

# Applying for jobs when you're changing career

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# Here to help you:

- Identify skills from your current/previous career which are relevant to the career you want.
- Articulate your skills effectively in the application process for your new career path.



## **An employer is always looking for a candidate who:**

- Is able to do the job (skills, experience, etc.)
- Is motivated to do the job
- Will fit in to the organisation

# Rationale

**A recruiter is always looking for a candidate who...**

- Is able to do the job (skills, experience, etc.)
- Is motivated to do the job
- Will fit in to the organisation

**Your job in the application process is to convince them of these things!**



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**When looking at an application from a career changer, a recruiter might think...**

- Your skills and experience don't 'fit the mould' of the candidates they usually hire/the previous post-holder
- Your career trajectory doesn't seem logical
- You might not understand how the organisation works

# What's your career change story?

**How have you reached this point in your career journey where you're making a change?**

- Experience (aspects of a previous role, voluntary experience etc.)
- Subject knowledge
- Self-reflection (e.g. learning about your values and skills)
- Personal circumstances

# Crafting a compelling career story

*“You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.” – Steve Jobs*

1. Find the points of connection between you and your listener  
e.g. an interviewer
2. Share your past
3. Introduce the moment (or moments) of transition
4. Highlight the consistencies
5. Invite your listener into your story



# Reframing your differences

Instead of focussing on what you don't have, or have less of compared with other potential candidates focus on what advantages your background offers.

## **Instead of:**

*"I don't have a Computer Science bachelor's degree"*

## **Focus on:**

*"My background in languages using Computer-Aided Translation tools gives me a great understanding of how computer science is applied in the translation industry"*

# TRANSLATING YOUR SKILLS FOR A CAREER CHANGE



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# Example: translating skills from academia to industry

Academic essentials	Skills employers value
Producing a thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Designing and/or managing a research project</li><li>- Collecting data</li><li>- Analysing sources/ texts/ results</li><li>- Self-motivation</li><li>- Creative problem solving</li></ul>
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Verbal communication skills</li><li>- Conveying complex information in an accessible way</li><li>- Engaging audiences</li><li>- Presenting</li></ul>
Writing articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Written communication</li><li>- Reviewing and editing</li></ul>
Dealing with your supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Building professional relationships</li><li>- Negotiating and influencing</li></ul>

# Your turn... translate your skills!

1. Identify something new/different that you will be doing in your target career
2. Identify the skills needed to do this
3. Identify activities in your current/previous role or course where you have used this skill

**Share an example in the chat**

# Translating your skills & experience for career change

## **Events Executive (Education), British Society for Rheumatology**

- Enthusiasm
- Ability to work efficiently on a variety of digital platforms and learn new software packages quickly
- Good time and project co-ordination skills
- Ability to engage with colleagues and collaborators
- Confident in managing stakeholders at all levels and dealing with external contacts
- Ability to see opportunities and challenge convention in order to make improvements to how we deliver education, especially virtually
- Maintain a professional and personable attitude when communicating with colleagues, customers and volunteers



# Translating your skills & experience for career change

## Candidate A

- Degree in Events Management
- Currently works as an events assistant
- Internship in events management whilst studying

## Candidate B

- Degree in Biology
- PGCE
- Currently works as a science teacher



# Candidate A:

I am writing to apply for the position of Events Executive (Education) at the British Society for Rheumatology. I am currently an events assistant at a corporate events company, and I have a degree in events management.

My current role involves working with clients to understand their vision for the event and then working with my manager to find suppliers, create menus, work on running orders and source materials such as décor for the venue. I usually work on events such as conferences and awards ceremonies. I have been complimented by clients on my professionalism and personable manner. I am now seeking the next step in my career and I would welcome the opportunity to bring my extensive knowledge and experience to your organisation.



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# Candidate B:

I am writing to apply for the position of Events Executive (Education) at the British Society for Rheumatology. I currently work as a secondary school teacher, and I am also the Careers Tutor in my school.

Previously the Careers Tutor role simply involved ordering university prospectuses and making them available to students. I challenged this as I recognised the need for students to understand a broader range of options. I took the opportunity to develop the role, working with external contacts and stakeholders such as governors to arrange presentations and trips to inspire students. I have used my strong interpersonal skills to develop and maintain relationships with several local organisations who we work with annually. I also write a blog for our students to access after each event. Seeing the enjoyment that the students get from these events and the positive feedback from parents has encouraged me to make a transition into a full-time events role.



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# Candidate B continued:

This is an additional duty I take on beyond my teaching, so I regularly balance organising these events alongside planning lessons, marking homework etc, demonstrating excellent time and project coordination skills. Working as a teacher during the pandemic, I have quickly adapted my teaching practice to support learners online, so I am confident in my ability to learn new software packages quickly.

This role will combine my experience in education with my passion for organising events.



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**Look at the example cover letter. Does the candidate convince you that they...**

- Are able to do the job (skills, experience, etc.)
- Are motivated to do the job
- Will fit in to the organisation





# WRITING A CV FOR A CAREER CHANGE



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# Different types of CVs

## Chronological

Personal Details  
Personal Profile  
Education  
Relevant Experience  
Skills  
Positions of Responsibility  
Awards and Achievements  
Interests

## Skills-based

Personal Details  
Personal Profile  
Key Skills  
Employment history  
Education  
Interests

## Academic

Personal Details  
Education  
Research Experience &  
Interests  
Relevant Research Skills  
Academic Awards  
Conferences & Presentations  
Publications  
Relevant training  
Memberships



# Personal profile

Highly motivated, hard-working Computer Science student with strong communication and organisation skills developed through 10 years experience teaching maths in secondary schools.

**Vs.**

Aspiring software engineer with strong communication and project-management skills and proficiency in C++ and Java, seeking a new career in the tech industry on completion of my MSc in Computer Science.

## Research Experience

**PhD Classics**

**University of Birmingham**

**2019-2023**

**Thesis title: Cultural memory and imagination: dreams and dreaming in the Roman Empire 31 BC – AD 200**

My research thesis takes Assmann's theory of cultural memory and applies it to an exploration of conceptualisations of dreams and dreaming in the early Roman Empire (31 BC – AD 200). Background information on dreams in different cultures, especially those closest to Rome (the ancient Near East, Egypt and Greece) is provided, and dream reports in Greco-Roman historical and imaginative literature are analysed. The thesis for the first time applies the newly developed concept of cultural imagination to the examination of dreams and dream reports in Greco-Roman literature.



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**Compare this with...**

## Relevant experience

**Doctoral Researcher – Department of Classics  
University of Birmingham**

**September 2019- October 2023**

- Produced an original 80,000-word thesis and article for peer-reviewed academic journal demonstrating exceptional command of written English
- Developed sound understanding of peer review process, regularly reviewing manuscripts for student-led journal *Rosetta*. Contributed to three issues being released on-time
- Co-edited volume of essays published by Exeter University Press; liaised with academic authors from four countries to meet tight two-month manuscript deadline
- Led seminars for undergraduates and compiled resource lists, developing understanding of Higher Education environment and the resource needs of HE students



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# Giving evidence of your skills

- Acted as a student rep on SSF
- Regularly worked in a team with other reps

Vs.

- Represented the voice of fellow students in student-staff forums; worked with 2 colleagues to successfully negotiate additional library resources for 200+ peers



# Giving evidence of your skills

- Data analysis & data visualisation

Vs.

- Cleaned and visualised data for 1 million water level measurements over a 2-year period
- Designed & built interactive visualisations of water level measurements to identify key indicators of wetland health
- Informed smarter decision making about wetland restoration practices



# Career change CV tips

- Avoid jargon or acronyms associated with your current/previous career
- Use a personal profile to highlight your relevant skills and experience
- When describing your previous experiences, around 4-5 bullet points for each focussed on relevant skills/achievements is enough
- Lots of experience? You don't have to include it all
- Choose a format that best showcases your experience!





# Tips for career changers

- Look at job descriptions – What are they looking for? What evidence can you provide? Are there any gaps you need to address?
- Try some work shadowing or volunteering before you take the leap... and add it to your CV!
- Build a network in the sector you want to move into



# Further support

- Online CV checker
- E-guidance: Careersenquiries@contacts.bham.ac.uk
- Student Circus – country-specific CV ‘profiles’
- One-to-one support



# Further resources

- <https://www.careershifters.org/>
- <https://instituteofyou.org/personal-business-model-canvas/>
- <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/dubai/student/careers/explore-your-career-options/career-change.aspx>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/switching-your-career/switching-your-career?autoplay=true&resume=false&u=54776729>





# International Careers Support

## **Events with employers and careers advisers:**

- What UK employers are looking for
- Applying for jobs in the UK

## **Online resources including:**

- Student Circus for international job search
- 'Pathway' courses on Careers Connect:
  - Returning to your home country
  - Guide to the UK labour market



**Visit our International  
Careers page to find out  
more!**

URL: [www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/pgr](http://www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/pgr)

Email: [careersenquiries@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:careersenquiries@contacts.bham.ac.uk)



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