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50+ WORKS

A Guide for Older Jobseekers

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Foreword

50+ Works: A Guide for Older Jobseekers is a valuable and useful resource, for older workers as well as for jobseekers of any age. It offers clear information that neatly signposts and summarises the opportunities which people can take, maximising their potential to re-enter the workforce. I hope that older jobseekers, in particular, are able to make use of it, as they have a great deal to offer employers, including experience, maturity and knowledge.

The Rt Hon Steve Webb MP
Minister of State for Pensions

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Age UK Training	Tomorrow's People Plymouth
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Introduction

In 2010 TAEN – The Age and Employment Network was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions to produce 50+ Works, an online guide for employment advisers supporting 50+ jobseekers. 50+ Works, which continues to be updated with the support of the European Social Fund, is a product of extensive research of the barriers older jobseekers face, the modern job market and the techniques to best navigate it. Although 50+ Works is not targeted at individual jobseekers, it contains a wealth of information that they have found useful. We therefore decided to produce a guide for older jobseekers drawing principally on the relevant content from 50+ Works.

Increases in life expectancy mean that on average both men and women may expect to live well beyond their retirement age. In many cases, people are working for longer and past state pension age, out of choice or financial need.

There is a tendency to stereotype different age groups and older and younger workers may suffer from stereotypical views more than others. The over-50s are not a homogeneous group and, similarly, 50+ jobseekers differ from one another. Many of you may have held a steady job before recent redundancy or retirement. Others may have been on state benefits, experiencing short and longer term unemployment. Each of you will have different life experiences, different skills and different views and can be no more summed up in a few phrases than any other age group.

Despite this, research has shown that different age groups typically face different barriers and there are some common features shared by 50+ jobseekers. Many people aged 50+ find themselves part of the ‘sandwich generation’ – caring for ageing parents and supporting their children, which can have an impact on their ability to work. Others find that a lack of today’s qualifications can impede their job hunt, despite having good skills. Others, who would be happy to make a sideways move or take a less demanding and less well paid job, are often told they are too experienced or over-qualified.

Included in this Guide are case studies derived from the experience of employment advisers and individual jobseekers. These provide valuable insight into strategies that have proven successful in helping people get back into work. Whether you are looking for a part-time job, a change in career, or options for self-employment, we hope that the information and tips in this Guide will help you find work. But because 50+ jobseekers differ, there will be some sections, advice and information that do not apply to you.



We hope that the information and tips in this Guide will help you find work.

The Modern Job Market

There have been rapid changes in recruitment techniques in recent years. If you haven't had to look for work for many years, you may not be aware of how much it has changed. While it may seem daunting at first, understanding modern recruitment techniques is your first step to finding a new job.

One of the major changes in the recruitment process is that there are more places where jobs are advertised or listed. You may now find many of them online. There are also likely to be many more candidates chasing each job, so in order to stand out from the crowd you need to match your skills as closely as possible with those outlined in the job description.

The essential part of this is a carefully constructed application. Many recruiters now use software programs to sort applications automatically. These programs match the closeness of applications with the employer's requirements on a scoring basis. Because of this, it is crucial for you to reflect the same language in your application as that used by the recruiter in the job advertisement.

A comprehensive case study (Appendix) describes how one 53 year old, who had not applied for a job in eight years, adapted to modern recruitment techniques and found a job within three months of being made redundant.

Remember that it may be a long process from the time an application is submitted to the point that any human being gets to see it. It is also common today not to receive a response or an acknowledgement when your application has been unsuccessful. This can be very frustrating and is experienced by jobseekers of all ages.

Methods of Finding a Job in Today's Job Market

Before you start your job search, it is important to have a good understanding of the job market. Understanding the A to D of Self-Marketing will not only help you understand today's job market but will also teach you the necessary steps to getting a job.

A to D of Self-Marketing

Both A and B can be grouped as 'jobs looking for people'. Larger organisations generally use this method of filling vacancies. It is important to remember that because recruiters have specified what they are looking for, they often have an 'ideal' candidate already in mind.

A (Adverts): You can find a job advertisement on the web, in a newspaper or magazine, hear it on the radio, or see a flyer posted in a public area. If your skills and experiences match up with the job description, making an application may lead to a job offer.

B (Bureaus): A recruitment agency, the Jobcentre, or other organisations working in employment can put forward your name and details for any job vacancies. Interviews, etc, follow.

In order to find work, you can try posting your CV onto a job board such as [Monster](#), where companies can search for potential employees. A trick in successfully being 'found' by an employer is to update or refresh your CV regularly. This can consist of simply changing a single word in your CV one week, changing it back to the original word the next week, and repeating the process. This will register your CV as 'new' on the site, which can be helpful as some companies only look for new CVs.

Top Tip

Remember the job market works in various ways, and knowing how it works can help you understand how to engage in a more effective job search.

Both C and D can be grouped as '**people looking for jobs**'. In most cases, the job is based around the person and may even be moulded to fit more appropriately the candidate's particular skills and experiences.

C (Contacts): A friend, acquaintance, or anyone else that you have been networking with puts you in touch with someone who may have a job for you or may be in need of someone with your skills and background.

Contacts and networking can be extremely useful when looking for a job, especially if you are looking for a position in the 'hidden job market', where jobs may never be advertised or placed with a recruitment agency. Your network can become one of your main supports.

Studies in the past have shown that at least 25 per cent of positions, in any sector or at any level, are obtained through contacts. A personal network can often be a hidden resource for jobseekers, and while they may take a bit of time to develop, they often prove very beneficial.

Here are some suggestions on where to begin:

- It is easy to fall into a trap of believing you have a small personal network, but think of all of the people you have met through different areas of your life. This includes friends and colleagues from school, college, your first job, your second job, etc. Also, remember relatives, neighbours, sports club members, and contacts you have made at social events and courses you have attended. With a little effort, re-establishing contact with them might lead to a job opportunity. A good place to search for these people is [LinkedIn](#), a social networking site for people in professional occupations.
- While it might have been many years since you last saw a contact, it is likely that they will be just as happy to hear from you as you would have been to receive a surprise call from them.
- What you are after from your contacts is not a job, but instead help, advice, and suggestions. Often, if you get a job through a contact, it will be through someone whom that contact introduces you to, and sometimes even further down the line.
- Think about the 'hooks' you might use when phoning up a contact. These could be anything from "I was looking at some old photographs of when we were all together at..." to "I'm making a career change and thought I'd give you a call because you always seemed to know someone who could help."

You might be surprised to find out how successful developing your personal contact network might be. James, a jobseeker in his early 50s, lost his job as Head of Logistics and Supply Chain at the end of the year. Initially, James was not too concerned about finding a job as he was receiving redundancy insurance. But nine months later he began getting a bit desperate. After joining a job club he was encouraged to make use of his wide range of contacts with the particular aim of finding reasons to keep in touch. James decided to send Christmas cards to his contacts as a way of keeping in touch, which led to a meeting in February and a job offer in April.

D (Direct): You identify an organisation, or even a group of organisations, such as local companies, who might be able to use your skills and experience, and make contact with them. This is sometimes called a 'speculative' approach, and as a result you may get a 'meeting' that could lead to a job interview.

Researching the organisations you want to contact is an important aspect of direct approaches, as targeted job applications have a greater chance of success in today's job market. The following case study shows how one jobseeker found work using a targeted approach.

Case Study: Direct Approaches

Donald, aged 52, had held senior marketing positions but after being made redundant he attempted to get a job through agencies he had worked with successfully in the past. However, while Donald had a strong senior marketing CV, he still had trouble getting interviews.

Donald had initially rejected trying direct approaches, but after learning about using general and targeted approaches he decided to try the method. At this point, he began researching specific markets on the internet. He sent 14 direct approach letters, six of which were very specific, and had a fantastic response with five of the six companies contacting him. One of them offered him a job which he accepted.

Donald attributed his success to the extensive research that he carried out on the internet, where he spent time identifying companies that he was interested in working for. Initially, he sent a letter to a named executive, normally the chief executive, but also followed up all his approaches on the phone, asking for a short meeting.

While a direct approach is not guaranteed to be effective, it is still one well worth taking. It is possible even to turn your direct approaches into contacts by the process outlined below.

The Process

- **Research companies you can approach.** If seeking hourly-paid/contract work, use your local knowledge to visit companies to see if they have any work, or are likely to in the future. You could also use the [Kompass Business Directory](#) (most large libraries have copies) or the web to seek out the companies that offer the service or sell the product in which you have experience.
- After this, **research the individual organisation** to find out who would be the best person to write to. Ideally, this would be the person to whom you would report.
- **Write a letter** to the person in the company that you have identified, along the lines of: “I notice that ... and this is an area in which I have specific experience. At XXX... I would value the chance to meet you and discuss this in more detail, if you feel it could be of help to you.” Keep the letter brief, and enclose a short CV if relevant. Your CV should support the letter fully, and be tailored to the circumstances.
- The company may phone you to fix a meeting, but if not, you must **follow up the approach** asking to speak to the person to whom you wrote. You must then talk with whoever deals with the phone-call, because you are unlikely to get through to the senior person you wrote to. You might try something such as: “I wondered if my letter might have been passed on to someone else?” You should then try and develop a conversation from there, finding out if there is anyone else you might speak to or whether the situation might change.
- You should **get the name of the person you are speaking to**: “Thank you, you’ve been most helpful. May I just ask who I have been speaking to?” because he or she is now a new contact you can use, and next time you can phone and use their name rather than write.

Employment can be found through each of the above four options. However, as each one is different you might want to try out another method if one is not working. For example, if you’re having trouble finding work by responding to advertisements, look into registering with an agency that can assist you in your job search.

Identifying Your Transferable Skills

Potential employers will want you to establish your key competencies throughout the job application process. They will use the following identification methods: your response to a job advertisement (letter or application form), your CV and your job interview. Sometimes, working for many years in the same sector or job role makes it easy to forget about all that you know or can do. You may have even been out of the workforce for some time and are unsure about what you are capable of.

Take Miriam for example, who, after 44 years' service as a midwife in the NHS, decided that the time was right to retire. She first took an extended break to visit family and friends in the Caribbean. Then four years later, back in the UK, she started thinking about what she wanted to do next with her life. She had just had her 66th birthday, and returning to her previous occupation was out of the question. But, Miriam felt she still had something to contribute to society and considered looking for a less stressful job.

Miriam noticed an advertisement in a magazine that described providing personalised support to older people. She immediately booked an appointment with a careers adviser. During her first meeting it became apparent that she had a wide range of skills and experiences to offer. Miriam realised that being 66 and in good health, she wanted to commit to a serious new role.

Because of Miriam's extensive experience in healthcare, work in the health and social care sector seemed to be a good use of her skills. A short time later, she came across an advertisement for a long-term carer who would open their home to a vulnerable adult who would otherwise have to live in a residential care home. Miriam felt that her long career with the NHS had equipped her with the right balance of skills for such a job.

Once committed, Miriam proceeded with comprehensive screening to ensure she was a suitable host for a vulnerable adult. The support of a career adviser, coupled with her realisation that she had transferrable skills, helped her compile a successful job application which opened the doors to a new career as a long-term carer in later life.

Take time to think about the skills that you acquired both in past working roles and also outside of work, such as when dealing with family issues or aspects of your social life or when pursuing hobbies and interests. Even if you have been out of the workplace for a long time, it is likely that you still have been using many skills that are transferable to other contexts. For example, if you have been caring for a family member, you have probably had to be patient, multi-task, and communicate effectively.

Some further examples of these might be:

- Overseeing money and budgets, managing your time, prioritising tasks, and problem solving. You might use these in your family and social life.
- Speaking to people you are unfamiliar with, organising a meeting or planning an event. These might be an aspect of pursuing your hobbies or interests.

There are many helpful guides in circulation which can help you identify and organise your transferable skills. One such popular guide is the [Skills Assessment Tool for Older Workers](#), compiled by Fairplay for Older Workers.

Your next step should be to identify words in job specifications and advertisements which indicate that a particular skill is a requirement of the role. For example, job specifications

Top Tip

If you have been out of paid work for a while, in order to successfully re-enter the job market you need to identify which highly employable skills you have gained that can be transferred to a variety of contexts. It is also important to reflect on the skills that you would like to develop further.

that require presentation skills, listening skills, customer service, people management, negotiation skills and/or written skills will be looking for competency in 'communication skills'. Similarly, an advertisement using words such as planning skills, resource management, time management and/or tight deadlines will be looking for competency in 'organising'.

Your Next Job: Thinking about Your Priorities

Everyone has preferences about what they wish to do and how they want to work, but you might never have organised these in a formal way. Doing so can help you decide what is important to you when deciding on your next job. Your priorities can include anything from working as part of a team to being able to work flexible hours.

Additionally, you'll need to decide on the level of commitment you want to make. Are you looking for paid work with a contract of employment, or are you more interested in self-employment?

Once you are clearer about the sort of role you are looking for, the skills you already have, and the skills you need to develop to get where you want to be, you can begin matching your skills to jobs that might suit you. Throughout this process you might find it helpful to develop some sort of 'personal action plan' so that you can note the actions that you wish to take to get where you need to be. For example, do you need to improve and/or gain any new skills to get where you want to be? You might also need to do other things, such as put together a CV or register with a job agency. In setting goals such as these you can help keep yourself on track to finding a job, as well as mark your progress throughout the process.

Top Tip

There are many online career development tools available which you may find useful in your search. An easy way to access the tools is to use an internet search engine and type in 'career development tools'.

The Application Process

This section covers the whole application process: completing an application form, compiling your CV, writing a covering letter, interview preparation, candidate testing and job clubs.

Completing Application Forms

It is common for employers to ask prospective candidates to complete application forms so that they can receive standard information from all applicants. An application form will also help employers assess whether applicants have all of the skills and qualities that they require for the role.

You might find a job description accompanying the application form. Read through this information carefully, as it will give you insight into the skills, knowledge and experience that the employer is looking for. On the application form, you should give examples to demonstrate your experience instead of just listing your previous job roles or responsibilities.

Constructing a CV

Your CV is essentially your 'sales' document which will show your potential employer that you have the skills, experience, or potential to do the job you are applying for. Despite the increased use of application forms for public and voluntary sector jobs, CVs are still particularly useful when approaching small and medium-sized enterprises employing fewer than 250 people. It is essential that you tailor your CV to the needs of the employer instead of just making it a general description of your work history or life so far.

Top Tip

Make sure you have a core CV and then constantly refresh it for each new job application. Tailor it appropriately, remembering always to keep it to two sides of paper to ensure it is read.

All CVs include the same basic information but will differ in the way that information is presented to the employer. This means that you may have several versions of your CV as you may want to emphasise particular strengths for particular jobs. While a chronological CV is sometimes preferred by agencies, you should aim for constructing a CV that highlights your strengths by focusing on your skills and experience so that it 'shouts' the job you are after.

Case Study: Updating a CV

Tom, 63, had worked for 18 years in a sales job with a major food manufacturer. He had survived takeovers, downsizing and acquisitions but finally the axe fell, and with a dependent family and a mortgage to pay, Tom knew that he had to find work. He attended a seminar that covered modern recruitment techniques and how to adapt to them, and walked away with valuable knowledge to help in his job search.

One of the pivotal pieces of information he picked up was that he was approaching the job market in an ineffective manner. Tom had been investing too much of his time in form filling at agencies instead of drawing on skills that he already had that he could emphasise to potential employers.

After carefully listening to the advice he gained at the seminar, Tom rewrote his CV, making key changes such as taking off his date of birth and reducing his work history so that it didn't highlight the number of years he had been at work. Tom then worked with a recruitment adviser to learn how the matching software works when job applications are filtered by companies. After this, he was able to construct his CV to match the jobs he wanted to apply for. Using modern job searching techniques, Tom was then able to find a sales job himself.

What Should Be Included?

- Your name, address, and contact details
- A short profile that introduces you and the position you hope for – to provide a quick overview
- Relevant skills for the job
- Work history
- Qualifications (highest level only unless lower level qualifications are relevant to a specific role)
- Training, including in-house training, which could be useful for future roles
- Your interests outside of work, including any relevant volunteer information.

You do not need to include any details about your age, state of health, nationality, or marital status unless you feel that this information is relevant to the job that you are applying for. However, you need to be truthful, as providing false information could lead to dismissal from the job that you have worked so hard to get.

Your CV should be a maximum of two pages. It should be easy to read and have no spelling mistakes. You will also want to leave plenty of white space and make it look nice by using an attractive, readable font in size 12 type (try Arial, Calibri or Verdana).

If you are not getting interviews, you should get feedback on your CV from employers, Jobcentre Plus staff, or career advisers and make changes if necessary. As well as from the many books written on CV writing, you can also get helpful tips and ideas from websites.

Gareth, aged 55, learned the importance of a proper CV after editing it to put more of a focus on highlighting his skills. He had been a wireman for most of his working life, but once the need for wiremen began disappearing he found it impossible to get a job as one. After two years doing any temporary work he could find, he decided to become a van or small lorry driver, as he had also spent his life driving, and obtained a Class 2 driving licence. The CV that Gareth put together at the start of his job search made him look like a wireman who had been drifting for two years, which didn't help him sell himself. However, after improving his CV, he was able to highlight his skills and subsequently find work.

Your CV should describe your best assets and minimise your weaknesses. It should serve as an accurate record of your employment history while also being extremely relevant to the jobs you are applying for. As this is often the first piece of information that a prospective employer has about you and your experiences, you should compile your CV with care.

See the Appendix which provides a case study on writing a CV. The National Careers Service has some useful information on [creating a CV](#) and also provides a CV Builder tool.

Writing a Covering Letter

If you think of your CV as your personal 'sales' document, your covering letter serves as a preview for all that you have to offer. You should always include a covering letter when sending your CV to an employer, but make sure you tailor the letter to the job that you are applying for.

While it may seem obvious, it is important that you include why you are writing. This could be an answer to an advertised vacancy, or a speculative letter asking whether an employer has vacancies in your field. However, do not start cover letters with the phrase: 'I am writing...' as this is not a professional way of beginning.

In your covering letter, you will want to highlight your particular skills that are relevant to the job you are seeking. Mention other information included in your CV, but do not include the entire CV within the letter.

Good presentation is essential, so if possible your letter should be word processed on a computer. Also, make sure to check your spelling and grammar. Ideally, the letter should be addressed to a particular person by name. If you're not sure of the name, phone the company and ask for the most relevant person. Calling for the correct name will also establish a connection between you and the company and whoever you speak to on the phone could be a good contact for the future.

Top Tip

Use your covering letter to highlight your skills, make sure it is tailored to the job you are applying for and that it is addressed to a particular person by name.

Covering Letter Example

Mr J Brown
Company address

Your address
Your Street
Your town
Kent ME7 5TJ
Tel: 0101 12356

Date

Dear Mr Brown,

I am very interested in the post of Head Waiter which I saw advertised in the Medway News on Friday 10th November and would like to apply for this vacancy (Reference 010203).

As you can see from my enclosed CV, I have worked in the catering industry, starting as a dining room assistant and through promotion I am now Head Waiter. I have experience of silver service, bar service and cellar management. Much of my experience has been through working at the George Hotel where we catered for non-resident as well as resident guests.

I feel I have many of the skills that you are looking for and I am very keen to develop these further by joining your company with its nationwide network of prestigious hotels. I am able to provide references upon request.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Maggie May

Enc.

Interview Preparation

Getting an interview with a prospective employer is an exciting accomplishment in your job search, but many people find interviews daunting. Fortunately, with just a little practice, you can become much more comfortable with the activity. Rehearse examples that demonstrate your competencies and qualifications, and ask someone to give you feedback on your responses. You can also record your answers and listen to them.

In the modern job market interviews have tended to become a much more structured process. The interviewer will most likely have a set of questions to ask you that have been prepared in advance. They will read these questions to you from a page – almost like a script – to ensure that they are asking the same questions of every candidate applying for the role.

Once you know the competencies that you will be questioned on, you can start to prepare for the interview. Think of good examples for each competency by going through your experiences and thinking of a few of your best achievements. Ideally, these examples should be from the last few years' experiences, but you may draw examples from education, work experience, voluntary work, or personal/leisure activities.

You may find it helpful to familiarise yourself with the **STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result)** method to answering questions. This method aims to help you to answer a question to your best potential by covering many aspects that highlight your competency. For example, if an interviewer asked you: "Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a phone call from an angry customer", you could answer by using the **STAR** approach shown below:

Top Tip

Whether it be with a family member, employment adviser, or friend, practise interviewing to build confidence and make sure you are prepared to present yourself as well as you can. When answering, remember to use the STAR technique shown below.

Situation

Describe the exact situation that occurred

For example: *I once took a phone call from a customer who was really angry because they had not received an important document we had promised them would be received that day.*

Task

Describe your responsibility in relation to this role

For example: *As a customer service adviser, I was concerned that the customer was upset with our service and knew that I needed to resolve it as soon as possible.*

Action

Describe what action you took

For example: *I therefore let the customer explain the problem and listened carefully to their explanation. I apologised for the delay and told them I would investigate the problem and gave them a timescale for when I would get back to them. I contacted the deliveries department and discovered that there had been a problem with some deliveries as a driver was off ill. I therefore arranged for a special courier to deliver the document and advised the customer.*

Result

Describe the result of your actions

For example: *I rang the customer to ensure he had received the document and he was absolutely delighted that I had worked so hard to get the document to him on time. In fact, he was so impressed that he asked us to undertake some more work for his company.*

Interviewers will want to hear what **you** did. You should therefore ensure that you use the word 'I' in your responses.

Using the STAR method, you should be able to tell the interviewer more successfully as much about your past work performance as possible.

Remember that interviewers are there to give you an opportunity to promote yourself. They have been trained to help you through the process of describing your skills, and do not want to scare you away from the job opportunity you are being interviewing for. However, you should also be prepared to answer some difficult questions.

This short list of questions is matched with prompts to help you develop answers so that you may successfully market yourself:

Q: "How will you cope with moving into a very different culture?"

A: Explain what you are looking forward to in the new job and how you might involve yourself in the office activities.

Q: "Isn't this job too small for you? Won't you get bored?"

A: Explain that you really enjoyed similar work in your previous job and are looking forward to the opportunity of concentrating on what you really like doing, and doing it best.

Some questions might look critically at your past experience and can be targeted more at older than younger job applicants:

Q: "Aren't you over experienced and over qualified for this role?"

A: Start by explaining that while you might not wish to climb the career ladder, you are looking for a role to which you can bring the benefits of your knowledge, expertise, and experience. Emphasise that you genuinely enjoy this line of work, and be prepared to provide examples of how you will be able to make a positive contribution.

Other questions might relate directly to age:

Q: "At your age, shouldn't you be thinking of retirement?"

A: Current legislation should prevent ageist questions, but if, or when, you are asked one, it is best for you to deal with it as straightforwardly as possible. You can explain that an age-diverse workforce has many benefits for employers, enabling them to draw on a mix of skills and experience that can give employers a positive competitive edge. Also, remind them that you enjoy working, and therefore can provide an element of working flexible hours that younger employees might not want to or be able to fulfil.

You may come across an interviewer who might be your potential manager or boss. In such a case, it is important that you emphasise how you will support them.

Research the organisation beforehand, and if possible, your interviewer too. While doing this, prepare any questions that you might want to ask. Before your interview make sure that you get a good night's sleep so that you are more relaxed and can perform at your best. You will also want to make sure that you know where the interview takes place and how long it will take you to get there so that you can arrive on time. Ensure that your appearance is smart. Once the interview begins, answer questions in a clear and logical manner but do not be afraid to pause when you need to organise your thoughts. Additionally, try and keep your language specific and positive.

Top Tip

Answer questions in a clear and logical manner. Use the word 'I' in responses. Keep your language specific and positive.

Candidate Testing

In the modern job market, it is common for an employer to ask candidates to complete some form of testing either before or after an interview before offering them a job. The types of test you may come across can vary widely depending on the nature of the job you're applying for. Some examples of testing you might encounter are:

- A wiring test for someone applying for a job as a technician
- Asking you to sell something to the interviewer or interviewing panel, if you are applying for a sales job
- A typing test for anyone where speed and accuracy of typing is a must
- A spelling test for a job where spelling is of importance i.e. secretarial, proof reading
- A visual accuracy test for where attention to detail is important (pickers/packers are often asked to undertake this type of test, for example).

Some jobs might require a testing process involving one or more exercises which may include a psychometric test, a reasoning test, either verbal/or numerical, or another combination. It is common to be tested in a variety of areas.

It is helpful to check with an employer to see if you will be tested before the interview takes place. If your prospective employer confirms that they will ask for tests to be completed, it is reasonable to ask what the tests are or what they involve. This will offer the opportunity for practice and preparations.

Job Clubs

The Department for Work and Pensions launched Work Clubs, a Great Britain-wide initiative, to help jobseekers make the most of local knowledge and resources with the aim of improving employment possibilities in communities. You can find a list of these on the National Work Clubs Network [website](#).

In addition to sharing experiences with other jobseekers, in joining a job club you will likely form friendships with an element of networking involved. Group gatherings and job clubs can be a great way for people to develop ideas and help each other build self-confidence and a resolve to succeed.

There are some job clubs which focus specifically on helping people over 50 find work, such as the one run by [Age UK in North Tyneside](#). If you feel you would like to join such a club, it is worth carrying out an internet search to see if there is one in your area.

Top Tip

Job clubs can be an invaluable resource when looking for a job. They provide a forum where you can meet other people looking for work and as a group receive support, exchange ideas, discover opportunities, share experiences and make contacts.

Self-Employment

More over-50s are turning hobbies and interests into businesses. In fact, 43 per cent of self-employed workers are aged 50 and over, and the number of over-65s who are self-employed has more than doubled in the last five years to nearly half a million. Survival rates for businesses run by the over-50s are far better than for young people.

If self-employment is a new idea for you, you might be surprised to learn that working for yourself can entail provision of a wide range of services. These might be producing something, such as dress making or pottery, or delivering a service, such as book keeping, language tuition, gardening or home cleaning. Remember that there is a great deal of support available to help you develop the necessary skills if you are considering self-employment.

Top Tip

Talk to people about your idea for a business and see if they would buy your product or service.

For example, Kathleen, a resident of North Tyneside, used her experience to turn her dream of working for herself into a reality. She opened her own greetings card and gift shop. At 53, Kathleen had been made redundant twice, so when her most recent job was under threat she decided to work for herself.

Although Kathleen did have ten years' experience working in greeting cards shops, she initially faced a couple of barriers. She did not have access to start-up funding and lacked confidence to open a business alone, but Kathleen got help from a business adviser. Her adviser both encouraged Kathleen and gave her advice on start-up costs and different funding options available to her. With just a bit of help, Kathleen was able to secure a business start-up grant and opened her own shop.

Once you establish your business, you'll most likely find yourself experiencing many new benefits such as:

- Flexibility and control (over working hours)
- Independence (financial and autonomy)
- Self-fulfilment
- Realising a long-held ambition
- Supplementing pension funds
- Using skills or talents to greater extent
- Retiring when you are ready.

Case Study: Self-employment

After a factory accident, Paul, 51, was forced to give up his 35 year career as an electrician. Paul had a background in sport and had competed for 23 years up to international level as a sprinter. He had also had experience volunteering as a coach while working. Paul found out about Momentum Arts, a not for profit organisation which helps people into work through arts, sports, and volunteering.

Paul is now a self-employed sports coach, specialising in speed fitness, strength and conditioning training. He currently works with rugby players, hockey teams and track and field athletes, and his clients include a range of national finalists and medal winners.

It is important for you to draw upon any past experiences you have which will help you create not just a business, but a sustainable one. Self-employment also entails a number of responsibilities that you may be unfamiliar with, including:

- Selling the product or service to customers or clients and making sure they know how to find out about what you do (marketing).
- Planning spending or income and resources so you don't run out of material or money.
- Registering your business with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and ensuring that you are aware of legal requirements, such as Health and Safety.
- Possibly borrowing money to set up a business or buy an existing business.
- Possibly employing other people or finding a business partner or help.

Running a franchise is also a popular self-employment option as you get all the benefits of working for yourself while being able to pull on the support of a team. Examples of franchise companies are Clarks Shoes, McDonald's and Pitman Training. There are various websites providing information on franchising opportunities, which are easy to find through an internet search.

The organisation [PRIME](#) (The Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise) can help you into self-employment through offering financial advice and assistance. They have helped many people over 50 start businesses.

Training and Qualifications

You may have the experience and qualifications you need to get a job but, if you don't, taking part in some form of training can improve your skills and qualifications and therefore your employability. Make sure that the training you undertake and the new skills you acquire are relevant to the type of job you want to apply for.

Training can help you get back to work more quickly by helping you stand out as a more experienced and qualified applicant.

There are many different kinds of training, including:

- **Work-based learning:** people learn from supervisors, colleagues, manuals, and trial and error on the job.
- **Distance and correspondence learning:** learning using printed materials and submitting assessments by post.
- **Online learning:** taking a course using internet technology. This can be just like following printed text, and it may involve online assessment, interaction with tutors and other students, or simulations of various kinds.

The course format can include full-time, part-time, day or evening, and weekend programmes. All courses can also utilise a variety of 'learning styles'. Learning styles are the different ways in which people understand and process information, and tests are available to help you determine which style suits you best. For example, you might learn that you learn best by doing things hands on, by listening and talking, by seeing and visualising things, or by reflecting and thinking.

There are countless options for training courses. A good place to start is by thinking about which skills and qualifications you might need for the jobs you are applying for. For example, Francis had had a successful career as a driver until he was made redundant. He found a job a month later but it was a temporary one, lasting only two weeks. He was then unable to find work as a driver. Francis was referred to an employment agency, where his adviser noticed that he was taking a long time to read any material he was given. It turned out that he struggled with literacy, which made it difficult for him to fill out application forms and therefore put him off applying for jobs he wanted. Francis enrolled in an adult literacy course, and also started an IT course for beginners.

Top Tip

Make sure that the training you undertake and the new skills you acquire are relevant to the type of job you want to apply for.

While Francis had a full, clean UK driving licence and good driving skills, he didn't have a digital TACO card which prevented him from applying for jobs he had skills for, such as driving 3.5 or 7.5 tonne vans. So Francis applied to the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) for the card entitling him to drive heavy goods vehicles. This further extended his employment opportunities. Through networking, he was pointed in the direction of a job opening at an international courier company looking for delivery drivers. After a one-week work trial, he was offered a permanent position as a 7.5 tonne lorry driver. Behind Francis's success was the range of training he had undertaken in his job search.

Outlined below are six ways in which training can positively affect your job search:

Essential qualifications/'Licence to practise'

Some courses are designed to give people the essential qualifications or skills for work in a specific sector or job, without which employers might not consider applicants at all. If the job description includes such a skill, employers generally expect to recruit workers who are already qualified. Some examples of these include health and safety, food hygiene, and an HGV driving licence, where the law requires that people have them.

'Skills for life'

These skills include literacy, numeracy, IT, basic computing, and fluency in English. If you are not confident in any of these areas, courses are widely available. Engaging in training to advance your skills in these areas will be very important in your job search.

Broadening horizons

Getting back into work does not have to mean returning to what you did in your last job. Training can help you broaden your horizons and consider new kinds of work that you might not have thought about before.

Self-presentation

Participating in a training course can help you better understand your strengths and weaknesses. This can become extremely useful in working out how to present yourself positively, both on paper in your CV or covering letter, and face-to-face in an interview.

Soft skills

Soft skills can be difficult to define but they generally include people skills (such as a natural ability to communicate), interpersonal skills, problem solving, critical thinking skills, team work, and collaboration. Depending on the job you are seeking, you may come across employers who place a strong focus on these personal characteristics. Therefore, any employment preparation which leads candidates to improve and hone their soft skills is likely to contribute to a positive employment outcome.

Building self-confidence

While training can help you gain tangible skills that will help you find work, the most commonly reported benefit of education and training among jobseekers is "improved self-confidence".

Even if you currently have no work experience, engaging in training can provide you with opportunities that you otherwise might not have had. This is demonstrated by Jackie's story below.

Case Study: Training

Jackie, 56, had spent most of her life as a housewife. After her husband died, she joined a programme for ex-carers. Jackie didn't want to return to child minding, which is how she had been earning money since leaving school at age 16, as it hadn't brought in enough income. Jackie had ambitions, but there had always been something that had prevented her from realising them. But now, feeling that she had been looking after others her whole life, she wanted to put herself first.

Jackie was interested in becoming a receptionist. She had good communication skills and was happy to talk to people on the phone, but faced a major obstacle in that she had no IT skills, which she needed in order to work as a receptionist. So first, Jackie needed to find a basic weekend IT course which could be partially funded by the agency she was getting advice from.

She found one that ran at weekends over six weeks and provided distance support. After passing the course, the next step for Jackie was to enrol in a business course so that she could acquire administrative skills. But before doing this, she needed to find a work placement to gain sufficient elementary IT skills. She found an opening for a receptionist volunteering position and after sending off her CV was accepted for the position. Jackie's new commitments meant that she had a much busier schedule. In addition to her business course, Jackie had to fit in her child care responsibilities, her work placement, and the IT course. But she found that her new lifestyle was a positive change and she was happy to be expanding her social contacts beyond her family members and felt energised and proud of all that she was managing to do.

Once her three month business course ended, Jackie felt that it was time to start her job search. Fortunately, there was a job opening at her work placement. She was offered a permanent post as a part-time administrator of in-house training courses. While her new role required new skills that Jackie had not used as a receptionist, her manager had been very satisfied with her voluntary performance at the company and drew up an appropriate induction programme, gradually increasing Jackie's workload and responsibilities.

Jackie is enjoying her new life and all that she has achieved. She would not have been able to apply for the job that she is so happy with had it not been for her preparations and her ability to demonstrate her qualities while working as a volunteer receptionist.

The National Careers Service offers telephone, face-to-face and online career information and advice services. It also offers a number of tools such as detailed sector by sector job market information by area. It provides information on funding sources and an online directory of all adult learning and training programmes funded by the Skills Funding Agency in each area. Furthermore, the National Careers Service has started a programme of providing Lifelong Learning Accounts, which give account holders free access to a number of online tools including a skills diagnostic tool, localised course and job searches, a CV builder, an 'eligibility' checker to identify your possible options for Government funding to learn new skills or build up your qualifications, and a facility to store all your personal learner information (CVs, skills tests, job and course searches) in one place.

There are many other employment services and projects you could link into. They may be fully or partly funded by organisations such as the Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus, the Skills Funding Agency, local authorities and the Big Lottery Fund.

Identifying and Overcoming Barriers

In a survey of jobseekers aged 50+, many barriers to employment were identified. Some of the most common are listed below; can you identify with any of these? The explanations offered are not to reinforce any existing barriers you might have, but instead to show that all jobseekers encounter barriers for a variety of reasons.

Lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem

“I am not really sure why I am not getting jobs as I am very qualified. Could be the number of applicants or it could be that I am not selling myself well enough because my confidence is at rock bottom.”

“I find that my lack of confidence increases the longer I am unemployed.”

Unfamiliarity with modern recruitment practices

“I had been in the same job for more than eight years and had not looked for one in all that time. I had lost touch with the job market and many things had changed over this period.”

Lack of formal qualifications or IT skills

“My equivalent qualifications and skills are rejected because I don’t have modern qualifications.”

Caring responsibilities

“I have caring responsibilities for my elderly parents and need to be available at short notice.”

Note that some barriers are concrete, such as caring responsibilities, while others, such as believing age is a factor, are more perceptual. Regardless, all of these barriers can make the prospect of getting back into work seem impossible. However, the most important feature of all of these barriers, and any others that you might be facing, is that you can overcome them.

For example, some jobseekers believe that a lack of IT skills is preventing them from working in an office. However, it is never too late to pick up a new skill. In fact, there are many IT courses available. In addition to learning an extremely valuable skill, people who take courses such as these consistently report that they feel more self-confident and have higher self-esteem.

As for caring responsibilities, it might be worthwhile exploring other sources of help to enable you to combine your caring responsibilities with working life. Some employers may already have schemes in place to accommodate caring for children and older relatives.

Ageism can sometimes be another barrier, although discrimination in employment is now unlawful. Unfortunately though, many applications are reviewed and sifted by computers in the first instance and never reach an actual human being. While it is easy to think that age is playing a factor, it may have nothing to do with your age but the fact that the words you have used in your CV and application form do not match those used in the job advertisement.

Case Study: Overcoming Barriers

Joe had worked in the construction sector for almost 30 years before becoming unemployed three years ago, mainly because of back problems. From the very first day he felt uncomfortable and even angry at being sent on a back-to-work course, saying: "I am 53 years old, what the hell can you teach me?" Joe was especially annoyed by some of the behaviour of younger clients on the same course.

Joe was able to join a group of 50+ jobseekers and immediately preferred the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the group. Over the following weeks, Joe developed his individual training plan during one-to-one discussions with an adviser, who helped him identify his barriers and explore how they could be overcome.

Barrier 1: No experience in using a computer

"It's too late for me to start learning now and I don't need it anyway!"

Joe felt he was too old to learn new skills, particularly IT skills as he'd never used a computer before. His adviser was able to put him at ease, explaining that he wasn't the only person in the classroom who had never turned on a computer. A session was put on just for people who had no IT knowledge and slowly, Joe began to enjoy using a computer - for fun reasons as well as for job hunting - and became confident in learning a new skill.

Barrier 2: Difficulty gaining a job in the construction sector due to a bad back

Joe knew that his bad back would make a return to construction work very difficult. Discussing his interests with his adviser, he came to realise that he might be interested in a career in care work.

He wasn't sure, but his adviser set up a placement in a care home for two days a week, as a way to introduce him to the care home environment. Joe had some excellent feedback from the care home manager and really enjoyed the experience. He asked to increase his placement days to gain more skills and knowledge working as a carer for older people. During his 10 week employment course, Joe became more confident which, in turn, improved his motivation. A week before his course ended, the manager from the care home offered Joe a part-time post.

As you can see from the case study above, some barriers to employment can be devastating without support. Fortunately, there is help available in a range of areas.

You might find it helpful to identify any barriers you face so that you can think about how to tackle them and find your way back into work.

Age and the Law

Since the first Race Relations Act was passed in 1965, discrimination law has undergone many developments. The Equality Act, passed in 2010, brought together separate pieces of legislation, including the Age Regulations, into a single Act simplifying the law and strengthening it in important ways to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

The Equality Act is likely to apply to you in several ways as it covers a wide range of people, from employees and ex-employees to the self-employed and job applicants. The Equality Act also applies to a wide range of situations.

Recruitment: Employers are generally not allowed to refuse to hire someone because of their age. However, there are some limited exceptions to this legislation which allow employers or training providers to discriminate on the grounds of age without the need for justification. These include:

- Requests by an employer for your date of birth or a photograph. While this may lead to, or give the impression of, decisions being made on the basis of age, it is not unlawful for an employer to request either of these.
- Where there is a genuine requirement for a person of a certain age, such as in an acting job.
- Where the law stipulates an age requirement, such as in an establishment that serves alcohol and therefore requires staff of 18 years and over.
- Where the employer relies on the National Minimum Wage and, because of this, is allowed to pay differently aged workers different pay based on a legal framework.

Training: Whether you are employed or not, if you are completing work-related training you may make a claim for age discrimination if someone discriminates against you.

Employers, training agencies, qualifications bodies and all further and higher education institutions providing training must comply with the age provisions of the Equality Act of 2010. Therefore, it is unlawful for you to be treated less favourably because of your age.

There are a few limited situations where training providers may be able to restrict access to training on the grounds of age. This could be when age is a genuine occupational requirement or when training is targeted at an age group which is under-represented in training programmes or when a particular age group generally has a lower level of skills and qualifications than other age groups. State funding for training and education is not covered by the legislation.

Education: You are covered by the legislation if you are enrolled in higher education or any other education which provides you with relevant skills for work.

Redundancy: When selecting redundancies, employers cannot use age as a factor unless they can justify it on objective grounds.

Unfair dismissal: Someone can make a claim for unfair dismissal if they are over the age of 65.

Retirement: If your employer retires you on the grounds of age you may have a claim for age discrimination and/or unfair dismissal, but this is dependent on the circumstances.

The default retirement age of 65 was abolished in 2011. In most cases, employees can now decide when to retire. Employers may still have a retirement age but they will need to be able to justify it.

In some situations an employer or training provider may be permitted to discriminate on the grounds of age. In order to do this they must show, with evidence, that the aim they are trying to achieve could not be achieved in any less discriminatory way. However, only a tribunal can decide what is considered legitimate means for discrimination. It is important for you to remember that while all scenarios have not yet been outlined in a legal framework, the Equality Act does aim to protect you from age discrimination.

TAEN has published a number of guides covering different aspects of the Equality Act as they relate to employment (including recruitment and selection), training, retirement and how to make a claim and seek redress. They are available on the Age Legislation section of the [TAEN website](#).

Financial Matters

In regards to pension age, for men the state pension age is 65. Since 6 April 2010, the state pension age for women has started to increase gradually from 60 to 65, to match men's. You can find out when you will be able to get your state pension under the current law by using the [State Pension calculator](#) on the Government's GOV.UK website.

Welfare available to people aged 50 + is highly complex. Payments take the form of either benefits, via the Department for Work and Pensions at Jobcentre Plus, and Tax credits, via HM Revenue and Customs. Benefits for those on low income can be claimed through Jobseeker's Allowance, allowances for housing, council tax, and crisis payments, working tax credit, child tax credit, and pension credit. Working tax credit can only be claimed by people who are over 16 or over 25 if they don't have children or a disability. If they are aged 25-59, they must work more than 30 hours per week or, if aged 60 or over, for 16 hours a week.

Appendix

Case Study: Succeeding in the Modern Job Market at 50+

Anne (53) explains how she went about looking for a job after being made redundant.

When I was made redundant, I had been the same job for more than eight years and had not looked for one in all that time. I had lost touch with the job market and many things had changed over the period. The recession, the resulting unemployment figures and the economic climate made me feel despondent and panicky. I had not dare move jobs although I had wanted to but then my situation forced me to. I found that using various simple techniques paid dividends and I was offered a new job within three months. I am delighted to share my experience.

Email and internet

My most essential tools were internet and email. The various job search engines, jobsites and agency sites are set up to be easily searched and there are endless pages of useful advice and interview and proficiency tests which I found invaluable. It was easy to make immediate contact with agencies or employers via email without surrendering any personal information and I also set up a profile on the main job sites and uploaded my CV (with address and phone numbers removed, only name and email address visible).

Building my CV and covering letter

These are the main sales tools. Previously I had built my CV in the traditional style, with education and qualifications at the beginning and with a list of positions held in reverse chronological order. I had included my date of birth and date of graduation. After receiving advice from TAEN and reading several books about finding work in today's job market, I soon realised that I wouldn't get a look-in if I included this information. Employers and agencies are looking for simple and quick ways to screen CVs and age could be one of their de-selection criteria (although not for all, of course).

Functional CV style

I was advised by TAEN to adopt the functional style of CV. This gives a snapshot glimpse of the candidate and is designed to capture the reader's interest in a few seconds, which is apparently all the time recruiters have when flicking through a pile of hundreds of CVs.

Here are the tips that made the difference for me:

- Keep to two sides of A4.
- Do not put date of birth or date of school/graduation.
- Only include the last 10 years of employment history.
- First page to include:
 - profile: three-line summary of skills and aims
 - key skills, listed by category
 - achievements: main outstanding successes.
- On the second page, list posts in reverse chronological order. I found that employers wanted a bit of detail about my last post, so I fleshed that out in my CV.

Covering letter

This is a very important document as it will be the first thing a prospective employer sees and it will determine whether they think it worth looking at your CV. This is where you can tell them where you have seen their ad, why you are interested in what they do, and how

you can make a contribution if you worked for them. **I found that the more I used the same format and words as the employers used in their ads, the better a response rate I received.** The summary of the advice I collected is as follows:

- State job title and reference
- State briefly that you are responding to the particular ad, why you are interested and what you have to offer, using key words and tying in your skills and wishes to the purpose of the job/company
- Five to six bullet-point summary of relevant skills
- Try to show somewhere in the letter that you know who the organisation is and that you know and understand what they do
- Sign off by welcoming a response and thanking them for their time
- Keep the letter succinct (one side of A4 only).

Putting your CV up on job sites

At first, I was rather reluctant to do this, but it was surprisingly effective. For reasons of privacy, it is advisable to remove your personal address and phone numbers. Within a week of putting my CV up on various job sites, I began to get speculative approaches and some of them were definite possibilities.

Preparing applications

As mentioned above, it is really essential to tailor each application to the job vacancy advertised. Employers receive literally hundreds of applications and only have a few seconds to scan each one. You have to spend time preparing each application carefully and thinking about what the employer is looking for so that you can make your application stand out from the mundane “give me a job” approach. Judging from the various forums I read, many people make the mistake of sending off lots of applications and the same covering letter and CV without bothering to do this and are then surprised that they get no response. **It is far better to send a few, well researched and targeted applications than hundreds of ‘boilerplate’ ones.** The genuinely interested and tailored applications stand out.

To make my task easier, I drew up a ‘master’ list of all my skills and experience and then drew the relevant elements from it each time I was drafting an application.

Preparing for interviews

Research the organisation carefully and go through its website to understand where the position you are applying for fits in. Also, consider topics of conversation and prepare questions to show that you’ve had a good look at the website.

Know your CV well and be ready for any questions about your previous posts. Look at lists of interview questions and practise your answers. The better prepared you are, the less you will be thrown when you are asked certain things out of the blue.

Look at aptitude tests online: some employers use these and they tend to follow the same pattern so familiarise yourself with them. Also, they’re quite fun to complete and I found they served as good brainteasers in my daily routine.

Job sites I found useful

- [Monster](#)
- [Jobsite](#)
- [Gumtree](#)
- [Guardian Jobs](#)
- [Jobrapido](#)
- [Charity Job](#)
- [Third Sector Jobs](#)
- [Reed](#)
- [Agency Central](#)
- [indeed](#)
- [TPP Not for Profit](#)
- [Vacancy Central](#)

Website References

50+ Works: <http://www.50plusworks.com/>

Monster: <http://info.monster.co.uk/seeker/info3.aspx>

LinkedIn: <https://uk.linkedin.com/>

Kompass Business Directory: <http://gb.kompass.com/b/business-directory/>

Skills Assessment Tool for Older Workers:

http://www.50plusworks.com/downloads/Skills_Assessment_Toolkit_for_Older_Workers.pdf

National Work Clubs Network: <http://www.nationalworkclubs.net/>

Age UK North Tyneside: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northtyneside/information--advice/back-on-board/>

PRIME: <http://www.prime.org.uk/>

The National Careers Service:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/tools/cv/Pages/default.aspx>

TAEN Guides to the Equality Act: <http://taen.org.uk/adl/guides>

State Pension calculator: <https://www.gov.uk/calculate-state-pension>

Jobsite: <http://www.jobsite.co.uk/>

Gumtree: <http://www.gumtree.com/jobs>

Guardian Jobs: <http://jobs.theguardian.com/>

Jobrapido: <http://uk.jobrapido.com/>

Charity Job: <http://www.charityjob.co.uk/>

Third Sector Jobs: <http://jobs.thirdsector.co.uk/>

Reed: <http://www.reed.co.uk/>

Agency Central: <http://www.agencycentral.co.uk/>

Indeed: <http://www.indeed.co.uk/>

TPP Not for Profit: <http://www.tpp.co.uk/>

Vacancy Central: <http://www.vacancycentral.co.uk/>

Disclaimer

This guide is for help and information only. It is not meant as an authoritative guide. It is not meant as an authoritative statement of the law, and future changes in the law and other programmes and initiatives could make it less accurate at times. TAEN, the Department for Work and Pensions and the European Social Fund take no responsibility for your use of the information. You should always take professional advice on any specific legal or financial matter.



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This Guide has been compiled by TAEN – The Age and Employment Network in association with the European Social Fund.

TAEN works to promote an effective labour market that serves the needs of people in mid and later life, employers and the economy.

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