes, bring a special lunch, glasses for reading, etc. You might be able to ask your employer for help through 'reasonable adjustments'.

### PACK A NOTEPAD AND PEN

You can bring your list of key English vocabulary with you, and maybe a dictionary. Remember to keep up with your English learning outside work. Try these British Council guided podcasts: [learnenglish.britishcouncil.org](https://www.learnenglish.britishcouncil.org).



## YOUR FIRST DAY AT WORK

### REMEMBER TO HAVE GOOD TIMEKEEPING

Regular lateness is seen as disrespectful in the UK, so arrive on time in the morning, but also come back on time from break and lunch-times. Smoking during working hours is frowned upon in the UK even if working outside. Try and be discreet and only smoke in your break times if you have to — or give up — it's bad for your health! [nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking).

### BE OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES

At the end of your first day, you might be surprised to see different types of people socialising together. UK workplaces can be very multicultural with a variety of races and cultures. Avoid divisive conversations on politics or religion. Men and women often work closely together. Women are often in positions of leadership. All this might seem strange to you. Colleagues eat lunch together and go for drinks after work on Fridays. You don't have to do anything you're not comfortable with but expect some personal questions at some point. What will you say to a question about your past as a refugee? You could keep the answer short and sweet and focus on your life now in the UK. e.g., 'I left because of the war, but I've been living happily in Horley now for 2 years, I love the area because of all the parks ...'

### TRY TO STAY MOTIVATED

You might be bored. Refugees often have lots of experience so it can be frustrating to take a first job which includes menial, repetitive or boring tasks. In the UK, there are no secretaries or 'women's jobs': everyone writes their own letters, does their own administration, makes their own tea and cleans up after themselves. To stay motivated, take advantage of training opportunities, practise your English and make friends. One job is not forever but it can help you get a good reference for the next job.

### BE PATIENT

After your first day, remember to be patient. Perhaps it was not exactly as you expected: no job is perfect.

When you came to the UK, you adapted: you can do it again because you are resilient.

If you are strangely disappointed after your first day, don't worry it's normal. Just don't give up straight away! Take time to process all the changes that are happening and remember to enjoy the good things. Like all the new friends you will make from work! Enjoy it! *Congratulations and good luck!*







Taghreed Ibrahim is a refugee from Iraq who secured her first job as a cashier at a grocery store. She enrolled in a part-time culinary training program and is now a pastry chef at a local bakery.

# Annex

## BUDGET TEMPLATE

- 1. Work out your balance: INCOME TOTAL – EXPENSES TOTAL = BALANCE
- 2. Now work out how much you can save, and how much to spend.  
BALANCE – ADDITIONAL EXPENSES = SPENDING BALANCE (for fun!)

INCOME		£
Job salary		
Government benefits		
Profit from business		
INCOME TOTAL		

INCOME TOTAL

EXPENSES TOTAL

BALANCE

EXPENSES		£
Rent/Mortgage		
Utility bills (gas, electricity, water)		
Other bills (e.g., contents insurance)		
Council tax (+ income tax if self-employed)		
Childcare		
Food		
Transport (e.g., car, train tickets)		
Phone and data		
Internet		
Clothes		
Any other essential costs?		
EXPENSES TOTAL		

BALANCE

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES TOTAL

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES		£
Emergency fund		
Long-term savings		
ADDITIONAL EXPENSES TOTAL		

SPENDING BALANCE (FUN!)



# IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

**advertisement; advert** — the way that an employer tells candidates about the job vacancy e.g., online or in a newspaper

**annual leave** — the number of days you are allowed to take of as holiday each year

**candidate** — a person applying for a job

**CCDL** — “clean current driving license” : a full, in-date driving license with no penalty points

**circa** — “about” : this is used with pay to say that it might not be exactly what you’ll get

**competitive pay** — you should get paid a similar amount to what other employers would pay for the same job. Do your own research!

**contract** — this word can refer to the legal document you sign when you accept a job, but in a job advert it might also mean that the job is FTC (see below)

**cover letter; covering letter** — a letter you write to the employer to summarise how you heard about the job and why you think you’re a good fit

**CV** — “curriculum vitae”: a document you write summarising your skills, education and experience

**criteria** — the standards used to assess your application. ‘essential criteria’ includes things you must show evidence of in your application to be shortlisted. ‘desirable criteria’ includes things which are not strictly necessary, but make you more likely to be shortlisted

**DBS** — “Disclosure and Barring Service” check. This is a check of your criminal record required in certain jobs, for example, when working with children

**D & I; E & I; DEI** — Diversity and Inclusion ; Equality and Inclusion ; Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. This may refer to the employer’s practices, e.g. encouraging applications from candidates with disabilities. It might be a question in the application or interview asking you about your experience working with a range of different people, which as a refugee you should be able to answer well. Sometimes there are questions asking you about your race, nationality, etc. Legally, these are always completely optional

**DOE** — “Dependent on experience”. Your salary will depend on how much relevant experience the employer thinks you have. You may be able to negotiate so remind the employer of any relevant work done before you arrived in the UK.

**duties** — tasks; responsibilities. What you will actually be responsible for doing in the job

**employer; employee** — the employer is the person recruiting for the role, the employee is the person working in the job

**flexi time** — you may be able to work additional hours each month to take time off at other times without affecting your annual leave

**flexible working** — this can mean two things. It might mean that you have flexibility in the exact hours you work, for example starting slightly later and finishing slightly later. It may also mean that the employer is open to you working from home where appropriate. Remember even with flexible working you must discuss your plans with your employer to ensure agreement beforehand

**freelance** — you will do work for the organisation but will not be a formal employee, so you will have to sort out your own tax etc. This type of job has less security

# IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

**FTC** — fixed term contract, or fixed contract. A job guaranteed only for a certain (‘fixed’) amount of time, for example only 6 months.

**F/T; P/T** — full-time and part-time

**H & S** — health & safety

**internship** — a job to gain experience, not money; you’re likely to get a low wage or no pay at all

**interview** — when the employer asks questions to see whether you’re right for the job. Mostly in person, sometimes online or on the phone

**job description** — a summary of the job and likely duties involved written by the employer

**job share** — where a full-time job is shared between two people

**K** — often used to represent £1000, e.g. a 14k job means a job with an annual salary of £14,000

**Living Wage** — A wage which is slightly higher than the national minimum wage

**OTE** — “on target earnings”. your pay is dependent on your results. Often found in sales jobs

**NMW** — “national minimum wage” :The minimum amount an employer has to pay you by law

**per annum / p.a.** — “per year”, so annual salary

**person specification** — a list of desirable criteria that the ideal candidate should have; written by the employer; used for the ‘shortlist’ so you should use it to tailor your application

**pro rata** — “in proportion” : you receive part of a full-time salary because you work part-time. For example, if a job offers £20,000 a year pro rata for 3 days’ work a week, you get £12,000 a year

**ph; pw** — per hour ; per week (your pay)

**qualifications** — general educational achievements, or any training you have done relevant to the job

**remuneration** — salary ; wage ; pay

**Right to Work** — not all migrants have the right to work in the UK, but refugees do. Employers have a duty to check your ‘right to work’ and you can get a document to prove this by putting your details into the government webpage at [www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work)

**secondment** — when an employed person temporarily transfers to another role within the same organisation

**shift** — time of work, e.g. “day shift” / “night shift”

**shortlist** — the list of candidates most closely matching the person specification and who will go to the next ‘round’ or stage of recruitment (most likely an interview)

**temp; perm** — temporary and permanent : whether the work is short-term, like a seasonal job around the UK Christmas holidays, or long-term

**unsociable hours** — in the UK the usual working day is 9am–5pm, so this means any hours outside this. This job would likely include evening or night work

**vacancy** — an available job

**zero hours contract** — this is a contract when an employer is under no compulsion to give you hours, so there is no guarantee of work. You are only given work when you are needed and pay will depend on when you work. Sometimes called a “casual contract”. Be careful of this!



**International Rescue Committee UK**  
100 Wood Street  
Barbican, London

**From Harm to Home**  
[rescue-uk.org](https://rescue-uk.org) | [rise-uk@rescue-uk.org](mailto:rise-uk@rescue-uk.org)



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