

JOB SEARCH IN NORWAY



Finding
the job

Understanding
the job

Applying for
the job



CareerServices
UNIVERSITY OF OSLO



Start now

- It's never too early to start planning your job search

For many people, reaching the end of their formal education is an important milestone. And for those people who complete a university degree, there is no shortage of opportunities. There is—and will continue to be—a great demand for skilled individuals with a university degree. The opportunities do not simply present themselves, however; the burden is on you to put serious effort into your job search. In one sense, you have a job already—and that's to get a job!

We hope that this brochure will give you as a student at the University of Oslo some expert guidance as you prepare to enter the workforce. Career Services is well aware of the challenges UiO graduates face throughout the job search process, and we know quite a bit about how employers think too. Our goal is to help you become an informed job seeker capable of marketing your skills for employers so that your career gets off to a flying start.

This brochure will walk you through the job search process from A to Z, with sections on how to find a job that's right for you, understand what that job demands, submit a successful application and knock their socks off during the interview. We hope this guide serves as an inspiration and gives you the kick-start you need to take the plunge into the job market. The best advice we can give is to start early — ideally six months before you finish your degree. Read this brochure and don't be shy about reaching out to us at Career Services as you begin the process.

Good luck on your job search!
Gisle Hellsten, Head of Career Services at UiO

The Career Services

The Career Services has a range of services to offer students and recent graduates alike: courses, career guidance, feedback on your CV/resume and job application, interview training, Career Day at UiO, company presentations, as well as other kinds of activities delivered in collaboration with employers and other partners. We hope to see you at Blindern campus one day soon!



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Norwegian work culture in a nutshell

by David John Smith

Do you want to live and work here in Norway? There are a few things that you should know to survive and thrive. What is my story? After I met a Norwegian girl in West Berlin in the 1980's, I married her and came here to live. Through the years, organizing the Lillehammer Olympics, working in the public and private sector, my creative collaboration with "Lilyhammer" Steven Van Zandt, raising a family and more, I have learned something about this fascinating culture. Thanks for letting me share my thoughts with you!



Name:
David John Smith

Workplace:
Founder of Norway Communicates

Originally from:
USA.

Worked in Norway since:
the late 1980s

Start to learn Norwegian today. Learn 10 new words a day, and start to use them. "God dag. God dag. Hvordan står det til?" Then try to make that elusive first contact. Norwegians do not like small talk, but when they do, they talk about skiing or about the weather. Combine weather talk with the last international skiing competition or about the controversial skier Petter Northug, and you may make a friend.

Do not worry if everyone is saying "no" to you, or if nobody seems to be looking you in the eyes. This is a shy, but lovable bunch. To get to a "yes" in Norway, you may have to go through the first reaction of "No" (Nei), then "Well, maybe"(Nja), then "Well, that could be possible" (Tja), then perhaps a "Yes" (Ja). This is the way it works. A "No" may be a hiccup on the way to a "Yes".

This is true at the workplace as well. Discussion and debate are part of the daily activities, around a coffee table or around a lunch table. Don't be surprised if a decision is not made, be patient. Things take time. After all, it did take them 30 years of discussion to decide where the main airport would be. Even then, the decision may be changed.

Speaking of lunch, let's talk about the "matpakke". Once you have a job, be prepared to never get a hot lunch. Be prepared to bring your lunch with you, traditionally a few slices of dry

bread with some meat or cheese on each slice. This is a daily ritual where discussion will flow. Perhaps about what was on TV last evening, or about politics, or about the weather, or uh, about skiing.

Speaking of the boss, you can go knock on her door. Or his door. Norway has a very flat organization structure, one that prides itself on an "open door policy". Go knock on the door. But not after 4 pm in the afternoon, especially on Friday, when the place will be deserted – everyone has gone to the mountains.

Your boss may be a man or may be a woman. This is a country of gender equality. Man or woman, don't be surprised if your boss or your colleagues disappear at 3:15 pm to go pick up their child from the "barnehage". And don't expect them back at work that day. Or they may be gone for several months, as Norway has one of the most advanced child leave programs in the world.

If it is a Friday, your colleagues may leave even earlier, off to the cabin in the mountains or by the sea. You won't see them until Monday for a weekend of "hyttekos". Once a month, you may experience the phenomena of "lønningspils", on payday many companies have a tradition to go out for food and drinks. Of course, you have to pay your way, but it is a good way to get to know your colleagues.

Be patient. Norwegians are not easy to get to know. The first week after I had moved to Oslo, I was out in the front yard at my mother-in-law's house, an awesome woman, very polite. Seeing a stranger walking up the small road by the side of her house, I raised my right hand to say howdy. I never got the chance as my mother-in-law gently pulled my arm back down, saying, "We don't do that here in Norway". But don't give up - once you have made a friend, you have a friend for life.

David

My meeting with the Norwegian work life



Name: Lasse Thesbjerg Andersen
Workplace: Posten Norge AS
Title: Economist, Konserntrenee
Originally from: Denmark
Worked in Norway since: 01.09.14

1. How do you experience the “everyday work life” in Norway?

The organizational structures are relatively flat and there is a high degree of autonomy. A leader will ask you what and how to do things rather than giving you orders. The working hours are quite good. Generally it is expected that you deliver results rather than working long hours. The working environment is good too – good coffee, comfortable chairs and tables and well-furnished meeting rooms are just a few examples of that.

2. What aspects about your job in Norway has surprised you?

I was surprised by the number of Swedes working in Norway. Since the Norwegian and Swedish language are similar in many ways both languages are used. This is sometimes confusing due to the inevitable differences. There is a great focus on HMS (Health, Safety and Environment) where I work. This was a great positive surprise to me. Where I am from we are used to eating a good lunch al-

most each day. In Norway they do not seem to appreciate that to the same degree. I was surprised that most people here are satisfied with just eating 3-4 slices of bread for lunch.

3. What do you think is important in order to adapt to the Norwegian culture?

Simply just be open to the Norwegian culture. Enjoy the great nature and experience their traditions. You will discover that the office often will be empty at Friday's around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. This is because people are going on “hyttetur” (trip to their cottage). Try this! Norwegians are proud of their country, something you can experience each 17. Mai. Go skiing (specially cross-country) and experience the elite competition live at the stadium.

4. Do you have any advice for international students looking for work in Norway after graduation?

Learn the language! This is the best advice I can give. This will give you an edge.

1. How do you experience the “everyday work life” in Norway?

The structure in Norway is very open and flat in comparison with the hierarchical structure which is common in Japan. I am treated equally with the other members in the project team. I am also called into important meetings with clients. I can control my working hours under the flextime system while I had to work from 9 am to 5 pm every day in Japan.

2. What aspects about your job in Norway has surprised you?

Everyone speaks frankly with the bosses and older employees. There are many female managers at Nexans. Women can have the same opportunity to have a career as men do. The employer respects employees' personal lives. Most of the employees take 3 weeks' vacation in the summer and use up their 5 weeks' vacation in

comparison to Japan where I could take maximum 9 days off including weekends at a time. Furthermore, a lot of fathers take parental leave for 10 weeks, while only 2.30% of men in Japan take parental leave (for less than one month). Both men and women seem to manage work-life balance in Norway.

3. What do you think is important in order to adapt to the Norwegian culture?

Although most Norwegians speak English very well, I think speaking Norwegian is important.

4. Do you have any advice for international students looking for work in Norway after graduation?

Network is very important. Have an active student life and build a network through your friends, part-time job, internship, fitness gym etc.



Name: Ema Hosoya Cabral
Workplace: Nexans Norway AS
Title: Document Control
Originally from: Japan
Worked in Norway for: 1,5 years

How to find the job you're looking for?

We're guessing you have a general idea of what kind of job you're hoping to get when you finish your studies. The question of where you can find this job, what the title of the position is, and how you can go about landing it is probably a little more difficult to answer. This is a common dilemma for recent university graduates: qualified for many different jobs, yet unsure of where to begin their search. So how can you get a better sense of the possibilities that await you? By taking a systematic approach to your job hunt, you can both systematize what you already know, and identify opportunities that might never have occurred to you before.

Putting thoughts into words

Start by making a list of activities you enjoy and would like to perform in a work setting. Let's say that you like writing, and that you think you would like working with words and communication. You may, however, be having a hard time imagining many types of jobs that meet this description, beyond working as, say, a publisher or a teacher. But don't stop here— the next step is to identify additional work environments where you could make use of these skills.

Identifying potential workplaces

Ask yourself: what kinds of employers need people with good writing skills? What kinds of written communication do different companies and organizations engage in, and what kinds of people do they employ to do the communicating? Next, ask a friend or classmate to help you map out which specific employers – private, public, NGOs – are active in fields that interest you. As you brainstorm, keep in mind that potential workplaces may be lurking where you least expect them. They may have a clearly-defined mission (e.g. a public relations firm), employ large numbers of people with your specific skills set (a publishing house), exist as a single division or unit within a larger organization (PR for a large organization, company or university), or represent a separate but related field (i.e. the news media). We also recommend adding to your master list types of work that fall outside of your chosen area (written communication) but which nonetheless are related (teaching, working as a counsellor, and conducting training sessions, for example).

From potential workplaces to openings

The next step in your career-mapping exercise is to connect the workplaces you have identified to specific job opportunities. As you track down relevant leads, keep your eyes open for names of specific employers, insights and information about your chosen field, what job titles are generally used, and how the positions you are interested



in are integrated into the larger organization. As you set about doing this, we recommend using every resource available to you: company websites, social media, industry-specific websites and discussion forums, newspaper articles, academic articles, and not least your own circle of contacts and acquaintances. Be sure to devise a good system for gathering and maintaining your findings!

Putting your ideas into action

Now comes perhaps the most difficult, but hands-down most important part: putting your newfound knowledge to work for you. Start by devising an action plan. Do you know someone who knows more than you do about the industry or field you're interested in? Give him or her a call. If there's a particular magazine you could imagine working for, make contact and let them know you're interested in freelancing for them. If you come across an industry event or an interesting class, sign up. If you find an open position that piques your interest, apply. And if the company of your dreams isn't advertising any open positions, send them an open application. As you carry out your action plan, be sure to keep track of what you learn and who you're in touch with by phone, e-mail or in person. You'll be happy you did when you land your first interview!

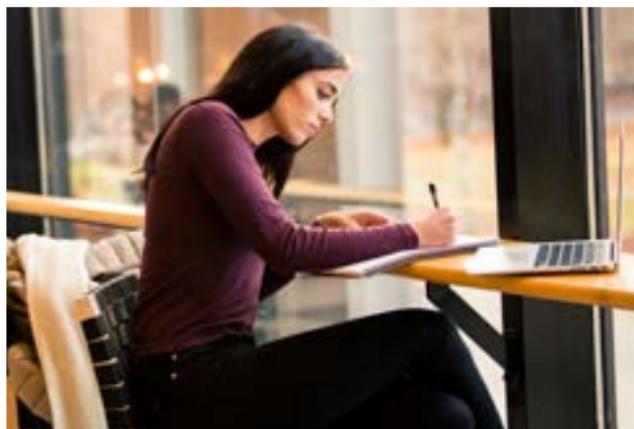
Where can you get information about open positions?

1. Job databases

You can find a number of job listings online. Nav.no is Norway's largest and most comprehensive job search database, while finn.no hosts an extensive jobs database as well. More information about online job databases is available on our webpage.

Regardless of whether you are a recent graduate or have some work experience, you will not necessarily know the name of your future employer or exactly what the job title of your next job will be. It is therefore vital that you make smart use of jobs databases. When conducting searches, do not restrict yourself to defined categories like "economist," "administration," or "consulting". Try to think of which words could be used to describe the job you're looking for and type one or more of them into the search field. You can type just about anything here—a skill you have, a task you like performing, or some aspect of a prospective job that is particularly important to you. Examples might include "analysis," "communication," "community," "youth," "project," or "international."

Using the search function in this way will return all openings containing these search items as a match, regardless of industry or level of seniority. Some of the positions you see will not be a perfect match; on the other hand, you are also likely to find relevant jobs and fields of work that you may not have known about before. To save yourself the trouble of having to enter the same search criteria over and over, most job databases allow you to save your searches and have new matches sent to you by e-mail.



2. Don't forget about company websites

In some cases, you can find jobs on company home pages. In certain cases, companies advertise open positions on their websites that you will not find advertised anywhere else. In cases where you are not familiar with relevant employers in a particular field, Google is the best resource. If, for example, you are interested in working with public opinion surveys, try Googling this search term together with "available position" and the name of the city in which you want to work. This will take you within one click of the homepages of the companies that are most active in your chosen field. Larger companies like Statoil and McKinsey typically practice an active recruitment strategy, and are always on the lookout for good candidates. Companies like these often encourage candidates to submit an open application online, and contact candidates whose backgrounds and qualifications they find interesting.

3. Other websites

Another category of websites covers an industry or field, rather than a specific company or organization. In addition to industry-specific news and information, sites like these typically have a separate section for open positions. If you are interested in communication, the website kommunikasjon.no may be a good place to start. Here you can find information, but also positions within PR and communication.

4. Social media

You can also find open positions on social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn. By following companies you are interested in on Twitter, and participating actively in relevant groups on LinkedIn, you may come across opportunities that you had never thought of before. Future employers can search for you on LinkedIn, so set aside time to keep your profile up-to-date. Observe how others convey their job and career aspirations using social media, and decide what approach works for you. Don't underestimate the importance of getting noticed!



Why wait for the job of your dreams to be formally advertised when sending an open application could be just the door-opener you need?

Data from the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration show that something like 60% of vacancies are never advertised. Many businesses find candidates through personal and professional networks, social media such as LinkedIn, internal postings, recruitment agencies, and headhunting firms. It is also becoming more and more common to hire people who have reached out to the company themselves.

The open application

In an open application, you attempt to match your skills set to the needs of an organization. There are a number of advantages to going this route, but here even more than elsewhere it is important that you do your homework. Any open application you submit should be tailored to the specific employer; it cannot be mass-produced.

Among the benefits of submitting an open application are the relative lack

Don't wait for the job to come to you

of competition and the power of your own motivation. Take best possible advantage of these factors by researching the industry and employer in question, mapping out your skills for them, articulating the ways in which you could add value to their organization, and locating the appropriate contact person.

An open application should be no longer than a regular application, but you need to be especially clear about your motivation for applying and why you would like to become a member of their team. Show how you can contribute and illustrate this with examples from your education, experience, and skills set.

The CV you submit together with your application should be geared towards the type of position you see yourself holding in the organization. Use appropriate headings and expand on the kinds of skills you possess, placing special emphasis on the skills that are most directly relevant to the job you could see yourself performing.

Doing your homework

Start out by finding a company you would really like to work for and familiarize yourself with the industry, the company, and the responsibilities of each of its divisions. Then try to imagine yourself as a member of the organization: in which areas could you potentially contribute? How would you add value and help address the organization's needs? In which unit and position could you do this?

Next, find out whether the company has a system for handling open applications on its website, or if they provide a designated e-mail address for

such purposes. Some companies do not wish to receive open applications and may state this online. Failing to respect this preference may disqualify you from future application cycles.

If you cannot find answers to these questions online, you might try calling someone who has the type of position you are interested in, or the head of the unit you would like to work in. Say that you are interested in obtaining more information about the company and the industry in which they work, and ask whether they would be open to answering some questions. Be sure to make some mention of your skills set. Ask whether the company is accepting open applications, and if so, to whom you should address the application. Also be sure to ask whether you may reference the phone call in your application.

Show your motivation

You should have thoroughly mapped out who you are and what you can offer the organization before initiating this process. This applies to skills and knowledge you have acquired through your education, experience you have gained from past jobs and volunteer work, personal attributes, and your motivation for applying. If you are going to have a chance at succeeding in this process, you need to demonstrate that you are a conscientious, enthusiastic, and well-adjusted person who is keenly motivated to do a good job for their company in particular. Further, you need to be able to convince the employer that they have needs—and that you are just the person who can fill them. Every employer knows that motivated employees work more effec-

tively, are more productive, and bring energy and new ideas to the company.

Following up your application

We advise that you follow up with a phone call to the person who received your application 10-14 days after you send it. Ask whether he or she has received your application and how things are proceeding. If you learn that there are currently no openings, ask if there is anything you can do to increase your chances of being considered for a position at a later stage. You might also ask whether they can forward your

application to other units in the same organization that might be interested in taking you on board.

The opportunities are here

Your odds of landing a job by way of an open application are generally higher in the private sector. Having said this, if you have a unique skills set that would enable you to be a contributing team member relatively quickly, you may have a chance at a position in the public sector as well. More commonly, however, a prospective employer will ask to hold onto your application and

contact you down the road when a vacancy arises. He or she may also refer your application to another company or organization with whom they collaborate. In the best case, an employer will be convinced that creating a new position or designing a job especially for you would amount to a valuable investment. If this is your experience, you will know first-hand one of the greatest perks of securing employment using this method: you get to contribute actively to writing your own job description!

Make employers notice you

Having a hard time finding a job that's right for you? Reaching out to people you know and being active in social media can put you on the trail of your dream job.

Smart jobseekers use their networks to help connect them with job opportunities, while employers rely on their networks when looking for new talent. Your network consists of friends, family, acquaintances, and, no less importantly, people who know people you know. Social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook could be a source of additional contacts. Your network is not strictly comprised of long-standing relationships. You might make a new contact when you least expect to, in a setting far removed from your job hunt. Your new contact may be the person sitting beside you on a plane ride, someone you met in your tango class, or someone you met online. So keep an open mind, because you never know where your conversations may take you!

Networking can be your gateway to information you would not otherwise have gained access to, interesting leads, or other useful contacts. Having access to this information can enable you write a stronger application and nail the interview. So force yourself to leave your comfort zone and reach out to that friend-of-a-friend—it can make all the difference in your job search.

How to make your network work for you:

1. Draw up a list of companies, organizations, or fields you could imagine working in.
2. Make a list of people you know who may have contacts or information that could be useful to you.

3. Communicate to your network in person and online that you are actively looking for a job.
4. Maintain an active online presence. Familiarize yourself with relevant social media and websites, and create a profile where appropriate. Think quality over quantity. If your online presence is minimal, LinkedIn is a great place to start. When sending an invitation to a potential contact via LinkedIn, mention briefly why you are sending the contact request; don't just use the standard message template.
5. Think about how you prefer to come across and play on your strengths. Some people are naturally charismatic, while others choose to present themselves in a more understated way. Find the style that works for you!
6. Make sure that the person you contact knows who you are—give a proper self-introduction. Be straightforward and let them know what your motivation is for contacting them. Are you looking for information/advice or is this an inquiry about a job?
7. It is often easier to contact an employer if you are able to make reference to someone they already know and trust. Remember to ask your contact whether he or she is comfortable being referred to by name in this way.
8. Use your network carefully. Be sure to make it clear that you are asking for help and not making demands. Make it clear to this person that he or she can say 'no.'

Knowledge is power

Read the job listing closely, and remember to do background research—job advertisements rarely spell out all the information you need to write the perfect application.



There are two reasons to do background research into an open position before you start writing your application. The first point may be obvious: you need to figure out whether you would actually enjoy the job, and whether you are qualified for it. Second, and no less important, you must succeed in convincing the employer that you have understood the duties of the position, what your role in the organization would be, the organization itself, and the industry or field in which the organization operates if you hope to have a chance at landing the job. The internet, newspapers, other publications, and not least your professional and social networks are all good sources of information as you conduct your background research.

1. Work duties and roles

Does the job listing provide a clear picture of what the duties of the position will be? Do you have a sufficiently good

understanding of what the duties specifically entail, what level they are set at, what tasks you will be asked to prioritize over others, what role(s) you will be assigned, and who you will be working most closely with? Gaining deeper insight into your prospective employer's expectations surrounding these issues will enable you to submit a strong application.

Job listings often feature bullet point lists that set out the duties associated with the position. A listing for senior advisor position, for instance, might include such bullet points as "case management", "project-based work" and "managing inquiries." Faced with vague, general terms like these, you're going to want to investigate further. How will your typical workday be structured? What will you actually be doing day-to-day? What will the balance between different kinds of work tasks look like? You will also need to know more about what

the employer means by "project-based work" in order to be able to address this point convincingly in your application. It may go without saying, but you will need to first understand what this position is all about before you can successfully present yourself as the candidate with the right skills and motivation to fill it.

In addition, you need to demonstrate that you have a good understanding of what kind of role you will have in your new position. Will your role be that of a bureaucrat – for example, if you are hired by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – where your day-to-day work will be shaped by policies and regulations over which you have no control? Or will you be cast in more a political role – say, if you begin working for the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers – that will involve working to change the system? Differences in role can take other forms as well: some positions are professional, while others are

administrative; some involve acting as a lobbyist or a salesman for a product or a cause, functioning as an in-house expert, or being the face of an organization. Other roles might include coordinating internal processes, or rolling out new initiatives.

2. The organization and the industry

In addition to acquiring an understanding of the duties and roles connected to a particular position, we recommend that you acquaint yourself with the working conditions at the organization or company in question. What is it actually like to work there?

The first areas you will want to look at relate to how the organization or company is organized, where they get their financing, who they serve, and who they work with. Say, for example, that you plan to apply for a job at a government ministry. It will be to your advantage, then, to understand what areas of policy this ministry is responsible for, which government agencies report to this ministry, and how ministry staff's positions are organized (there is, for example, a significant distinction between political and administrative staff in government ministries). Understanding these factors will enable you to better understand the context in which the position you're applying for is situated.

It may also be worth investigating what kind of workplace culture the company or organization is known for. Is the workplace culture fast-paced and characterized by demanding clients and attention to the bottom-line? Or is the environment more collaborative and focused on delivering quality services over time to specific user groups? Is the organization hierarchical and structured along clear lines of authority, or do employees have more autonomy and control over how their workdays are structured?

Last but not least, we recommend familiarizing yourself with the industry you're hoping to work in. If, for example,



you're applying for a job at Norwegian Shell, you should make sure you have a grasp of the fundamentals of the oil and gas industry. Who are the biggest players? Who are the customers? Who are the subcontractors? We also recommend that you learn as much as you can about the industry's growth trajectory. Is the industry you're applying for work in expanding or contracting? Finally, you should familiarize yourself with some of the latest developments in the field.

3. Required vs. desired qualifications

What kinds of qualifications is the company or organization looking for in their next employee? You can find answers to this question by reading the job listing, of course, but also by reading between the lines. It is important to keep in mind that there is a fundamental difference between qualifications an employer requires that applicants to the position demonstrate, and those they simply value enough to include in the job listing. You should by all means apply for the position even if you don't meet all the desired qualifications—remember, most employers consider candidates with a range of different educational backgrounds and work experience.

4. Still have questions? Pick up the phone

Do you still have unanswered questions regarding the position you're interested in, even after doing all your background research and reading the job announcement twice over? Then we recommend that you seek out answers by going straight to the source. But before you pick up the phone and call the employer listed in the job vacancy, make sure you have planned out what you are going to say and what you hope to gain from the conversation. You might, for example, request that the employer elaborate on specific work tasks listed in the job listing, or clarify where the position is situated in the larger organization. You can also ask the person you speak with what kind of candidate the organization is hoping to recruit, as well as what qualities they will be placing highest importance on when deciding who to hire. Be prepared for this to be a two-way exchange, and reflect on your own background, skills set and motivation for applying before you make the call. If you know someone who holds a similar position in a different organization, ask them about their job ahead of the call so that you will be as well prepared as possible.

5. Keep your head up high

It is no secret that applying for jobs is demanding and time-consuming. Yet it's important to keep in mind that the time you invest in mapping out your motivation and interests and conducting background research is a valuable investment. Every application process makes you a little bit wiser, and you may be surprised by how much you know about "your" fields of interest by the time you have landed a job.

Tailor your CV to every job application

A well thought-out CV is your key to making a positive first impression on a potential employer.

"I always look at the CV first. If the candidate's education and experience are not relevant for us, there's no real reason to invest time in reading the application." This statement comes from a manager at a Norwegian company, and attests to the outsized role the CV plays in filtering out applicants during the recruitment process. It does not take long to form an image of who an applicant is through their CV, and when it is well thought-out and neatly presented, it can be the very thing that snags an employer—hook, line, and sinker.

What should you include?

CV, or Curriculum Vitae, means "course of life." Your CV should provide an employer with an easy-to-follow, reverse chronological overview of your background. A CV should not exceed two pages and should contain sections that present your personal information, education, work experience and other kinds of experience, language and computer skills, and references.

Given this fixed format, the challenge is to put together a CV that effectively communicates how your skills are relevant match for the position. Each time you apply for a job, you should tailor your CV to the position you are applying for. You may find that it helps to start by constructing a "master CV" where you include everything under the sun. Then, when you apply for a specific job, first make a copy of your master CV before you set about making changes and adjustments

based on what you would like to convey to that particular employer. It can be useful to put yourself in your prospective employer's shoes, and ask: What kind of information does this person need to know about me? What qualities and experiences can I bring to the table that are particularly relevant for this job? What makes me an especially attractive candidate?

Turning the tables in this way can help you hone in on what qualities and experiences you will want to emphasize when you tailor your CV for this particular position.

Education: your greatest asset

As a recent graduate, your greatest asset is most likely the degree you have just completed or are about to complete. For this reason, your educational background belongs at the top of your CV. In addition to specifying your field of study, include the subject of your master's thesis and any relevant coursework, including methodology training, that you think an employer would see as relevant for the position you are applying for. Avoid course codes and acronyms, and make sure to elaborate on what you studied in layman's terms; not all employers are equally familiar with all fields of study.

Presenting your experience

Most people choose to present their work experience just below their academic background. In addition to paid work experience, however, many recent graduates have accumulated



other relevant experience through their involvement in student organizations, as volunteers, or in local or student politics. For this reason, we recommend that you group your experiences into two categories. Under the heading "Relevant Experience," include all work and non-work experiences you have had that are most directly relevant to the position you are applying for. Be judicious about what qualifies as "directly" relevant experience for the position in question; this is the time to make use of the background research you've been busy conducting. Next, include any other work and non-work experience under the heading "Other Experience."

In order for the reader of your CV to understand the logic behind how you have put together your CV, it is essential that you demonstrate why the experiences you have chosen to highlight are relevant to the position. One way you can do this is by expanding on the individual experiences you include in this section using keywords. By including additional information about the duties you performed, the level of responsibility you had, and the results you achieved, you can draw a link between your past experience and the open position. Some people also include a keyword in which they identify the skills as part of

that particular job or experience. If you decide to go this route, make sure to demonstrate clearly that the skill in question is transferable to the position you are applying for.

Organizing your CV in this way allows you to draw on a broader range of experiences that you think strengthen your candidacy for the position. At the end of the day, most employers are more interested in the experiences you have had than whether you had them in a work or non-work setting. To take two examples: if you were applying for a position as a case worker, your experience holding an elected position in a student organization is more important to emphasize than the part-time job you had in retail. If, on the other hand, you were

applying for a job that involved a great deal of interaction with people, your summer job as a waiter suddenly becomes more relevant.

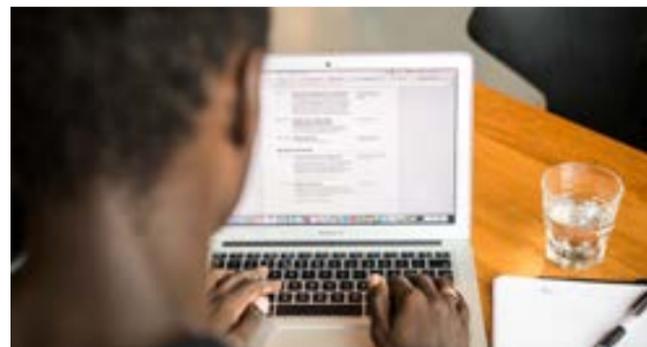
Make yourself an attractive candidate

By putting together your CV in this way, you not only come across as a more attractive candidate—you demonstrate self-awareness and an understanding of how you can contribute at your new workplace. Now that you've mastered your approach to the CV, you can turn to the other half of your application that stands between you and an interview—the cover letter.

Read about the cover letter on page14 >>

Online application portals

More and more employers have begun using online application portals to register CVs and applications. Submitting an online application through one of these portals can be a time-consuming exercise. There's no getting around the fact that online application portals are here to stay, however, so the real question is how to adapt to the challenges they can sometimes present.



When it comes to your CV, you have no choice but to stick to the portal's pre-defined categories. Often, this makes it more challenging to tailor your CV to the specific job opening because the pre-defined categories might prevent you from including supplemental information. Fortunately, there are other ways you can include this information. Some application portals allow you to enter additional text under each item of work experience or educational experience. Be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to elaborate on your experiences, keeping in mind the points made in the previous section. Some application portals also allow you to upload your CV as a separate document.

As for your cover letter, we recommend composing it in a text editing software and then pasting it into the application portal or uploading it as a separate file. Your cover letter should be set up just as it would be if you were submitting it using some other channel; it does not need to be formatted as a letter.

Tips and tricks when applying online

- The quality and scope of different online application portals varies widely. We recommend having a look through the portal before you begin filling anything in, to give yourself a sense of how the portal is set up. Investigate what kinds of file formats are accepted for uploads, and

check whether you need to complete the application within a certain amount of time.

- Be sure to set aside plenty of time for filling in relevant information. If possible, save as you go.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to expand on what you studied and the experiences you've had.
- Have the following items ready to go: the text of your cover letter, your CV ready to be uploaded (if possible), and scanned copies of transcripts and other relevant documents. Make sure that your files are not too large and that they are scanned as separate files.
- Assess whether you can re-use a CV you entered in connection with an earlier application, if applying via the same electronic portal (WebCruiter, for example). Edit your CV as needed to ensure that it is tailored to your current application.
- If possible, preview how your CV will appear to the person reading it.
- Print out a copy of your application if given the option to do so; this will prove handy if you get called in for an interview.

JANE JOBSEEKER

Kingsgå Studentby, 0683 Oslo
Date of birth: January 30th, 1991 (optional) 1
Country of birth: Great Britain
Marital status: (optional)
Telephone number: 123 45 678
E-mail: jane@janeil.com

(Optional)
Select a recent, professional photo

EDUCATION

mm.yy – present **Master of Science in Mathematics** 2 University of Oslo
Applied Linear Algebra & Numerical Methods, Scientific Computing and Numerical Analysis of Boundary Value Problems. Master thesis: "Comparison of boundary element methods for linear second order inhomogeneous partial differential equations" (inspected graduate: mm.yy)

mm.yy – mm.yy **Bachelor of Science** University of Leeds
Mathematics and Finance, Modelling of Insurance Markets, Accounting and applied economics, Business Finance. Bachelor thesis on currency fluctuation.

mm.yy – mm.yy **A-levels** St. Mungin School Leeds
Further mathematics (A), computer science (C), physics (A) 4

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE 5

mm.yy – present **Scientific Assistant** University of Oslo
For Prof. Smart Smartest at the Faculty of Mathematics. Gathering information, working with statistics and other administrative duties. Part time job.

mm.yy – mm.yy **Marketing Assistant** Sainsbury, Leeds
Coordinating a research project team looking at customer satisfaction. Full time job.

mm.yy – mm.yy **Host for The International Coffee Hour** University of Leeds
Bringing together international students for social meetings, organizing and planning events. Volunteer work.

OTHER EXPERIENCE 6

mm.yy – mm.yy **Saleswoman** Sainsbury, Leeds
Sales and consulting. Assisting in meetings with suppliers. Part time job.

mm.yy – mm.yy **Kitchen Assistant** Elaine's Café, Leeds
Assisting the chef, doing the dishes, serving and attending the guests.

mm.yy – mm.yy **Travelling in Latin-America and Asia** 7

mm.yy – mm.yy **Miscellaneous part time and summer jobs** Leeds
Newspaper delivery, gardening, Check-Out Operator, Switchboard Operator 8

LANGUAGE SKILLS 9

- **English:** Excellent skills, both written and spoken (mother tongue)
- **Norwegian:** basic understanding both written and oral, have taken classes at UIC, attend classes at Folleuniversitetet and planning to take test i norsk høyere nivå "Bergenstesten" in December
- **Spanish:** Conversational

IT-SKILLS 10

- Experienced user with common tools like Outlook, Word, Powerpoint, Excel
- SPSS
- Photoshop

INTERESTS 11

- Refugee support at the British Red Cross
- Travelling (visiting historic sites)
- Mountain climbing and bicycling

REFERENCES

12

- Prof. Smart Smartest, University of Oslo, phone number +47 22 34 56 87
- Ole Nord, Supervisor, University of Oslo Tel: + 47 22 85 50 50,
- Elaine Simons, Owner of Elaine's Café Tel: +4 113 223 5859,

Putting together your CV: some practical tips

Your CV should be easy to read, well organized and carefully put-together. Use formatting when necessary to draw attention to particular items. And remember to be consistent when using headings and margins.

- 1 Make sure that your personal information is accurate. Whether or not you include a photo is up to you.
- 2 Refer to your degree/program/field of study by its correct name. If you have not yet finished your degree, be sure to indicate this. Provide additional information about your education when appropriate, but avoid course codes and acronyms. Be sure to include larger projects and presentations, time you spent studying abroad, and any academic distinctions.
- 3 Be neither too detailed nor too vague. Use the correct date format: "from month/year" and "to month/year."
- 4 Eliminate items from your CV that are furthest away from the present if you run low on space; high school should be the first to go.
- 5 Display relevant experience prominently and supplement with examples and additional information. Focus on duties, responsibilities, and results. Use the name of your position as the heading, not your employer's name.
- 6 Provide additional information under "Other Experience," but in somewhat less detail than under "Relevant Experience."
- 7 Include travel, leaves of absence, etc. to account for periods of time when you were not working or studying.
- 8 Group less relevant jobs and other experiences (especially those further removed from the present day) together under a single heading.
- 9 When assessing your language proficiency, differentiate between speaking, writing, and reading ability. If you claim to be fluent, you should be able to conduct an interview in that language.
- 10 Include any special computer or programming skills you might have.
- 11 Interests and hobbies can be omitted if you are short on space, but can be useful as a way of showing what kind of person you are outside of work and school.
- 12 Provide two to four references

The cover letter: your chance to make the sale

The function of the cover letter is to land you an interview. So write yours in a way that makes the person reading it want to meet you!

Many people find writing a cover letter to be a strange and challenging exercise. At the same time, if you have done background research as laid out above, writing a cover letter will not necessarily be that difficult. You know quite a bit at this point about the company or organization, the industry in which it is situated, and the position being advertised—background knowledge that should provide direction and focus to your cover letter. The challenge for you is to demonstrate how your skills set and background will enable you to meet the needs of the position.

Looking ahead

One classic beginner's mistake is to treat the cover letter as an extended self-introduction. This is what your CV is for; you should use the cover letter to draw a sketch of how you would perform if offered the position. In other words, do not treat the cover letter as a reiteration of information contained in your CV; instead, expand on key elements of your CV and demonstrate that your experience makes you a good match for this position specifically. It goes without saying that you will not get very far if you send the same cover letter to employer after employer. One position might call for a cover letter where you highlight your experience and personal attributes, while in another cover letter you decide to emphasize your educational background and academic achievements.

Structure and content

One of the main challenges of the

cover letter is making smart use of the limited space you have; you should strive to be concise, while at the same time not being overly general. We recommend mapping out your cover letter sentence-by-sentence, and avoiding introducing more than one subject or argument at a time.

Begin your cover letter by specifying which position you are applying for and referring to where you saw it advertised. You should then immediately proceed to one of the central questions your cover letter must address: why are you applying for this particular job with this company or organization? If you succeed in providing a satisfactory answer to this question, while at the same time drawing attention to the most relevant aspects of your background, you will pique the employer's interest and compel him or her to continue reading. Be sure that your educational background makes an appearance early on in the cover letter as well.

In the paragraphs that follow, you should elaborate on how you would draw on your educational background and work experience to carry out the duties associated with the position. Draw explicit links between your experience and the demands of the position; you should not expect that the person reading your application will draw these links by him- or herself. At the same time, this is your chance to demonstrate to the employer that you have familiarized yourself with the organization you are applying to work for, and that you have a clear understanding of the position.

In your concluding paragraph, con-

sider highlighting some of your personal qualities that you believe make you the right person for the job. One way of doing this is by providing examples of the kind of colleague you are, for example by citing former colleagues' or supervisors' descriptions of what it was like working with you. Citing specific examples rather than introducing a long list of adjectives that you think describe you will come across as more convincing to the person reading your application.

Dot your i's and cross your t's

It can be challenging to objectively assess the quality of your own cover letter, especially when you've just finished writing it. For this reason, we recommend asking someone else to read over your cover letter and give you feedback relating to content, wording and structure. You are welcome to take advantage of Career Services' drop-in service, or you can ask someone you know. At a minimum, you should set aside the draft you have written before looking it over again a few days later. On the following page, you will find a checklist you can use as you review your cover letter one last time before sending it off.

Finally, if you are submitting your application using an online application portal, be sure to compose your cover letter in a text editing software before pasting it into the application portal. Many online portals lack a save function and you risk having your session time out and losing all your work if you compose your cover letter directly in the application portal.



12 mistakes to avoid

1. Your cover letter is too long

Employers often spend very little time reading cover letters the first time around. For this reason, it is essential that yours is not more than a page in length.

2. It is unclear why you are the one for the job

Your cover letter should make it clear to the employer what makes you specifically the right match for the position. You should be explicit about how you can apply your education and work experience to the position you're applying for. The employer has a set of needs—you have something to offer in return. Remember that part-time jobs, elected positions, and volunteer work may have also given you skills that you can draw on in your new job.

3. Your motivation is unclear

You appear to be qualified for the job—but why do you want it? Saying that you think the position sounds interesting and exciting tells the employer very little. Before starting to write, ask yourself a few questions: why do I want to work for this company or organization in particular? What kind of work tasks, responsibilities and areas of focus would motivate me to go to work every day? Employers are looking for applicants who seem genuinely motivated to carry out the duties associated with the position, and who want to work for them and them alone.

4. Your motivation comes across as self-serving

You place too much emphasis on what you would get out of the job. You should frame your motivation in a way that convinces the employer that you are excited to take on the duties associated with the position and deliver results for the company or organization. Place more emphasis on how motivated you are to contribute than on what benefits you would reap by getting the position.

5. The cover letter seems mass-produced

Every single cover letter has to be tailored to the position you're applying for. You can of course use the same wording or even reproduce paragraphs in multiple cover letters, but if the text comes across as generic or mass-produced, there

is little chance that it will leave much of an impression on the employer.

6. It contains too many irrelevant details

Detailed information about course codes, credits and dates make your cover letter hard to read. Such details belong in your CV—not in your cover letter.

7. Your writing style sends the wrong message

Assess who your audience is. An application to a government ministry should be written in a different style than an application to an advertising agency. A good place to start when weighing what writing style to adopt is the organization's website and any interviews or public statements they have given in the media.

8. Your cover letter lacks organization

Avoid jumping around from subject to subject. Focus on addressing one issue at a time.

9. You use too many technical terms

Using some technical or specialized terms in your cover letter can work to your advantage. At the same time, keep in mind that the person reading your application may not be as familiar as you are with the terminology used in your area of specialization. Avoid using language that comes across as overly academic as well.

10. Your cover letter resembles a list

Replying to the job listing point for point will give the reader the impression that you are reciting answers from a list. This makes your cover letter a chore to read, and you miss out on the opportunity to express yourself in an original way and give the employer a glimpse of who you are.

11. You call attention to your own shortcomings

It is the employer's job to determine whether or not you are qualified for the position. Focus, then, on what you have to offer—not on your shortcomings. Phrases like "unfortunately, I don't have" or "I hope that you will still consider me" do not belong in your cover letter.

12. Avoid clichés

Many people conclude their cover letters with a list of attributes that they think describe them—'flexible', 'conscientious', 'hardworking', and 'a positive attitude' are some of the most frequently used. Our advice is that you only mention attributes that are relevant for the position, and that you offer concrete examples. That way, the person reading your application will be more likely to believe that you actually possess these qualities.

Which documents should I bring?

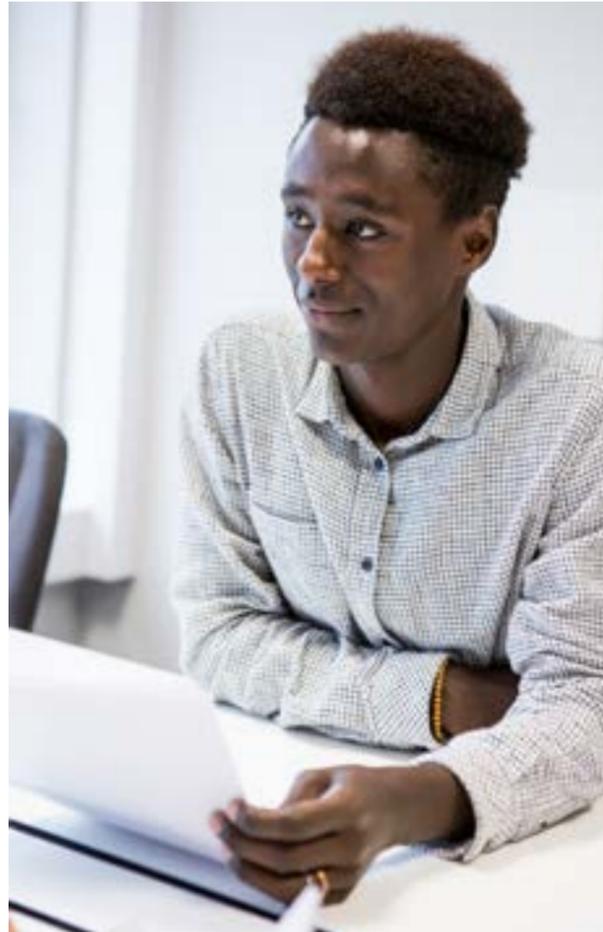
More and more employers ask applicants to include only their CV and cover letter when they submit their application. These employers then expect you to bring supplementary documents with you to the interview. Employers' preferences vary, however, so you should make sure to ask the employer what he or she prefers if you are in any doubt. To be on the safe side, we recommend bringing a folder with original documents along with copies to the interview so that the employer can look them over side-by-side. It is also a good idea to scan your documents ahead of time in case the employer prefers that you send them electronically. Scan each document separately, as this will make it easier to select the documents that are relevant for the position you are applying for; it is important that you avoid inundating an employer with documents he or she did not ask for.

Which documents should I include?

Different employers have different expectations as to which supplementary documents you should submit. As emphasized above, always ask the employer if you are in doubt about which documents he or she wants to see. Notwithstanding employer preferences, here are some ground rules to help you out:

TRANSCRIPTS: Include transcripts from all the institutions of higher education where you have taken courses. There is no need to include transcript supplements unless you suspect that the employer may not be familiar with your degree program or the grading system with which it operates. If any of your transcripts are in languages other than Norwegian or English, you should provide translated versions of them.

CERTIFICATES AND OTHER ITEMS: Do as the employer asks in the job listing. It is no longer as common to attach certificates or other documentation (course certificates, other certificates, letters of recommendation) as part of the original application as it used to be. You can bring these documents with you to the interview. If the employer asks for these to be submitted together with the application, select those documents that are most relevant for the position you are applying for.



Do I need to provide certified copies?

The answer is generally no. Attaching certified copies was more common before the application process became electronic. The main reason for this change is that it is impossible for a notary to know whether the original is authentic or not. For this reason, only an educational institution can certify that you were a student at that university or college. If an employer asks you to certify your student status, he or she may contact the University of Oslo at studentopplysning@uio.no.

If, however, you do need certified copies, most copy centers offer this service. Some faculties at UiO also provide this service to their students.

Your references: your best advocates

When choosing references, you should select someone who knows you from a work or academic setting, and with whom you have a good, but not overly personal, relationship. At least one of your references should be a former boss or supervisor. Apart from this, you can opt for an academic advisor, a colleague, a co-worker, someone you sat on the board of an organization with, or someone else altogether. It is not a good idea to ask friends or family members to serve as your reference.

When thinking about who would make a good reference, consider choosing someone who is well-spoken, conscious of what it means to act as a reference, and who you know will speak highly of you. You should provide at least two, but no more than four references. While it makes no difference if the reference has moved on to a different position, you should select someone who you worked with relatively recently. Likewise, it makes no difference if the job you are applying for is unlike the one you had at the time. The most important thing is that the reference knows what kind of person you are.

Remember to ask the people you settle on before listing them as references. Moreover, be sure to tell your references what kinds of jobs you are applying for and how you are approaching your applications.

When including references in your CV, you should provide phone numbers at which they can be reached, as well as information about their position in the organization as it related to you. If, for example, you include Ola Hansen as a reference, you will need to indicate that he was your supervisor when you worked at Subway three years ago.

When will your references be contacted?

It is not common for references to be contacted prior to an interview. With this in mind, if there is anything you feel the need to comment on in relation to a reference, you can do so at the interview. In most cases the employer wants to speak with your most recent or current manager. If you would prefer not to inform your current manager that you have applied for another job until it is absolutely necessary, you should say so, and request that he or she be contacted only if you are deemed a very strong candidate for the position. Some employers may also ask you for a reference not listed on your CV. In view of this possibility, we suggest that you have an additional reference in mind just in case. If you have a good reason for doing so, you can decline to list your references on your CV. In this case, write "References available on request" at the bottom of your CV, and be prepared to furnish references if and when you are called into an interview.



Are you in it to win it?

You are out shopping and suddenly your phone rings: "Can you come to our office for an interview tomorrow morning at eleven?"

You say yes, of course, but as soon as you hang up, you get butterflies in your stomach. Your cover letter and CV have done the job, and it's now time to take on the next challenge: the final round of the recruitment process. Now it's up to you to show them what kind of person you are and what you are capable of, and convince them that you are truly motivated to land this position. The key to turning in a winning performance lies in preparation.

The interview setting

The most common type of interview is a structured interview, in which all the candidates who have been called in are asked more or less the same questions. Most interviews begin with the employer describing the company or organization and briefly discussing the duties associated with the position. You will generally then be asked to introduce yourself before the employer begins asking you a series of questions. Normally, you will also have the chance to ask questions at the end of the interview. As a general rule, there will be two to four people in the room with you, each of whom has a different role: one who conducts the interview, one who is merely observing, and so on. The length of the interview can vary somewhat, but is generally about an hour long.

It is not at all uncommon to feel like the underdog in an interview setting. It is important to keep in mind, however, that an interview is fundamentally a conversation between two equal parties: one who is "buying" labor and one who is "selling." The employer will have his or her agenda, and you should keep your own agenda in mind too. Focus as much

as possible on yourself, what interests you about the position, and the contributions you think you could make to the organization, instead of trying to guess what kinds of answers the interviewer is looking for. Feedback we have gotten from employers suggests that many



recent graduates have a tendency to show up "cap in hand" to an interview, and that they wish recent graduates were more self-confident and more assertive about their strengths on the job market.

Preparing for the interview

Whether you knock their socks off during the interview or fall short hinges in large part on one factor: how well prepared you are, both mentally and for the kinds of questions and topics you will be asked to address in the interview.

Start this process by bringing yourself back to the fundamentals: why did you

apply for this job, and what do you have to offer this company or organization? We recommend breaking down your qualifications into individual components; this will help clarify what kinds of skills you bring to the table and how they relate to the position you're applying for.

Remember that an employer is interested in hearing about the relevant experience you have had in previous jobs, in the classroom, and in your voluntary and free-time pursuits. As a recent graduate, moreover, you should be able to clearly explain your academic training, while making sure to link what you have learned with the needs of the company or organization. By making use of good, illustrative examples rather than platitudes, you will make it easier for the employer to remember you, while also drawing a clearer picture of who you are and what your qualifications are.

Ask good questions

As part of your preparations, be sure to re-acquaint yourself with the company or organization you will be interviewing with, as well as the field or industry in which they operate (more on this subject in the article "Knowledge is Power"). If indeed you conducted extensive background research before submitting your application, now is the time to pull out the notes you took then and begin thinking through possible questions you could ask during the interview. This represents the perfect opportunity for you to learn more about the company or organization's culture, and about the specific duties associated with the position—all useful insights to have when it comes time for you to decide whether you really want to work there or not.

Final thoughts

Before you step into the lion's den, we recommend asking a friend, or the Career Services, to play the part of the employer and to take you through a practice interview that lasts at least twenty minutes. This will help you ease into the interview setting, practice talking about your background and

The Ten Commandments of the job interview

1. Save a copy of the job listing

Weeks can go by from the time you submit your application until you get called in to an interview. The listing may no longer be online then, and you will be glad you saved a copy that you can use to help you prepare.

2. Take care of the practical stuff ahead of time

Plan your interview outfit the day before. Your outfit should be semi-formal and something you feel comfortable wearing, unless of course there is a dress code at this particular workplace. Investigate how long it will take you to get to the interview site, and leave extra time to account for any delays or unforeseen events. Present yourself at the reception approximately 10 minutes before your interview is set to begin.

3. Take comfort in the fact that you've prepared

If you're well prepared, you'll come across as calm and more articulate during your interview. Scan the notes you took when you were conducting your background research and run through some common interview questions in your head. Make sure you have prepared a well-formulated introduction to who you are and what your qualifications are, and be prepared to elaborate on things you wrote in your application and account for any gaps in your CV.

4. Be an active participant

Show initiative and demonstrate that you are flexible during the interview. Feel free to ask questions, and make sure that you get your ideas across, even if you aren't asked to share them explicitly. Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question, but never interrupt the person interviewing you. Maintain good eye contact and keep in mind what kind of message your body language is sending.

5. Let your enthusiasm show

All employers value colleagues who want to do a good job, and who are genuinely passionate about their work and the field or industry in which they work. Explain why the position appeals to you, drawing on things like your field of study, your hobbies or your work as a volunteer to make your case.

qualifications, and get feedback on the way you express and carry yourself. Our last piece of advice can't be overstated enough: be yourself, but think through what it means for you to be yourself ahead of time. Believing in yourself and coming across as authentic are two qualities that will take you far in an interview setting, and they tend to be closely intertwined.

6. Show an understanding of your role

Demonstrate that you have understood what your role in the organization will be if offered the job. Important distinctions exist between, for example, a bureaucratic role in an organization and a more political role, or between an administrative and expert role.

7. Present your academic skills

As someone with an academic background, you need to do an extra good job of drawing connections between your studies, your experience and the duties you will be performing if offered the position. Make good use of examples to help your listeners see these connections more clearly, and try to provide evidence of your reasoning skills and your ability to reflect thoughtfully on things during your interview.

8. Know your audience

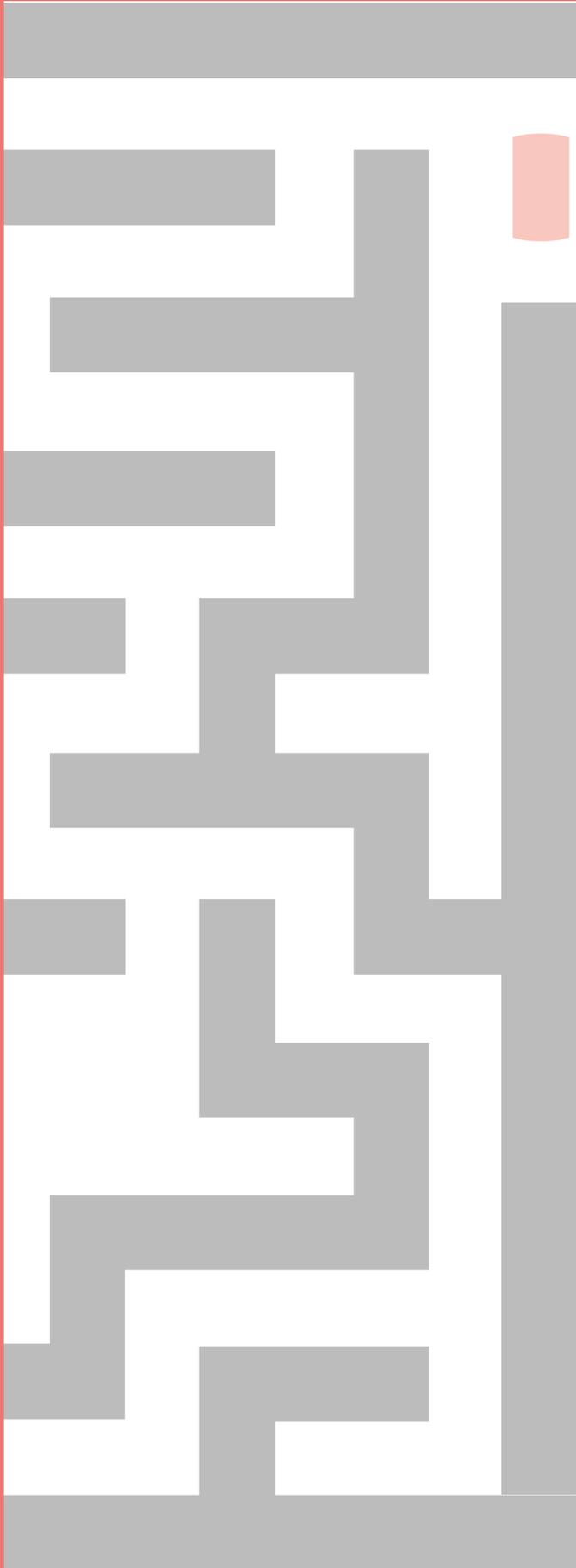
Not all employers are as familiar with technical terms related to a particular field as you may be, and they may know little about what your study program entailed and the grading system at UiO. This means that it's up to you to explain what you have studied in layman's terms.

9. Answer honestly, but strategically

You are almost certain to be asked at least one tricky question over the course of the interview, often something along the lines of "what are your biggest shortcomings?". Answer truthfully and offer something that you think is relevant in the context of this position, while at the same time being careful not to say too much. Treat this as an opportunity to demonstrate self-awareness; finish this answer by telling your listeners how you negotiate these shortcomings and what you are doing to improve them.

10. More than just a conversation

From the moment you walk in the door until the second you leave, you are, in essence, being interviewed. Keep in mind that someone from the organization may be observing you at any moment, and make sure to carry yourself professionally at all times.



CareerServices

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Good luck on your job search!