

CAREER ADVICE IN AGRICULTURE

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Your CV can be your first point of contact with potential employers, so making an impression is important. Whether you are applying for a relief worker role or a more formal job, a CV is your chance to 'sell' what you have to offer based on your education, experience, skills and personality.

1

Making the most of a career in farming

By Paul Spackman



Whether you have been brought up within farming or are new to the industry altogether, it is worth taking time to carefully plan the next step of your agricultural career. The choice of jobs is so varied that knowing what's available and where to go for advice can be just as important as being able to milk a cow or reverse a tractor and trailer.

The following is a brief summary of some of the main farm-based jobs, outlining the key skills required, likely salaries and tips on how to progress. It is based on information provided by LANTRA, as well as other sources. It is intended as a guide only and readers should be aware that rates of pay and benefits may vary significantly.

General Farm Worker



Skills and qualifications

An understanding of agricultural plants, animals and basic machinery maintenance is useful, plus basic health and safety, numeracy and IT skills. Like most farm-based jobs, workers must be physically able to work outdoors on a range of tasks, and be self-motivated as tasks often require working alone.

No specific qualifications are required, but college courses or apprenticeships may be useful ways of getting started and progressing in this career (see career progression).

Salary and benefits

Minimum rates of pay are set by the **Agricultural Wages Board** (see panel). Pay varies depending on age, experience and farm type. Workers aged 16 can earn at least £7239 a year, increasing to £9795 by age 19 and £14,986 over 19. Experienced farm workers may earn up to £19,000.

Accommodation and the opportunity for overtime at peak periods are often available.

Career progression

With experience farm workers can gain promotion to supervisor or unit manager on larger farms. Gaining more skills and training improves progression chances.

Those wishing to go into farm management should consider an agricultural or related degree course (see below).

Specialist farm management companies, such as Velcourt and Sentry, offer management training programmes and defined career progression routes. Courses often include farm-based practical instruction, formal classroom instruction and residential personal development courses.

Agricultural colleges run many relevant courses, which provide qualifications such as: BTEC First Certificate and Diploma in agriculture; BTEC National Award, Certificate and Diploma in agriculture; Level 1, 2 and 3 Awards, Certificates and Diplomas in work-based agriculture; Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies.

Most training combines practical, work-based experience and classroom training. Apprenticeship programmes are also available, providing paid (£95 to £170 a week) structured training.

» SPECIFIC CONTACTS

Velcourt Farm Management Training Scheme, 01526 830469

www.velcourt.co.uk/employment/velcourt-mts

Sentry Farming, 0845 345 8058

www.sentry.co.uk

UK. Landex (an association of land-based colleges)

www.landex.org.uk

Diploma in Environmental and Land-based studies

www.diplomaelbs.co.uk and <http://ypdirect.gov.uk/diplomas/subjects/>

Apprenticeships

www.apprenticeships.org.uk



Farm Manager



Skills and qualifications

Farm managers usually have an agriculture-related qualification and a good level of technical knowledge backed up by several years' practical farming experience.

Farm career Qualifications relevant to a farm manager include: Level 3 Diploma in Agriculture; BTEC Level 3 Certificate or Diploma in agriculture; a degree in agriculture or a related subject, (normally requires at least two A level grades, with chemistry and biology preferred); postgraduate courses, which require a relevant first degree or HNC/HND together with relevant work experience; Fertiliser Advisors Certification and Training Scheme.

Farm managers should be skilled in: business management and IT, leadership and decision making, people management, business acumen and strategic vision, and have an ability to cope with responsibility and stress.

Salary and benefits

Starting salaries are typically around £20,000 a year, increasing to £30,000 with experience. An experienced manager on a large farm may earn over £50,000.

Living and working on a farm makes for a great lifestyle often with valuable benefits such as rent-free accommodation, a farm vehicle and possible pension scheme.

Career progression

Farm managers often move around the country and sometimes overseas to gain experience. Continuing Professional Development is essential to keep up to date with the latest developments in agriculture, technology, policy and health and safety legislation.

As a general strategy, farm managers need to be active and known outside the farm business in societies and learning groups. As part of that, managers should keep in touch with their old university / college.

They should also build on qualifications and their track record of business competence and professionalism. A willingness to move area is important.

Potential follow-on careers from farm management include technical sales, consultancy and teaching, or agricultural advice.

» SPECIFIC CONTACTS

Institute of Agricultural Management, 01275 843825

www.iagrm.org.uk

British Institute of Agricultural Consultants, 01795 830100

www.biac.co.uk

Fertiliser Advisors Certification and Training Scheme, 01335 343945

www.factsinfo.org.uk

BASIS, 01335 343945

www.basis-reg.com

www.struttandparker.com

www.savills.co.uk



Dairy Herdsman



Skills and qualifications

Like shepherds, no set qualifications are required, but a dairy herdsman will typically have several years' practical experience and some formal agricultural training. Relevant agricultural qualifications are similar to those listed above for shepherds, but tailored to the dairy sector.

Other useful training includes: artificial insemination of cattle, foot trimming, first aid, health and safety, transportation of livestock, safe use of veterinary medicines.

Salary and benefits

Herdsman wages vary depending on the amount of responsibility and size of the herd. Starting salaries are normally at least £22,000 a year and with experience this can increase to £45,000.

Rent-free accommodation and a vehicle are often provided and some employers may provide other benefits, such as pension scheme or free farm produce.

Career progression

Practical experience is important, especially when getting started in the sector. Farm management or jobs in allied dairy industries are possible progression routes, although new training (e.g. sales) may be required.

DairyCo provides practical advice, training and business tools for dairy farmers, through its knowledge transfer service. This includes discussion groups, benchmarking (Milkbench+) and workshops focussing on business management.

Kite Consulting also offers a two-year management training programme, designed to produce dairy herd managers capable of managing 500+ cow herds within 5 years. All trainees must have a minimum of an NDA or NVQ3, although

ideally candidates will have a Higher National Diploma or degree in agriculture or a similar discipline.

» SPECIFIC CONTACTS

DairyCo, 024 7669 2051

www.dairyco.org.uk

Kite Consulting Dairy Manager Scheme, 01461 700228

www.kiteconsulting.com/_Attachments/resources/160_s4.pdf

Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers, 0845 458 2711

www.rabdf.co.uk

Assured Dairy Farms, 01387 247967

www.ndfas.org.uk



Shepherd



Skills and qualifications

No specific qualifications are required, but shepherds should have some form of agricultural training, supported by practical experience - as a lambing assistant, for example.

Relevant agricultural qualifications include: Level 3 Diploma in Agriculture; BTEC Level 3 Certificate or Diploma in agriculture; a degree in agriculture or a related subject; postgraduate courses, which require a relevant first degree or HNC/HND together with relevant work experience; Advanced Apprenticeship in Agriculture.

Other useful training includes: shearing skills, foot trimming, ATV driving, first aid, health and safety, transportation of livestock, safe use of sheep dip, safe use of veterinary medicines.

Salary and benefits

Salaries vary depending on the flock size and level of responsibility, but typically start at around £18,000 a year. With experience this can increase to £23,000-25,000.

Rent-free accommodation and a farm vehicle are often provided.

Career progression

The more technical knowledge and practical skills you can develop, the more opportunities are likely to present themselves. Experienced shepherds can go on to manage larger flocks within the UK or abroad, while others may go into allied industries (eg, sheep feed specialist, red meat food sector, farmers' markets), sales, research and policy development.

It is therefore important to keep up-to-date with market trends, farm policy, animal health, nutritional advice, and health and safety legislation.

The **Institute for Animal Health** runs a number of courses for people associated with the health of farm animals and provides information on control of diseases such as bluetongue.

» SPECIFIC CONTACTS

National Sheep Association, 01684 892661

www.nationalsheep.org.uk

EBLEX, 0870 242 1394

www.eblex.org.uk

Institute for animal health,

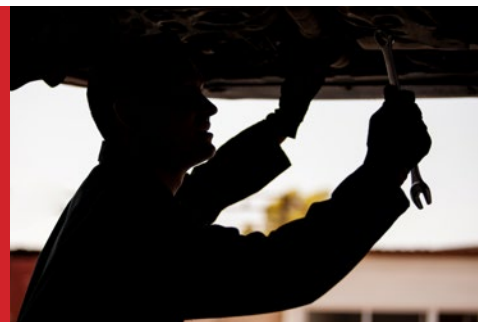
www.iah.ac.uk

Meat Training Council, 01908 231062

www.meattraining.org.uk



Machinery technician



Skills and qualifications

Machinery technicians need a high level of mechanical skill and ability to apply information from technical manuals. Patience and an ability to solve problems under pressure are needed, along with a strong health and safety awareness.

Many enter this career through an apprenticeship. Entry requirements vary, but most employers expect four GCSEs (A*-C) or equivalent, including English, maths and science or technology, plus IT skills. Most of the large manufacturers provide apprentice training.

Useful qualifications include: Diploma in work-based land-based service engineering at Level 2 or 3; Level 3 BTEC National Award, Certificate and Diploma in land-based technology; NPTC Level 2 Certificate of Competence in land-based machine maintenance.

Salary and benefits

Apprentice technicians may start on a salary of £8000 to £10,000 a year, depending on age, increasing to around £30,000 for an experienced technician, or nearer £40,000 for diagnostic technicians with advanced skills.

Employers may provide transport, so driving licence is needed.

Career progression

Ongoing training is essential to keep up with changes in technology.

Experienced technicians can go on to a range of roles, including diagnostic technician, master technician, workshop supervisor, service manager and sales representative. Others may go self-employed, move into training as a college

lecturer, or take up opportunities with sports clubs, local authorities and specialist equipment servicing companies.

The **Land-based Technician Accreditation Programme** sets out a recognised career path related to pay scales (see the Institution of Agricultural Engineers **website**).

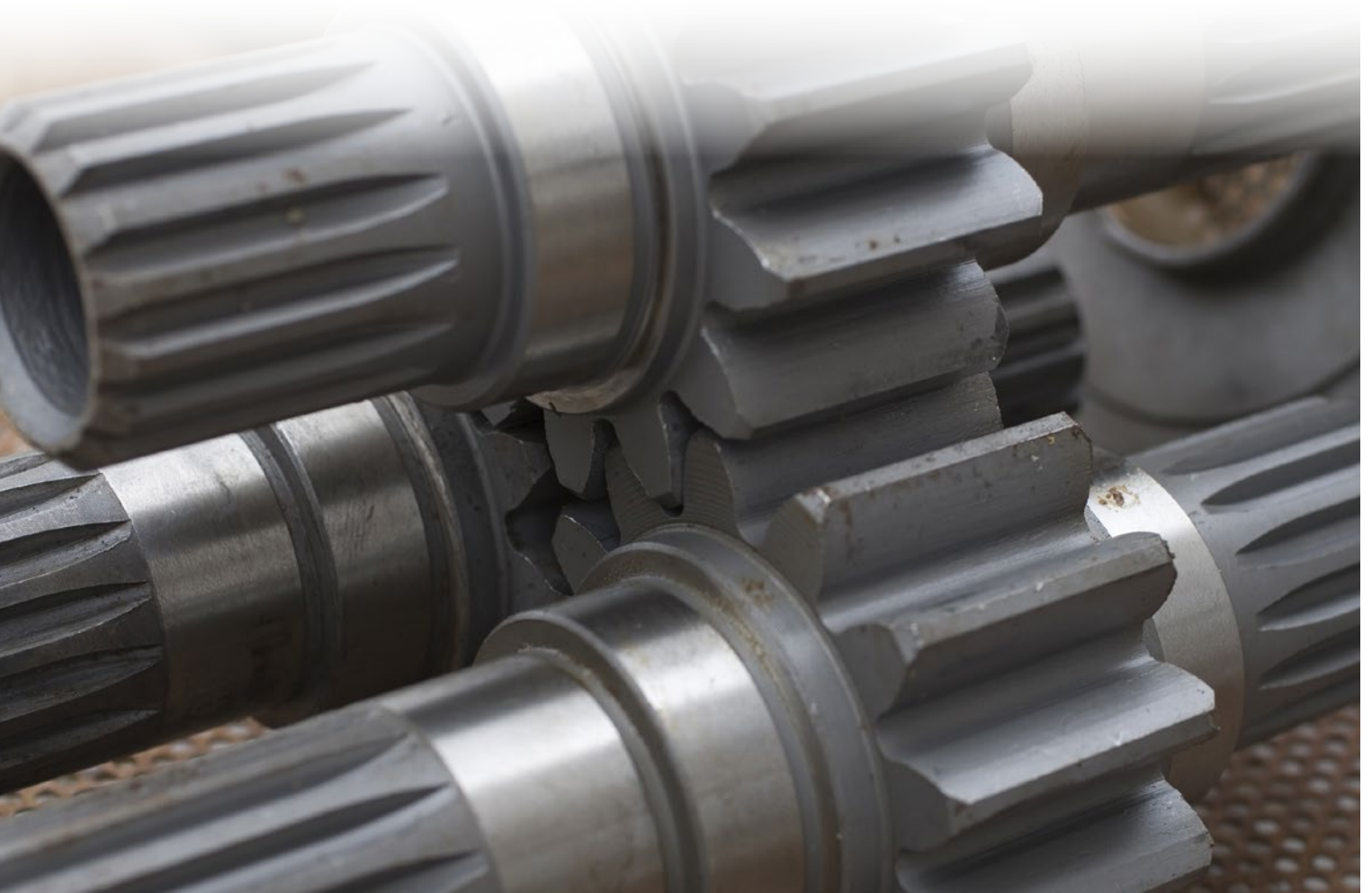
» SPECIFIC CONTACTS

Agricultural Engineers' Association, 0845 644 8748
www.aea.uk.com

British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association, 01295 713344
www.bagma.com

Engineering and Technology Board, 020 3206 0400
www.etchb.co.uk and www.scenta.co.uk

Institution of Agricultural Engineers, 01525 861096
www.iagre.org



Farm administrator



Skills and qualifications

Strong numeracy, IT, communication and organisational skills. A knowledge of the running and management of a farm, plus ability to handle confidential business matters with discretion.

Most work is office based, although a driving licence and own transport is usually necessary.

Salary and benefits

Salaries range from £14,000 a year for starters, up to £28,000 or more for experienced staff working on large estates. Some farms may provide accommodation on site.

Career progression

Continuing Professional Development is a key part of career progression and training is available to all Institute of Agricultural Secretaries and Administrators members. There are various CPD grades available, with CPD 1 being the entry level required for members to use AIAgSA after their name. In order to maintain this grade CPDm must be completed annually.

Some farm administrators decide to go self-employed or join other administrative/management roles once they have built up enough experience e.g. finance clerk, business advisor, personal assistant.

» SPECIFIC CONTACTS

IAGSA, 024 7669 6592

www.iagsa.co.uk

Institute of Certified Bookkeepers, 0845 060 2345

www.book-keepers.org



Forester



Skills and qualifications

No specific qualifications required, although qualifications for operating forest tools and machinery are encouraged, such as: Level 3 NVQ in tree work; Level 2 Certificates of Competence in chainsaw and related operations, all terrain vehicle handling or forest machine operations.

Apprenticeships may be possible and several forestry courses are also available, including: BTEC Introductory Diploma in land and environment; BTEC National Award, Certificate or Diploma in forestry and arboriculture; NPTC Level 2 Certificate and Level 3 Diploma in Forestry and Arboriculture; ABC Awards Level 1 Certificate in practical environmental and conservation skills; Lantra Awards Level 2 Certificate in land-based activities.

Driving licence may be required.

Salary and benefits

Starting salaries for **Forestry Commission** apprentices are around £13,697 a year, with more experienced works supervisors earning nearer £18,000 a year, up to £24,000.

Career progression

Progression prospects are clearer in large organisations like the Forestry Commission where experienced staff can go on to senior forest worker, works supervisor, or forest officer roles. Others may need to change organisations or go self-employed and contract-out their services. Alternative careers include tree surgeons or forest ranger roles for those with a stronger interest in wildlife.

Voluntary work with organisations such as the **National Trust**, **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers** or local wildlife trusts may help get into this sector or progress to a new role.

» SPECIFIC CONTACTS

Forestry Commission, 0131 334 0303

www.forestry.gov.uk

Institute of Chartered Foresters, 0131 240 1425

www.charteredforesters.org

Arboricultural Association, 01242 522152

www.trees.org.uk

The Royal Forestry Society

www.rfs.org.uk



General contacts

DEFRA Agricultural Wages Board, 020 7238 6523
www.defra.gov.uk

LANTRA, 024 7669 6996 or 0845 707 8007
www.lantra.co.uk
www.lantracoursefinder.co.uk
www.afuturein.com

Scottish Agricultural College, 0131 535 4000
www.sac.ac.uk

Grow Your Own Career in Horticulture
www.growcareers.info

National Council for Work Experience, 0161 277 5267
www.work-experience.org

Countryside Jobs Service, 01947 896007
www.countryside-jobs.com

NFU, 024 76858500
www.nfuonline.com

Graduate careers advice,
www.prospects.ac.uk

Continuing Professional Development
www.cipd.co.uk/cpd/

Agricultural Wages Board

The AWB sets the minimum rates of pay for agricultural workers. Rates, effective from 1 October 2009, are as follows:

*Assumes 39 basic hours each week

FWi.co.uk forums users and friends on [Facebook](#) contributed en masse when we posed the question: If you could give one piece advice to a young person considering a career in agriculture or having just embarked on one, what would it be?

*“Do your own research and challenge the majority of what other farmers tell you. Understand book-keeping and the whole food supply chain (your customer) and value your time and assets as any other business would - make sure they are put to best use
Be prepared to drop farming if you cannot make it pay.”*

Will Wilson

“Education, education, education. It doesn't have to be formal, but it will stand to you in the years to come. Don't follow a well-paid job, pursue an area the you are interested in, as it will make going to work a lot more enjoyable.”

Mursal

“Travel. Work in different parts of the UK - and preferably in other countries. Agriculture is coming into a new golden age and there are perhaps better opportunities where land is cheaper and more available than “old Europe”.

Flash Jacques

Add your comments to the forums at www.fwi.co.uk/careeradvice

2

Using Social Media to get your next job



Many agricultural recruitment firms, companies and farms are embracing social media and can use it to scout for and hire new employees.

David Williams of Country Mile Recruitment, which services agricultural, horticultural, environmental and agri-business sectors, says websites such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are increasingly being used as ways to find jobs.

“Both in terms of candidates searching for roles and companies looking for and learning about potential employees, social media is becoming more and more important.

“We have a lot of direct contact with candidates via Facebook and Twitter, which is a good way of getting information out and igniting conversations, while LinkedIn is a great way to network with professionals.

“Employers still want to meet candidates in the flesh and we will still ask for a covering letter and a CV, but social media can be really useful in showing what a person is about, so it’s worth thinking how you use it.”



LinkedIn

An understanding of agricultural plants, animals and basic machinery LinkedIn is the number one website to build professional relationships online.

“It’s a walking, talking CV and an opportunity to sell yourself, so having a profile on there is a must,” says Mr Williams. “It’s also fantastic for networking, so if you are looking to get noticed you can really put yourself out there.”

Make sure your profile is complete:

Having a 100% complete profile projects a professional image as it shows you are thorough. If your expertise are listed it also makes it easier for potential employers to find you as they will search for keywords.

“As with a CV, your profile can’t have any holes in it and it has to be truthful,” says Mr Williams. “At the most basic level, spelling, grammar and punctuation also have to be perfect.”

Join industry groups:

Groups are sometimes used to advertise jobs or to ask for recommendations for vacancies. More often, they put you alongside relevant companies and individuals who could be useful to network with.

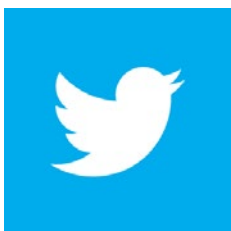
“If you are a graduate looking for your first role and you are interested in agronomy, joining relevant groups can give you an opportunity to get a feel for the sector and to get known,” says Mr Williams. If you get involved in group discussions it shows you are capable of asking sensible questions and engaging with the relevant community.

Approach people:

If there is a company you want to approach, search through your contacts to see if you have any connections or mutual contacts who you could ask for an introduction. Never directly ask someone for a job, but seek their advice on getting into the industry or who to talk to about business opportunities.

Use it regularly:

Send LinkedIn invitations to connect after you meet new contacts and use the site to search for connections for events you are going to attend. That way you can have a network of contacts when you start job searching.



Twitter @FarmWeekly_Jobs

While lots of businesses use twitter to promote themselves and their products, it is a great way for them to get the measure of candidates outside a formal interview process, and for you to show what you can offer.

Many recruitment firms and companies also advertise jobs on twitter, so it's worth following businesses you might want to approach for a job.

Create the right 'voice':

Twitter is great for showing your personality, but bear in mind that you shouldn't tweet anything you wouldn't want a future employer to see.

If you want to tweet about your escapades at raucous Young Farmers parties, then it might be best to set up two Twitter accounts - one for personal and one for professional use.

Engage:

Twitter doesn't just have to be about you sitting back and waiting for jobs to be advertised. The website is all about conversations - it's immediate, direct and the only place you could find yourself talking to the head of a company without a formal introduction or going through their HR team. While you can show your personality, remember to think before you tweet and be as polite to someone as if you were speaking to them face-to-face.

A number of young farmers are using Twitter to get onto the farming ladder by actively engaging with industry figures they think could help them, and by creating a profile which promotes their skills and shares the hard work they are doing.

CPD is becoming more and more critical and its continuous learning, which is all the better for you.



Facebook

Many large companies and farm businesses have a Facebook presence to promote their enterprises, but if you are a potential employee you must use the website with care.

“From a candidate’s perspective, it’s about being careful not to project yourself badly,” says Mr Williams.

If you ‘like’ a company you want to work for, then potential employers could have access to things you post, which could be a bad thing if you have drunken photos posted on your profile.

Potential employers are also likely to check your online profile, so if you haven’t got your privacy settings switched on make sure there isn’t anything on your wall you wouldn’t want them to see.

“Lots of people use Facebook for their social lives, so if there’s a risk of you saying something inappropriate on there, it would be best to make sure potential employers can’t see it,” Mr Williams says.

“But if you talk about your friends and your hobbies and it shows you are a nicely-rounded person, then it can be a useful tool for employers who are trying to get a feel for what kind of person you are.”

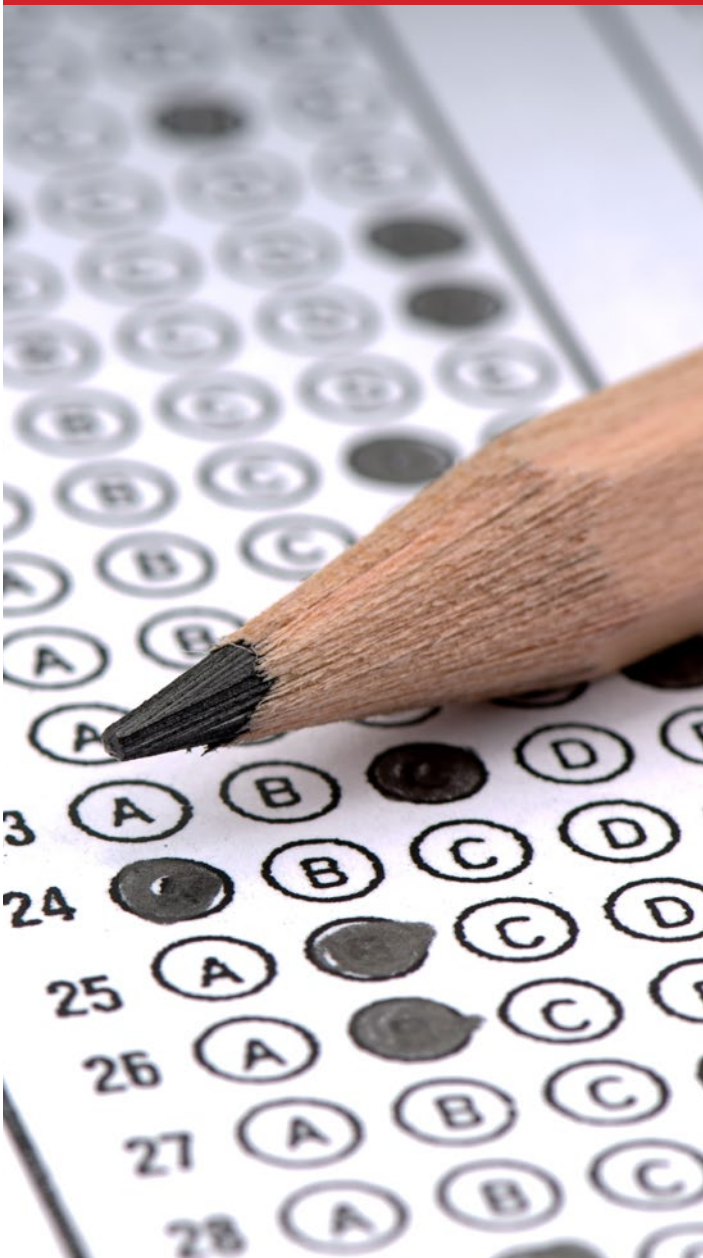
It’s also worth remembering to stop yourself from posting anything negative about previous or current employers, he adds.

“We have had questions raised over how to raise a disciplinary for staff saying bad things about the company on Facebook.

“People are starting to include social media policies as part of their general HR package to stop that from happening.”

3

Psychometric testing in interviews



Personality questionnaires or psychometric tests can help a potential employer judge if a candidate is suited to a role by determining the type of personality they have.

The tests indicate attributes such as team-working, confidence, communication skills and reasoning, which can often be difficult to assess in interviews.

Common in many businesses, psychometric tests are being increasingly used in the agriculture and food sectors, particularly by larger companies for graduate roles.

“We are seeing more and more of these tests, primarily for trainee sales roles,”

says Grace Nugent of agriculture employment specialists DeLacy Executive.

“Very often applicants have practical experience of working on farms, but employers want to see if they have the attributes that can help in sales and other roles.”

While they may seem intimidating, Miss Nugent says it's important to remember there are no right or wrong answers in psychometric tests.

“There are a wide range of tests which try to put you in certain scenarios to see how you would react,” she says.

“It helps the employer understand your working style, which is what is important from their perspective.”

The tests can also reveal if you would be suited to the role on offer.

If you are prone to worrying, for example, you perhaps wouldn't enjoy a highly stressful job where you have to make important decisions quickly.

“It helps the employer understand your working style, which is what is important from their perspective.”

The tests can also reveal if you would be suited to the role on offer.

If you are prone to worrying, for example, you perhaps wouldn't enjoy a highly stressful job where you have to make important decisions quickly.

“These tests can help you understand how you might fit into that job or company,” says Miss Nugent. “If you couldn't do the job, then you wouldn't want to go forward in the recruitment process anyway.”

Even if you are sure you are right for the role on offer, the worst thing a candidate could do is try too hard, she adds.

“There are online tests you can try out to see what kinds of questions you might be asked, but the best thing is to be honest.

“Don’t predict answers you think your employer wants, otherwise it could produce an inconclusive result and might indicate you are trying to sway them or cheat on the test.”

» TIPS

- » Be yourself, as you don’t know exactly what qualities the interviewers are looking for. The tests usually contain checks to make sure you are being consistent, so answer as honestly as possible
- » Select answers that spring to mind rather than thinking about their meaning
- » Don’t worry about your answers - there are no right or wrong answers and your CV and interview provide lots of information about you, so your test result is not the be all and end all
- » As there are no right or wrong answers, you can’t revise for psychometric tests. However, to get a feel for the style of questions you might be asked, you can try out practice questionnaires ahead of your interview, which are available free-of-charge from many websites

4

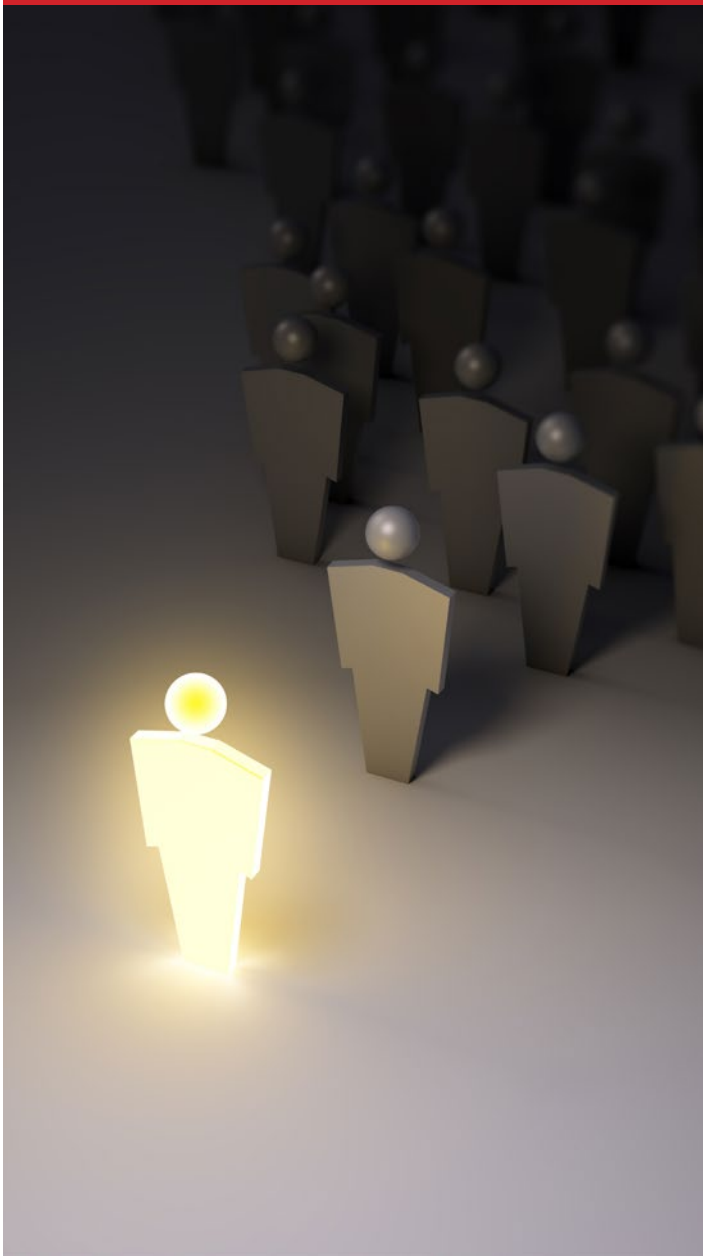
Creating an alluring covering letter

The aim of a covering letter is to encourage potential employers to read your CV.

While a CV sets out your skills and experience, the covering letter gives you the opportunity to show how your skills fit the job on offer.

It can be used to highlight parts of your CV which might be of particular interest to a recruiter, or to draw attention to additional information that doesn't fit easily into a CV.

It can also be useful for explaining any personal circumstances which may be important to your application.



Do I really need to write a covering letter?

Whether you're going for a graduate traineeship or a job as a relief milker, a covering letter is an important way for you to sell yourself and explain why an employer should consider you.

George Gordon, managing director of farm relief and contract recruitment firm LKL Services, says while his candidates fill out an online application form, he would also encourage people to write in with a CV and covering letter.

“A covering letter should show enthusiasm for the job and highlight the experience and qualifications which would make you right for the role,” he says.

“For on-farm jobs, the covering letter gives you the chance to set out geographical preferences and your family situation, which can be important if the role comes with accommodation.”

Taking the time to tailor letters for each role is also important, says Mr Gordon.

“You can have a template letter and CV, but make sure you customise it for each job to give different emphasis on that particular role so the reader really appreciates why you are suitable.

“It's nice when you get a letter and you think you can see exactly why the person wants the job, and then hopefully the CV will flesh that out further.”

It's nice to have a template CV but customise it for each job to give different emphasis on the job to make the reader appreciate why they are suitable.

What to include:

Introduction - explain why you are writing. If you are replying to an advert, say where and when you saw the advert

Experience and skills - briefly explain your current job and relevant qualifications.

Draw attention to relevant aspects of your experience and how it would be useful for the role on offer. Sell your personal qualities and try to match them to the employer's job requirements.

The perfect team - explain why you want to work for the business and what you know about them. Showing you have done some research into the company shows you are keen and enthusiastic.

A positive sign-off - say you would appreciate the opportunity to be interviewed and let them know when you are available.

>> DO...

- » Check the letter doesn't have any spelling or grammar mistakes
- » Check you have sent the letter to the right person. If you are unsure, phone the company and check who will be responsible for dealing with applications
- » Keep the letter short and factual, no more than a page in length and laid out clearly with plenty of white space. If your letter is written as part of an email, apply the same formalities as you would in a letter
- » Think from the employer's perspective - tell them what you can offer
- » Avoid including negative information

>> DON'T...

- » Regurgitate your CV
- » Send out standard covering letters
- » Ignore specific instructions with your application - make sure you include any information the employer requests in the job description

5

Creating rapport in an interview



You've impressed your potential employer and made it through to the interview stage.

Some employers, particularly for relief and contract farming jobs, may conduct a telephone interview first to whittle down prospective candidates further, but eventually you will be asked to attend a face-to-face interview.

Preparation

In both cases, preparation beforehand is key.

“Some candidates don’t realise how important preparation is.”

says Grace Nugent of agricultural recruitment specialists DeLacy Executive.

“Some people just look at the business’ website and think that’s it, but it’s important to go back to the job description so you know what the job would entail and what would be expected of you.”

Doing Google searches to find any articles and latest news about the company is a good idea, as is researching the company’s customer base and any competition.

“Little things like planning a journey are also important.”

says Miss Nugent.

Just knowing where you are going and how you are going to get there help.”

First impressions count

Potential employers will make judgments about you in the first few seconds of meeting you, so it’s important you present yourself in a way which creates a good first impression.

Plan your clothes, avoiding too much statement jewellery and any outrageous outfits as it could convey the wrong thing about you.

“If you are worrying whether to go smart or more casual, it’s probably safer to err on the smarter side.”

says Miss Nugent.

George Gordon, chief executive of relief work supplier LKL Services, agrees looking smart is important, even when the job will involve you getting mucky.

“If you are going for a senior herd manager role for example, I would expect you to be smartly dressed,”

he says.

“If it’s a dairy assistant’s role it’s not as crucial so long as you make a good impression - a checked shirt and jeans would be fine, so long as you are clean and tidy.”

Body language

The way you sit, stand and shake hands can all go a long way in making an impression on someone.

If you slouch or slump in your chair you may come across as disinterested. Keeping your shoulders back and head up will help you look confident, as will maintaining eye contact and smiling.

“A lot of people forget to smile, which is actually really important as it shows enthusiasm and energy, which are key things to interviewers,”

says Miss Nugent.

Selling yourself

Selling yourself and proving what you can contribute to the company is a vital part of any interview, Miss Nugent adds.

“Lots of people read up on the company and forget to think about themselves and what they can offer.”

“You got the initial interview from the CV, but when it comes to the interview it’s more important to get your personality across and the chemistry you have with the interviewer is a key part.”

Although you might feel under pressure, take a few seconds to think before you answer questions.

“If you’re asked for weaknesses, don’t say you haven’t got any,”

says Miss Nugent.

“Show you’re aware of them and explain how you can turn them to strengths.

“Don’t be critical about your previous employers either,”

she adds.

“It doesn’t go down well as they get concerned you would be critical about them too.”

Finally, ahead of the interview think about things the employer will be thinking and think how you can respond to them.

“An employer will be thinking about why you have applied, how competent you are, whether you could fit in with the existing team and so on,”

Miss Nugent says.

“It pays to be aware so you can plan ahead how to answer their questions.”

6

Negotiating the best starting salary



Discussing salaries can be uncomfortable, but talking about how much you will be paid with a potential employer is a crucial conversation.

The main thing for any job candidate is to be realistic, both in terms of what you are worth and what kind of sums the role you are applying for can command.

Know your value

“For a farm job, knowing what you are worth can be tricky,”

says George Gordon of relief and contract staff provider LKL Services.

“You can ask friends and neighbours what they earn to give you some indication, but they might not be willing to share.”

Historically the Agricultural Wages Board set farm salaries, but its abolition means starting wages are not so cut-and-dry.

“The other alternative is to look at other job advertisements and call and ask what the salary is, or talk to companies like them to find out what your value is on the marketplace.”

Establish a target salary, but be realistic

Deciding on what salary you want to earn and what you are willing to settle for before you enter negotiations over a role can be helpful.

But be careful that you don't miss out on a good opportunity by having a fixed salary in your head that you won't stray from, warns Grace Nugent of agricultural recruitment specialists DeLacy Executive.

“When we go around universities talking to graduates, we tend to find they have quite a fixed salary in their minds and they can have tunneled vision,”

she says.

“They don't see that there's more than the salary. Having certain companies on your CV is a massive investment in your future and there's a lot of money in that in itself.”

“If you take a job and the company has to invest time in getting you to a certain standard and giving you training, then that's a big investment in itself which shouldn't be overlooked.”

“When we interview candidates for roles, if they realise it’s not all about the money it makes us think more favourably of them,” she adds. “If they just want to know about money it’s usually not a good sign.”

On the other hand, you do have to be realistic about how much you deserve, particularly if the job requires you to relocate, or if you will have large travel costs.

“You have to survive, so you have to strike a balance,”

says Miss Nugent.

“If you can justify a higher salary, there is always room for negotiation.”

How to negotiate

Discussing salaries shouldn’t be a confrontation. Make the employer feel you are working together to find a solution that makes everyone happy.

If you genuinely think you deserve more money than is on offer, explain why you think the salary should be increased.

“If it’s between having an ideal candidate and losing them for the sake of a couple of grand, most companies might be willing to invest,”

says Miss Nugent.

“But you do have to justify that extra payment.

“Relocation in particular can give room for negotiation, so it’s not always set in stone.”

Companies will usually want employees to prove their worth before they are given a higher salary, so if you are unhappy with the figure on offer but you do want the job, ask for a review.

“I would advise taking the job at a lower salary but get it written into your contract that after three or six months you would like to look at a salary increase,” says Miss Nugent.

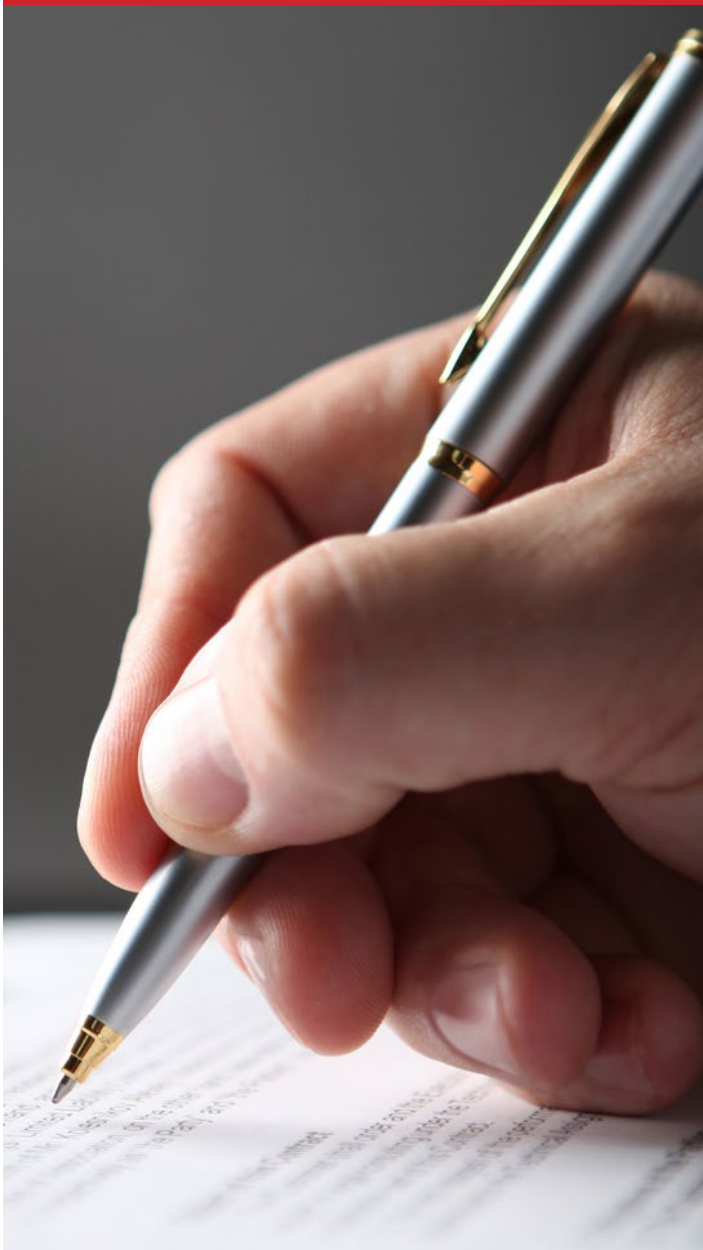
If you cannot negotiate a salary you are happy with and you feel you do need to turn down the job offer, make sure you do it on good terms.

Treat every offer graciously and don't burn bridges with potential business contacts who you may well come into contact with in the future.

Finally, if you do get the offer you want, make sure you get it in writing - including everything you have agreed.

7

Do's and don'ts for developing a CV



Your CV can be your first point of contact with potential employers, so making an impression is important.

Whether you are applying for a relief worker role or a more formal job, a CV is your chance to 'sell' what you have to offer based on your education, experience, skills and personality.

The way you present your CV can have an effect on whether it is read and whether it helps you get an interview, so it's worth spending time and effort on the content and lay-out to make sure it's easy to read.

Things to consider when creating your CV:

>> DO...

- » Tailor your CV for each application. Look at what the employer's requirements are and then pick out areas of your education, experience and achievements which best match them
- » Use headings, bullet points and paragraphs so information is spaced-out and easy to read. Ask someone to read it before you send it to make sure you haven't got any spelling or grammar mistakes
- » Provide all the contact details you can so employers can easily get hold of you, but make sure your answerphone message and email address will not embarrass you
- » Include a paragraph at the beginning with a description of you which is tailored for the job
- » Describe any previous employers' work and responsibilities you had. The dates should start with the most recent work experience first
- » Always describe your experiences in a positive way. Even if you didn't enjoy a previous job, identify what you learned or what skills you developed
- » Include experience and achievements at work, education and other activities, especially if they might be of interest to an employer. Holding a tractor or driving licence, IT skills, or outside interests that show you can work in a team could all be relevant
- » Include your interests if they are substantial and relevant - saying you enjoy socialising is not worth mentioning, but mentioning being a member of Young Farmers where you carried out some first aid training or developed public speaking skills is
- » Accompany your CV with a one-page covering letter which explains why you are interested in the vacancy and what you have to offer based on your skills and experience. Don't worry if there is some overlap with your CV, just try to find a different way to phrase the information and don't be afraid to sell yourself

Things to consider when creating your CV:

» DON'T...

- » Hand-write your CV - it looks unprofessional
- » Use colour or graphics unless they really help clarify your message. Left-justified text using a simple, black font on good-quality white or cream paper is best
- » Over-use 'I' - it is more professional to speak as a third person
- » Tell lies on your CV. If you get to an interview, you will need facts to back up what is written
- » Include negative information. Failed exams, points on a driving licence or reasons for leaving a job could make the employer discard your CV before you even get a chance to impress at the interview stage. Don't be untruthful, but avoid this information if you can
- » Use the same CV for all applications - each job is different, so tweak your CV to show how you meet the job specifications
- » Exceed a maximum of two pages. Listing the schools you attended with grades for each subject or a long work history isn't necessary. Concentrate on demonstrating the skills the employer needs
- » Use acronyms, jargon or technical terms unless they are essential

Referees

Add your referees contact details at the end of your CV but don't take up too much space. If you are currently employed, write that you can supply details on request.

Think carefully about who to ask to provide a reference to make sure they will make a good impression of you to your potential employer and be positive about your application.

Ask their permission before you use their names as a reference and once you know a reference is going to be requested, brief them on the company and the job so they can think about what they might say.