



## Using recruitment agencies – a step-by-step guide

Recruitment agencies are one of your options when looking for a graduate job or for opportunities to develop the skills you need for the industry you want to work in. You can also use their services to find temporary work to bridge the gap between university and full-time graduate employment.

To make sure you get the most out of using **recruitment agencies**, follow our step-by-step guide:

- Agencies usually focus on specific industries or types of positions, e.g. temporary staff for the catering industry, so make sure you don't waste your time contacting scores of agencies and just target the ones that offer the kind of opportunities you are looking for.  
To find agencies specialising in a certain sector, use the [sector listings](http://www.rec.uk.com/regions-sectors/sectors) on the REC website. (<http://www.rec.uk.com/regions-sectors/sectors>) Check the agency's website if they have one, as many of them advertise their current vacancies online. This should give you a pretty good idea of whether they are likely to offer the kind of job you are after and whether it would be worth contacting them.
- Approach an agency like you would approach an employer. **Do your homework** before you contact them and make sure you have a rough idea of the kind of jobs they offer. When making the initial contact, be prepared to briefly talk about your skills and experience and try to link them to the type of role you are looking for, e.g. "I have developed excellent customer service and sales skills while working in the retail industry for 3 years, which makes me an excellent candidate for a role in Account management".
- **Make a good impression.** Part of an agency's reputation rests on the quality of the candidates they provide, so they are unlikely to take you on their books if you are unprofessional, rude or vague about your skills.
- If you make your initial contact by phone, try to use a landline phone to avoid being cut off. Have a think about what you are going to say and what you would like to know about the application process. Speak clearly and be polite – a good telephone manner is likely to feature among the basic requirements for many jobs, so make sure you tick that box. Some agencies prefer candidates completing a registration form in the first instance, so they might ask you to drop by and fill in the form before you can send in your CV.
- **Your CV is your main marketing tool** as it is the first thing both the agency and a potential employer will see of you. Make sure it paints an accurate picture of your education, work experience and skills. An effective CV is well laid-out, clear and concise, easily readable and provides all the relevant information in no more than two sides of A4. If you are unsure about writing a CV, attend one of the Ready for Work CV sessions, or ring 0151 231 3600 to book an appointment with an Employability Advisor for one-to-one feedback on your CV.
- If you have emailed your CV or uploaded it on an agency's website and have not had a reply after a couple of days, **follow it up with the agency.** Ring them and



- ask to speak to a consultant to draw their attention to your application. Often, agencies use email addresses like [jobs@agency.co.uk](mailto:jobs@agency.co.uk), so your email might not necessarily be read by a consultant straightaway. Briefly outline your relevant experience and skills to the consultant on the phone and ask if you could come in for an interview to discuss in more detail. Consultants earn commission for any candidate they place, so you have to convince them of your employability. Make sure you are clear about how best to sell yourself and your skills. If you have problems identifying what these are, ring the **Employability Team on 0151 231 3600 to book an appointment with a Careers Adviser.**
- **Dress smartly for an interview with an agency.** Remember, you are the “product” they are selling, so creating a professional impression is key to landing a job through an agency. Make sure you can talk about your skills and experience in detail during the interview as well as the type of roles you are looking for. If you are unsure what to expect in an interview, attend the **Ready for Work “Preparing for Interviews”** session, or **ring 0151 231 8099 to arrange a practice interview.**
- Try and **establish a relationship with your consultant.** If you have not been offered work after a week or so, ring your consultant and check if they have any roles available you are suitable for. Also keep an eye on the vacancies on their website, if they advertise them online, and let your consultant know which ones you are interested in. Make sure you let them know of any changes to your personal details, e.g. address or phone number, as well as any additional skills you may have gained through training courses you have completed recently. Ring your consultant every now and then to let them know you are still available and keen to work.
- Once your consultant has identified a role they think you are suitable for, they will contact you with some basic details of the job (your potential duties and responsibilities, the type and location of the company and the duration of the contract) and will ask you for your consent to forward your details to the company. At this stage, you will not usually be given the name of the company for data protection reasons. Once you have been short-listed for an interview, you should then be provided with further details to enable you to thoroughly research the company. After the interview, you will be given feedback on your performance, and if you’re lucky an offer of employment!
- Depending on the type of role and the length of the contract, you might be able to skip the interview and be **“fast-tracked”** into a job. A company might need to arrange cover for a member of staff that will be off sick for a couple of days at short notice and might just rely on the agency to provide cover immediately. If you have previous experience in the role required or have already proved yourself to the agency through working on another contract, you might be lucky and get the call!



- And finally, **know your rights!** It is unlawful for agencies to charge you for finding a job or make it a condition that you use other chargeable services (like a CV-writing service) before or after you register. Reputable agencies are usually registered with the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC). Before you start work on an assignment or a position, the agency must provide you with all the relevant details, such as your start date, the likely duration of your contract, your rate of pay and your working hours. For further details of regulations affecting temporary workers and agency staff, please check the [REC's Guide for Work seekers](#).  
([http://www.grb.uk.com/uploads/media/Work\\_seekers\\_guide.pdf](http://www.grb.uk.com/uploads/media/Work_seekers_guide.pdf))

## Agencies by regions or sectors

You can use [Google](#) ([www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk)) or the [Yellow Pages](#) ([www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com)) to search for contact details of recruitment agencies or alternatively, search online agency directories.

To find agencies by region or agencies specialising in a certain sector, use the [regions and sector listings](#) on the REC website. (<http://www.rec.uk.com/regions-sectors>)

Alternatively, you can also search the [REC consultancy database](#) by either type of job or town. Use the graduate option in the sectors drop-down list to find agencies that have opportunities for graduates.

(<http://www.rec.uk.com/membersarea/directory/default.asp?dir=1>)

Another agency directory is available at <http://www.agencycentral.co.uk/>