

HOW TO FIND
a job that's
GOOD
FOR YOU AND THE PLANET

A Green Careers Guide

November 2023



How do I use this guide?

Hi! It's great to see you here!

This guide is for anyone who is interested in or simply curious about jobs that support efforts to protect, conserve, and enhance our natural environment. These are often referred to as **'green jobs'**.



This guide aims to:

- illustrate that green jobs are much **more varied** than you might think by using many examples and busting myths;
- explain how jobs that are good for our planet are often **good for you** too;
- show how **everyone** can find a green job, or do a job more greenly, and signpost to useful resources.

The main audience for this guide will be people who are in, thinking about entering, or finishing **tertiary education**, including college, university, or short courses. But much of it will be relevant for people at all stages of their life. While the guide mainly refers to data from **Scotland**, many sections will be relevant to you, wherever you are from.

Where to start?

Which part of this guide will be most interesting for you depends on your current questions and situation. Check out the Contents page or use these starting points:

- **I'm not really sure what green jobs are:** Check out the [Understanding](#) section.
- **I thought green jobs are all about STEM and being outdoors?:** That's a myth! Read our [myth busters](#) and our [Understanding](#) section.
- **What do I get out of doing a green job? Are they paid well?:** Go to our [Benefits](#) page to find out!
- **What skills and knowledge do I need for a green job?:** The [Training, Knowledge, and Skills Development](#) section will give you an overview and further guidance.
- **I'm looking for support to find and get a green job:** Our [Employment](#) chapter provides information and links for searching and getting a green job.

GOOD TO KNOW: [Underlined text](#) means there is a hyperlink to a different page or a website. Find further links to top guidance and useful facts in boxes like this one throughout this guide.



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FUTURE FACT: All jobs will be green(er) jobs.



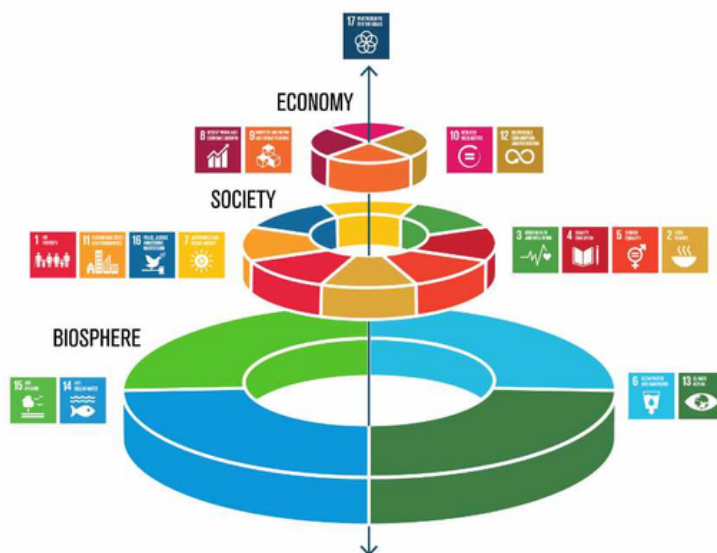
About 20% of existing jobs will be directly impacted by transition to a greener economy. Another 20% will be enabling jobs, and the remaining 60% will be indirectly impacted. ([Climate Change Committee Net Zero Workforce report 2023](#))



The Meaning of Green: a part of sustainability

While this guide focusses on environmental challenges, solutions and jobs, it is important to keep in mind that any job, and anything you do, also has an **impact on people and the economy**, both locally and globally. The interplay of environmental, social and economic factors is often referred to as sustainability.

The Sustainable Development Goals illustrate some of the many things that sustainability encompasses – and how everything is **inextricably interconnected**, as illustrated in the graphic below. Environment, society, and economy don't exist in isolation, and action in one area often affects other areas, too. For example, a project that offers repair workshops and second-hand products can benefit the environment by saving resources; the local economy by providing an alternative to buying new products; and people by allowing them to save money, learn new skills and build confidence.



SDG wedding cake model.
See the full picture [here](#).
Credit: Azote for [Stockholm Resilience Centre](#), Stockholm University CC BY-ND 3.0.

Climate Justice



While most greenhouse gas emissions are emitted by rich and privileged population groups, the consequences of climate change disproportionately affect low-income communities and people of colour, who cause less pollution. This results in environmental, social, and economic injustice. While this guide focuses on green jobs, it is important to remember that **climate justice is fundamental to a sustainable future**.

Consistently asking yourself what impact green endeavours have on social and economic aspects is essential and helps to think and act strategically to benefit people, planet, and the economy.

1

Understanding: What are green jobs?

The meaning and scope of the term ‘green jobs’ can be confusing. On government levels, policy makers use definitions that help to monitor and quantify green jobs – but **what does ‘green job’ mean in practice for people who are looking for a job?** We’ll start with a general definition, bust some myths, and show you lots of green job examples over the next few pages.

KEY DEFINITION

Green jobs are jobs that help to benefit the environment, generally by protecting, enhancing or conserving it.

This can mean many things – all jobs can be green jobs, because all jobs, just like almost everything we do, have an impact on the environment.



What makes a job green is whether it supports a **positive, or at least less negative, impact on the environment**. Some jobs will do this more than others, and different jobs will do this in different ways. Some jobs will be defined as “Sustainability Professionals” or have the name “environmental” in it - other jobs won’t give away their greenness in the job title at all. Importantly – green jobs go far beyond windfarms and STEM, as you’ll see on the next page!

You can find a job that supports the environment, that is valued, adequately paid, and gives you purpose, no matter your background. See some examples in this word cloud:



1.1 Busted myths about green jobs

Myth: Green jobs are all about climate change and reducing emissions.

Busted! Decarbonisation and mitigating climate change are very important aspects of green jobs and generally green actions. But facilitating behaviour change, education and communication, and many other aspects are equally important parts of protecting, enhancing and conserving the environment.

Myth: Green jobs are all about Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

Busted! STEM plays an important role, specifically in decarbonising our economy and transitioning to Net Zero. But it is very important to understand that many non-STEM backgrounds can lead to green jobs. For example, administration, finance, education, communications, management, hospitality, and many other fields have an important role to play, too.

Myth: Green jobs are all about being outdoors in all kinds of weathers.

Busted! Green jobs are about the environment – but that does not mean you need to be always out in nature to do a green job. In fact, many green jobs take place exclusively indoors.

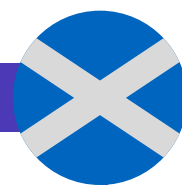
Myth: For a green job, you need to have special ‘green skills’ and training.

Busted! Yes, a general understanding about environmental issues is important in almost every green job. But there are many green jobs for which you don’t need to have detailed knowledge of environmental science or new technologies.

DID YOU KNOW? The Scottish Government defines green jobs in three ways:

- **New and emerging jobs** such as carbon monitoring technicians;
- Jobs that require **enhanced environmental skills and knowledge** (i.e. catering professionals providing eco-friendly menus, youth workers teaching about biodiversity);
- Jobs that are **increasing in demand** due to green economic activities (i.e. electricians, joiners, designers, or transport and logistics professionals).

(See the Green Jobs in Scotland report)



1.2 Types of green jobs

Over the next few pages, we will help you identify what kind of green job might be most interesting for you depending on your interests and skills.



Essential for green: Net Zero & Nature Emergency Jobs

Do you want to fight climate change by supporting decarbonisation in sectors like energy, construction, waste or transport? Or maybe your interest is in nature and biodiversity? Read more in [this section](#) about jobs in these areas.



Greening society: Behaviour and System Change Jobs

Want to know more about how your background in social sciences, humanities, arts, enterprise, finance, or law can make an important contribution to the environment? [This section](#) is for you!



Green-enabling: "non-green" jobs to make green organisations run smoothly

Want to make a difference, but aren't sure how your background in HR, administration, marketing, management or similar subjects aligns? Your skills are needed, too! Read more in [this section](#).



Every job can be a green job: Making your job greener

Learn what you can do, even if you feel like the job you have or would like to do seems to have nothing to do with the environment. Your job might have the potential to really make a difference - you just don't know it yet. Read more in [this section](#).

TOP GUIDANCE: You can find excellent guidance on green careers online.

- **My World of Work by Skills Development Scotland** offers great guidance through their [Green Careers](#) website and [Green Jobs Workforce Academy](#), including facts, tools and a [green jobs training search](#).
- **Green Careers Hub by IEMA** is a great place to explore, particularly if you are already working or soon to start. Use the "I want to explore..." drop down menu to get started.
- **Green Jobs for Nature** is full of examples of green jobs and explores various sectors and career options.

Can't find what you're looking for? If you are using a PDF version of this guide, try pressing Ctrl and F to enter a keyword you're looking for.

1.2.1 Net Zero and Nature Emergency jobs

While many jobs are and can be ‘green jobs’, it’s important to note that some industries and sectors are **in urgent need of people with the right skills** to address our most pressing environmental problems.



These major challenges include **climate change** and the need for decarbonisation, the **decline in biodiversity**, and increased levels of **waste and pollution**.

Some of these jobs won’t seem obviously ‘green’ and might simply be higher in demand, for example electricians. Some jobs require up-to-date knowledge and skills, for example architects including higher environmental standards. And some jobs require specific knowledge and skills, like windfarm analysts or ecologists.

Key environmental concepts you should know:

Net Zero: Net Zero is a goal many governments have set themselves to fight climate change. It will be achieved when we balance the emissions we release with the emissions we remove from the atmosphere. To get there, we have to drastically cut emission sources: decarbonisation is key. This is particularly the case in high-emission sectors like energy, construction, transport, and agriculture.

Just Transition: With Scotland and the UK transitioning to a greener economy to achieve net zero and other environmental goals, it’s important to ensure this transition is fair to people as well. While some industries will experience growth, others may decline. The Scottish Government has committed to a Just Transition, making an effort to ensure no-one is left behind by supporting people to find work and retrain in industries that are more sustainable.

Biodiversity, restoration & conservation: Biodiversity, meaning the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms, is declining - with wide reaching consequences for people and planet. Restoring, conserving, and protecting nature (specifically in Scotland: peatland restoration) can support it to thrive and function as a carbon sink. Read more on tackling the biodiversity crisis.

Circular Economy: The circular economy aims for materials to never become waste: products and materials are kept in circulation through reuse, repair, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, composting etc. This helps to address climate change and other challenges like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by separating economic activity from the consumption of finite resources. Read more on Ellen McArthur Foundation or watch this video.



On the next page, we list some key areas and examples of job titles. Check out the Green Careers Hub Job Profiles for more examples of green roles.

Net Zero and Nature Emergency job examples

Energy: We need to move to less carbon intensive sources of energy. Green jobs in this sector will include electrical technicians, civil engineers, turbine designers, windfarm maintenance, and more. See further examples and pathways on the [Green Jobs Workforce Academy](#) (GJWA) and [My Energy Futures](#).

Construction: The creation, running and demolition of buildings accounts for around 40% of carbon emissions worldwide and needs to become more sustainable. Jobs to help with this include plumbers, carpenters, retrofit specialists, energy assessors, project managers, IT and many others. Find out more on the [GJWA](#) or on [ESHjobs](#).

Agriculture & Land Use: How we produce food and other essential goods is changing (see [Scottish Government](#)). The need to farm in more environmentally friendly ways and use up less natural space requires farmers, crofters, and land managers with knowledge and skills around regenerative farming, soil testing, optimising technology use, and increasing biodiversity.

Biodiversity & Nature Conservation
[Hydrologists](#), [Conservation workers](#), [Ecologists](#), [Foresters](#) and [Rangers](#) help to restore and protect nature and biodiversity. Find more roles on [Lantra](#) and [Green Jobs for Nature](#).



Transport: The transport industry is one of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases in the UK. Jobs to support the switch to low emission vehicles and infrastructure include electricians, mechanics, specialised hybrid technology engineers, carbon assessors, specialists in logistics, active travel coordinators, rail technicians etc. Read more on the [GJWA](#) and [Transport Scotland](#).

Manufacturing & Engineering: As we are moving towards greener economies across the globe, the need for designing and producing innovative low-waste, low-emission goods will only increase. Jobs include electrical, chemical, design, civil and mechanical engineers, quality controllers, as well as technicians and operators who are upskilled and have advanced digital skills to handle automated processes.

Circular Jobs & Waste and Resource Management: The circular labour market includes many kinds of jobs in different sectors, including creative and manufacturing industries, repair and maintenance, [urban miners](#), and waste and resource management. Jobs in the circular economy, shortly 'circular jobs', are all jobs that contribute to reducing resource consumption. Read more about core and enabling circular jobs on [Zero Waste Scotland](#).

Net Zero and Nature Emergency job case studies



Sharon Otieno, Masters Student: On track to a green career

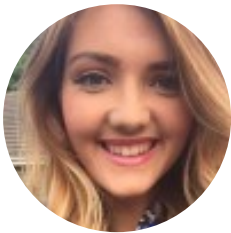
After a degree in biochemistry, Sharon worked in an industry job where she learned about the importance of the Circular economy and worked on mitigating plastic pollution. Now she is undertaking a master's programme in Chemical Regulation and Innovation, and currently does an internship on sustainable energy systems based on hydrogen fuel and innovative polymers.



Credit: Severin Gove, Grist.org

Nate Johnson, Electrician: From Climate Journalism to Tradesman (read more on [Grist.org](https://grist.org))

When Nate's passion for writing started to fade, he looked into what other jobs he could do that would benefit the environment. As an electrician, he now helps to fight climate change with his hands rather than his words, and now feels like he really helps to solve one of the biggest problems of our time.



Haidee, Wind Turbine Technician Apprentice - from Hair and Beauty to Renewables. ([watch video here](#))

After 6 years in hairdressing, Haidee got inspired by watching a documentary presented by Keeley Donovan about where Haidee now works: the renewable energy company Ørsted. Haidee is currently undertaking an apprenticeship to be a Wind Turbine Technician. She says: "It really grasped me from the minute I was watching. The presenter went straight into her training for offshore, and then, straight from there on, I just thought: I have to get a piece of this!"



Iain McCreath, Quality and Environmental Management Professional: A Circular Job

Iain studied biology as he enjoyed it at school. He then wanted to get an environmental job knowing it was a growing field. Now, he works at the Glasgow Recycling and Renewable Energy Centre, which takes in black bag household waste and tries to recycle as much as possible. Iain deals a lot with emissions limits, SEPA reporting, and all aspects of environmental management. He says "I really like my job! It's great. For the job I have, I'd say do some extra courses in things like ISO14001, Risk assessment etc."



Find **more and diverse examples** and stories of people in green roles on the [Green Careers Hub](#).

1.2.2 Behaviour and System Change jobs

To allow for many of the new technologies and approaches to our economy and life to take hold, **we need people and systems to be on board**. People with backgrounds, knowledge, and skills to change behaviours and systems to be greener play an important role in this transition. Whether it's getting people to change their habits, making money flow towards greener causes, or working in environmental law - there is a range of possibilities for people with many backgrounds!



Behaviour and System Change job examples



Educators and Trainers: Learning for Sustainability is an entitlement for young people in Scotland. Teachers, lecturers, nursery staff and youth workers are key agents to prepare learners for current and future challenges of our planet, people, and economy. Learning for Sustainability Scotland is a great resource hub to find support and guidance.

Environmental and Social Entrepreneurs: There are many new companies, businesses, and not-for-profit organisations emerging who are working on environmental solutions, such as community garden networks or outdoor education organisations. Social Enterprise Scotland has more examples.

Environmental Law: Increasingly, environmental laws are put in place to protect the environment, as well as human health and resource use. People with expertise in this field are high in demand. ClientEarth and Reed have a guidance to working in environmental law in the UK.

Data Scientists, Programmers, and Developers: The more we understand about what we need to be greener, the better, so people with data skills are key to a green and just transition - read more in this article. Similarly, people with skills in programming or web development make a difference when we put data into practice, for example by developing programmes and apps to manage energy consumption or encourage behaviour change. Of course, anything to do with IT also has a carbon footprint - read more about Green IT here.



Sustainability Consultants: Often, consultants are brought in to help companies and businesses become more socially and environmentally responsible in how they operate. Prospects has shared a [profile](#) of the Sustainability Consultant role, as well as a [trainee case study](#).

Green Finance: Green finance, in short, is using investments for pro-environmental causes, such as the purchase of ecologically-friendly goods or services, or the construction of green infrastructure. Using money more 'greenly' can be a powerful way to make a difference for the environment. The British Council has delivered a [webinar on green finance](#).

Green Hospitality and Tourism: From green tourism to seasonal and vegan catering, to more resource efficient venues and businesses, sustainable hospitality and tourism can facilitate more sustainable behaviour or consumption. See initiatives like the [Green Tourism Centre](#), Food for Life's [Green Kitchen Standard](#) or the catering company [arch](#).



Sustainability Engagement Officers: Local authorities, charities and education institutions may hire Sustainability Engagement Officers to design and run programmes and work with various communities to achieve collaboration and behaviour change around sustainability. Backgrounds for this can include many areas - from arts to sociology, what counts is that you can engage people.

Sustainability Managers: Many companies and organisations now have staff dedicated to managing sustainability. Generally, These managers are responsible for the sustainability of an organisation's operations, for example by making sure that environmental standards and legislation are met. See this [profile](#) of the Sustainability Manager role on Prospects.

Power to the people: If you have a social science, arts, or humanities background, the path to a green job may not be as obvious as in STEM, but your skills will play an important role in working with people and facilitating behaviour change - which is a key obstacle in many of the environmental issues we are facing.



Behaviour and System Change job examples



Jade Willets, Environmental Sustainability and Engagement Manager: two apprenticeships to a green job

As Environmental Sustainability and Engagement Manager at the University of Birmingham, Jade covers the day-to-day management on campus of waste, reuse, emissions, and behaviour change. She started as an Environmental Services Apprentice, a Level 2 Customer Service Apprenticeship, and two years later started a Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship. She says: “The skills and knowledge gained from this apprenticeship enabled me to grow, and begin a new role as Environmental Sustainability Manager”.



Vicky Howat, UK Development Lead: From corporate marketing to climate education

After climbing up the careers ladder for almost 10 years in marketing roles, including big brand campaigns for clients like Apple and international jobs, Vicky reconnected with nature during the pandemic. She says: “I just got to the point where I was like, why am I working in advertising, which is essentially just perpetuating this problem of over consumption?” After undertaking the [On Purpose Associates](#) programme, Vicky is now very happy in her job with the climate education NGO [Climate Fresk](#).



Dominic Lavelle, Managing Director: From commercial roles into starting a green business

After studying economics and accounting and over 20 years in commercial, product, and strategy roles, Dominic went ‘green’: He started his own business, Go Green Experts, where he now leads a small team of senior consultants to support clients in their transition to Net Zero. He also oversees and signs off all the work they deliver, ensuring quality and consistency. He says “All my business skills made that a smooth transition.”



Emma Carroll-Monteil, Sustainability Engagement Officer: A psychologist in a green job

In her role at the University of Strathclyde, Emma improves engagement with sustainability initiatives at the university and externally. Transferrable skills from her Psychology degree and her environmental extracurricular activities were key aspects to support her path into a green job.



Find **more and diverse examples** and stories of people in green roles on the [Green Careers Hub](#).

1.2.3 Green-enabling jobs

Green jobs don't require everyone to have in-depth environmental knowledge and skills (although some basic knowledge is important). You can also do a **'non-green' job for an organisation that works towards green goals**. These types of roles are just as important as sustainability-focused positions. Find some examples below.



Green-enabling job examples



Administration: Green organisations rely on committed, efficient people to deliver the tasks essential to the smooth running of the entire operation. Whether as an Administrative Assistant, Secretary or Financial Clerk, people skillfully performing these tasks are key to a green organisation achieving its goals. Learn more about the variety of administrative roles out there.

Communications and Marketing: In times of environmental reporting, greenwashing, and increased public scrutiny, skills in writing and visualising content or marketing products and services are essential. While Artificial Intelligence can do some content creation, this will not replace all communication roles: it still needs people with the skills to create and edit writing and visuals to help green organisations get the word out in the most appropriate and societally relevant ways.

Customer Relations and Member Management: Addressing customers or managing memberships is vital for green organisations to keep people on board. Skills and experiences in this field will be welcomed with open arms when respective roles open up in a green organisation, especially if you have a passion for and basic knowledge of environmental aspects.

Human Resources: Human Resources (HR) is the division of a business responsible for finding, recruiting, and training job applicants, as well as handling employee compensation, benefits, and terminations. Larger green organisations and businesses with a HR department need people with the right knowledge and skills to make sure they find, train, and retain their staff. See current HR jobs for green organisations on GreenJobs.

Managers and Leaders: Managers and leaders play an important role in achieving a more sustainable world. You may be managing a green company or department, or you may choose to use your influence to make your organisation greener.



Accounting: Accountants use their financial skills and expertise to inform decision-making and advise an organisation on how to manage their profitability and efficiency. This is important in order for any organisation to function - but what's more, green accounting means to take into account environmental as well as organisational costs and find the best way to meet financial goals while minimising environmental impact.

Green-enabling job case studies

Natalie Rees: Communications Officer at the EAUC

Natalie's academic background is in geography and she began her career in a social science research role and volunteering with young people, before joining the EAUC, an organisation putting sustainability into the heart of tertiary education. Here, she contributes to the smooth running of EAUC by managing online platforms, designing resources, and engaging members and stakeholders.



Julie Wilde*: Administrative Officer at an environmental not-for-profit organisation

Julie has worked in marketing for many years, both in the private and public sectors. Now she works for an environmental charity, and supports the whole team on a day-to-day basis through member management, reporting, administering communications, and other tasks that are key for the organisation to operate.

While she does not have an environmental background, throughout her time at this charity, Julie has gained environmental knowledge and now also supports environmental workshops and webinars as a facilitator.



*Julie Wilde is a pseudonym as this person preferred to remain anonymous.

1.2.4 Making your job greener



Even if you are doing a job that does not explicitly relate to the environment, you can still do your job more greenly. For example, if you are working in Hair and Beauty, you can choose which products you buy and reduce resource consumption - you can even get certified as a Sustainable Stylist. As a waiter or waitress in a café or restaurant, you can improve waste separation, avoiding food waste. As a doctor or nurse, you can get clued up about sustainable healthcare. In an IT support role, you can ensure that equipment is used efficiently, procure more energy efficient devices, and improve recycling and reuse processes, as you'll see in the case study below.

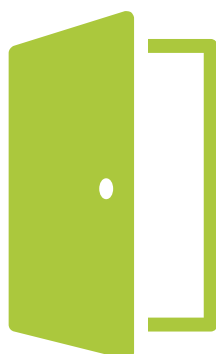
CASE STUDY: Calum Rodgers, ICT Manager at Dumfries and Galloway College



Calum works as the ICT (Information and Communications Technology) Manager for Dumfries and Galloway College. He is responsible for the Digital Services team which looks after all the technology in the college, as well as providing support to staff and students. While that might not necessarily sound like a 'green job', Calum has found ways to do his job more sustainably, inspired by his time as an IT Manager for a renewable energy company. Examples of this include:

- Upgrading and downsizing the on-premise data centre which has significantly reduced energy use.
- Introducing a managed printing service that gives the college an overview of how much paper is used and its environmental impact.
- Replacing more than 160 older, inefficient printers with 21 modern multifunction devices with a lower environmental impact.
- Using a WEEE recycling company when disposing of hardware, rather than sending devices to landfill.

Opening green doors



Having basic knowledge around environmental issues ([see p. 19](#)) can help to do your job more greenly – and it can also lead to new career opportunities if you consistently practice and encourage more eco-friendly behaviours.

This is especially the case if you formalise your role and become an environmental or green champion at work. Learn more about this in this article from [Cambridge Carbon Footprint](#) and the Guardian's [The secret to becoming a green office champion](#).

1.3 Unsure which career path to take?

Deciding which route to go down to find a career, what to study, what to specialise on, or where to apply to, can be difficult. You might also be looking for a career change, but aren't quite sure where to go to. Thankfully, there are some great resources out there that can help you find a direction:



80,000 Hours, a guide on jobs with purpose, has great advice on how to narrow down which career to choose, and where you can make the biggest positive impact globally on various social and environmental issues.

Skills Development Scotland's About Me Tool helps you identify potential careers based on a questionnaire, while their **Skills Discovery Tool** helps you identify your top skills based on previous job or volunteering roles.

The University of Cambridge has shared a series of **short documentary films called Careers to Solve the Climate Crisis**, which will be of interest to anyone considering a green career.

Scottish Water has an interactive careers map that allows you to see how you can use a variety of skills and backgrounds with them.

Remember, in education settings, you can always speak to your **careers advisor or tutor to ask for their views and guidance.**

NEWS SOURCES: You can find more examples of green fields and jobs by staying up to date with green news through newsletters or podcasts.



- [Green Edge podcast](#) for green developments in the UK.
- [Guardian Down to Earth Newsletter](#) for global and UK news.
- [Keep Scotland Beautiful](#) for environmental and nature news in Scotland.

2

Benefits: Why do a green job?

Why go for a green job? Whether it's for purpose, pay, or a job that allows you to gain expertise in a growing field: we've summarised some of the benefits of entering a green career below.



A job that's in demand

Both Scotland and the UK's economies are moving towards becoming greener. The National Strategy for Economic Transformation, and policies such as the [Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan](#), the [Biodiversity Strategy](#), and the [Circular Economy Bill](#) are strong indicators that the green economy will be a priority for the foreseeable future.



A job with purpose

Studies from the UK ([Wrike Happiness Index, Compensation, 2019](#)) and other parts of the world ([Meaningful Work, Happiness at Work, and Turnover Intentions, 2023](#)) have found that having a job that gives you a feeling of purpose makes you happier.



A job with a bright future

With greener economies here to stay, so too are green jobs and the skills they require. As green sectors are still relatively new and growing rapidly, gaining skills and experience now will help you get ahead of the pack and open doors to future career opportunities.



A well-paid job

The extensive [Green Jobs in Scotland report](#) from 2022 shows that green jobs are, on average, better paid than non-green jobs. This mainly relates to Net Zero and Nature Emergency jobs, such as engineering, construction, transport, energy, waste, and agriculture.



FUTURE FACT: The green economy is already here

More than 78,000 green infrastructure jobs are required by 2031 in Scotland, while there are 195,000 nature-based sector jobs already. Read more, and see predictions for other regions, on the [Green Careers Hub regional view](#).

3

Training, Knowledge, and Skills Development

There are many paths to a green job. We highlight a few ways to learn the skills that can help you to enter a green job below. But you might find others or combine several of these - there is no 'one way' and what you learn in formal education, in your life, or on the job, matters.

What knowledge and skills will help me to find a green job? Click on any of the headers below to navigate to the respective section in this guide:

- General sustainability knowledge
- Transferrable and meta skills
- Degrees, apprenticeships, and courses to develop specialist knowledge and skills developed (especially for more technical jobs)
- Knowledge and skills developed through experiences, including part time jobs and volunteering
- Building networks and a community

SUPPORT: Green STEM skills are for everyone



As explained in our [busted myths section](#), not all green jobs are STEM jobs. However, STEM is vital to solving many pressing environmental issues. Women are typically underrepresented in STEM - but that is changing. If you are a **woman or non-binary person** and feel like there are barriers to you entering a STEM career, check out [Equate Scotland](#) for support, including Careers Clinics, CV advice and workshops. You may also consider reading "[Your Green Career: the Handbook for young women and non-binary changemakers](#)" by Traci Lewis.

CASE STUDY: Sharon Otieno, inspired by women in STEM



Sharon, who you can read more about on [p. 9](#), is currently studying Chemical Regulation and Innovation (M.Sc) and is on track to entering a green career. About being a woman in STEM, Sharon says: "I am glad to have had phenomenal women ahead of me who have disrupted the status quo and made a name for themselves in this male-dominated field, an indication to me that it is possible. It is not easy, but it has been done before, I get a lot of inspiration from women like Marie Curie, Frances H.

Arnold, Jennifer Doudna amongst many others who made or are making a name for themselves by creating unshakable legacies. It is for these reasons that I consider myself an equal, well-capacitated, and very capable woman to pursue a career in STEM."

3.1 General Sustainability Knowledge

It is important to gain some general sustainability and environmental knowledge – for **every job, whether ‘traditionally’ green or not, is greening**. For example, for a vast majority of jobs, the office building heating, energy, and waste systems are changing, equipment and reporting requirements become greener, and how you speak about the outputs of your work will increasingly be checked for their impact on the environment.



Having basic knowledge of environmental concepts is important. This includes for example climate change, Net Zero, green and circular economy, pollution and waste, and biodiversity and nature based solutions.

If you feel that you don’t know enough about environmental basics, you can take **short courses or join online trainings**. While a certificate from paid courses can be useful, it is not a necessity – what’s more important is that you are confident about these concepts and understand how they relate to practice. Some free and low-cost courses and resources include:

- **My World of Work Learn & Train** contains a great overview of free online courses, as well as coaching, mentoring and funding.
- **Zero Waste Scotland** has a variety of free webinars and resources on zero waste and a circular economy.
- **Carbon Literacy Training** (CLT) is offered by various organisations across the UK, some paid and some for free. CLT is a comprehensive training around various climate issues and steps you personally and at your workplace can take to reduce emissions.
- **Future Learn** offers free courses around a variety of environmental topics.
- **SDG Learn** offers various courses around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals - for example, check out these course relating to SDG 13 – Climate Action.

TAKING ACTION: Campaigners have demanded better climate education.



Do you feel your education is not equipping you with the sustainability knowledge you need? Join campaigns such as Teach the Future or organisations like Students Organising for Sustainability UK to demand better sustainability education.

3.2 Transferrable and Meta Skills

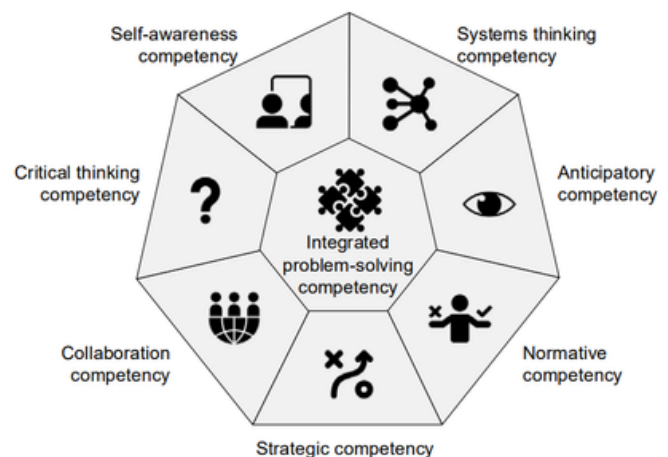
To enter a green job, you will need a variety of skills. While some are technical, many will be **transferrable skills, sometimes also referred to as soft skills**. This includes, for example, analytical and creative thinking, which “remain the most important skills for workers in 2023” (2023 Future of Jobs Report, [World Economic Forum](#)). Below are two frameworks that might help you understand and identify your transferrable skills.

Meta Skills

In Scotland, the [Skills 4.0 report](#) describes a set of ‘meta skills’ needed for the future, and the challenges we will face. These skills include Self-Management (Focusing, Adapting, Integrity, Initiative), Social Intelligence (Communicating, Collaborating, Feeling, Leading) and Innovation (Curiosity, Creativity, Critical thinking, Sense-making). Check Skills Development Scotland’s [progression framework](#) to read about these in more detail, and check in with yourself about how far you have developed these meta skills with [these self-evaluation tools](#).

Sustainability Competencies

Similarly, UNESCO’s [key competencies in Education for Sustainable Development](#) are a set of eight competencies consisting of knowledge, skills, and values vital to achieving a more sustainable society - see diagram. These competencies will therefore help you to enter a green job. Which ones do you think you have developed more, or less?



Source: [Mapping the CDIO Syllabus to the UNESCO Key Competencies for Sustainability](#), from Rosén et al (2019)

How do I develop these skills and competencies?

While there may be some courses and frameworks to specifically train in some of these areas, many of these skills and competencies are developed throughout your life, work experience and education. When applying for roles, consider situations where you have successfully applied these skills or showcased these competencies (see [Employment section](#))

There are also specific programmes that support you to develop these competencies. For example, one of Change Agents’ Education Programmes called the [Sustainability Leadership Skills Programme](#) is designed to help with the transition from education to work and covers transferrable skills. Some 'pay what you can' places are available.

3.3 Degree Courses & Apprenticeships

Many green jobs require **specialist or technical skills** which can be acquired through various means. We have listed some of the main pathways below. However, there is no right path and any combination of the below, including gap years, career breaks or something else entirely, is just as valid as entering a job straight after education.

Degree courses

A university or college degree is a great asset to prove that you have gained the right skills for a green job, especially for jobs that require strong technical knowledge and skills, like engineering or (green) finance.

If you are thinking about studying to enter a green job, try searching for key words like “environmental” or “sustainability” in the [UniGuide](#) and check the course catalogue of your local college. Have a look at the [Understanding section](#) again to see some examples green jobs and what types of skills you may need for these.

DID YOU KNOW? Not all green jobs require a degree.

If a degree at university or college isn't for you, there are still lots of green jobs open to you. Indeed has published this list of [Jobs That Help the Environment That Require No Degree](#).



Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships allow you to learn specific technical skills in a work-based learning setting, and many apprenticeships can lead to a green job. From Accountancy to Plumbing and Heating to Supply Chain Management, apprenticeships are varied across many subjects and fields.

In Scotland, there are three types of apprenticeships:

- A [foundation apprenticeship](#) allows you to gain work experience while you go to school (5th & 6th year).
- In [modern apprenticeships](#), you learn on the job and earn a wage. You'll learn real-life industry skills while you work towards an accredited qualification. You must be 16 or older to take this route – but there is no maximum age!
- [Graduate apprenticeships](#), like modern apprenticeships, allow you to gain industry experience and a wage - as well as a degree. You'll split your time between working and studying for your degree at university or college.

[Apprenticeships.scot](#) has more information and lets you browse opportunities. Specifically for green jobs, the [Understanding section](#) lists many job examples that you can get through an apprenticeship. If you are looking for green apprenticeships in England, the [Green Careers Hub](#) has some great guidance.

3.4 Upskilling, Short Courses and Adult Education

A full apprenticeship or college or university course is not the only way to learn new skills and knowledge for a green job – or in other words, to upskill or sometimes reskill. In addition to making sure you have general sustainability knowledge (see p. 19), you can also **take a shorter course around a specific skill or area of knowledge**. Adult education providers also often can support you to access further or higher education.

KEY DEFINITION: What are upskilling and reskilling?



Upskilling means undertaking learning to expand an existing skill. These additional skills enhance your performance in your current role, potentially advancing you along your career path. Upskilling is important for green jobs as it helps make your existing knowledge and skills fit for environmental requirements.

Reskilling is the process of learning new skills so you can do a different job than before. This may still be in the same organisation, but your role has changed to different tasks. When industries change significantly, this can sometimes require reskilling.

Finding courses

You can find courses near you through a simple **Google search for the skill you are looking for and your local area**. You can search for general green or sustainability skills, or a more specific area like heat pump installation. It's also worth getting in touch with local education providers and public bodies to see what they offer.

Colleges often have green skills programmes with a variety of short courses related to the climate emergency and net zero. See examples of such courses at [West College Scotland](#), [Dumfries & Galloway College](#), and [Edinburgh College](#) - and there are many more! Find providers for your course of interest by entering key words into the [My World Of Work course search](#) and check out your local college.

Universities sometimes offer free courses or micro credentials, meaning online professional development short courses designed to help you build professional skills. For example, have a look at the Open University's [Transforming your Organisation for Sustainability](#) and [Transport and Sustainability](#) courses, and the University of Glasgow's [Sustainable Tourism](#) course.

Local education providers across the UK may offer courses with a sustainability focus as summarised by the [Education and Training Foundation](#) or listed by [City and Guilds](#). There are also [Skills Bootcamps](#) available for those living in England.

Other short course and upskilling providers: Colleges and universities are not the only provider of green short courses – here are some examples of other organisations that focus on professional learning and provide training:

- **IEMA** offers various courses on green skills and sustainability, from general to specific technical skills, including courses such as Environmental Auditing; Carbon, GHGs, Foot Printing, Accounting and Management; Sustainable Business Practice; and Sustainable Procurement.
- **Energy Skills Partnership** offers links to resources and training for various industries like Construction, Hydrogen, Wind and more.
- **BE-ST (Built Environment – Smarter Transformation) & Low Carbon Trust** offer training around sustainable construction, retrofit, and sustainability, as well as some events around construction.
- **The MCS fund for heating engineers** provides heating engineers with an interest in installing heat pumps (either air, ground, or water source) with a grant to become MCS certified.
- **SkillSeeder** provides an overview of funded training in Scotland, much of which is ‘green’.
- **Adult learning centres, charities and community organisations** might also provide courses around environmental and sustainability skills. See, for example, [Adult Community Learning Essex](#) which provides various sustainability courses and supports access to further and higher education. Use a web search engine or ask in your local area to find providers.

Some, but not all of these courses will be free. Ask the training providers or, if you’re in work, your employer for financial support if you’re struggling to stem any course costs. You can also see an overview of specifically green or wider [free training on My World of Work](#).



TOP TIP: Haven't seen the training you're looking for yet? Try searching key words for your desired profession along with your country or region using Google or another search engine.

3.5 Developing knowledge and skills through experiences

You don't only learn important knowledge skills, and capacities in formal education – what you learn in your life, free time, and previous work experience is equally important and can help you develop your understanding, transferrable skills, and motivation.

Extracurricular activities

If you are in education, there may be opportunities for you to engage outside of your course. Joining clubs and societies can help you develop and demonstrate your communication and organisational skills, or your project coordination and teamworking experience. Read about [the value of extracurricular engagement on Prospects](#).

Joining groups with an environmental or sustainability focus can also help you to build your green knowledge and skills. Various societies address environmental issues, from the [University of Edinburgh's Energy and Sustainability society](#) to the [Sustainable Fashion Society at Glasgow City College](#). Contact your student union or association to learn what groups are active at your institution.

Volunteering

Volunteering helps you gain experience of taking responsibility and teamworking, and demonstrates your motivation to work for a cause you believe in. You can find a variety of opportunities by browsing [Volunteer Scotland's website](#), while NatureScot provides a list of [useful contacts for people interested in environmental volunteering](#).

Part-time jobs

Having any kind of work experience will improve your chances in the job market. Consider finding a part-time or holiday job while still studying or training to gain experience and references. You could seek part-time work specific to your sector or completely unrelated to sustainability.

Internships, placements, and student projects

An internship can be a great way to gain work experience, start networking, and find out whether a job is for you. Depending on the sector and your background and previous experience, you might struggle to find paid internships. If that makes it difficult for you to do an internship, a part time job can be a more feasible option.

If you're at college or university, or are planning to go, many degrees and courses offer placements and student projects. Finding a placement in a field with or without an environmental focus can help you gain experience. For example, if your placement is in an accounting firm, you could take the initiative to find ways to reduce waste and save resources. This could be as small as encouraging your co-workers to ditch the disposable coffee cups and use mugs instead, or speaking with IT to see if out-of-use devices could be donated to a local community.

Often, your course will allow you to choose different modules or projects according to your interests. Taking the opportunity to choose environmental topics and projects, or making your project more environmentally friendly, can be another way to improve and showcase your green knowledge and skills.

SUPPORT: Finding an internship doesn't have to be a struggle.

- Zero Waste Scotland have set up a [green internship scheme](#).
- [Green Jobs for Nature](#) have information and guidance on how to find green internships.
- [On Purpose Associates](#) is a great programme if you already have 3+ years of work experience. While being paid a salary, you get access to a community, training, and two placements in different organisations over one year.



Other experiences

Not everyone has the time, space, or resources to do things aside from work or education. Maybe you have caring responsibilities or are not able to do any of the activities above for health reasons. It is important to know that what you do in your daily life matters, too. For example, caring for someone else demonstrates valuable skills like responsibility and organisation. Maybe you mend your clothes, grow your own food or upcycle. These activities also demonstrate your understanding of and motivation to act on environmental issues.

3.6 Joining networks and finding a community

Growing a deeper understanding of the field that interests you and building a network is an important addition to any training or learning you are doing. Read more about the power of building relationships in the Guardian's [guide to networking](#), and find some advice below.

Finding a community

Of course, when you are starting out it can be difficult to build a network or find a community of people in your field. But doing so will help you gain a deeper understanding of sector issues, and improve your confidence and wellbeing.

Examples of these networks and communities include:

- Casual networking events, such as [People Planet Pint](#) organised by Small99 in many UK cities.
- Programmes or internships, such as the [2050 Climate Group](#) or [On Purpose Associate Programme](#).
- Environmental groups for ethnic minorities such as [Ethnic Minority Environmental Network \(EMEN\)](#) and [Climate Reframe](#).
- Green groups for young people such as [UK Youth 4 Nature](#) and [Force of Nature Youth Network](#).
- Green groups for women, including the [Global Women in Sustainability network](#) on LinkedIn.
- Environmental groups aimed at different professions, including for example [Creatives for Climate](#), [Creative Carbon Scotland](#), [Engineers for a Sustainable World](#) and [Climate Psychology Alliance](#).

TOP TIP: Why not try searching your desired or current profession together with keywords like “climate”, “sustainability”, or “environmental network” to find a community?



Professional bodies

Another good way into a professional network is to join professional associations which support, develop, and represent the interests of those working in that area. Many offer a professional development programme with certification, networking opportunities, and other benefits. Joining one of these bodies is a good way to keep up to date with developments in your interest area, and to display your sector knowledge. Some offer lower price student or graduate membership. Some associations with a strong environmental focus include:

- [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management](#)
- [Chartered Institute of Environmental Health](#)
- [Chartered Institution of Wastes Management](#)
- [Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management](#)
- [Energy Institute](#)
- [Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability](#)
- [Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment \(IEMA\)](#)
- [Institution of Environmental Sciences](#)
- [Landscape Institute](#)
- [Royal Geographical Society](#)
- [Royal Town Planning Institute](#)
- [The Geological Society](#)

Building a professional network online

Consider using professional social media platforms, such as LinkedIn. As you join these platforms and start making connections or simply following organisations and people you find interesting, more useful posts will appear on your feed, and you will begin to encounter people that are good to have in your network. LinkedIn has [guidance on how to set up your profile](#).

Other platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter), can also be useful.

Prospects has shared [guidance on using social media for job hunting](#), and the EAUC hosted a [Careers Webinar](#) with useful advice on networking.



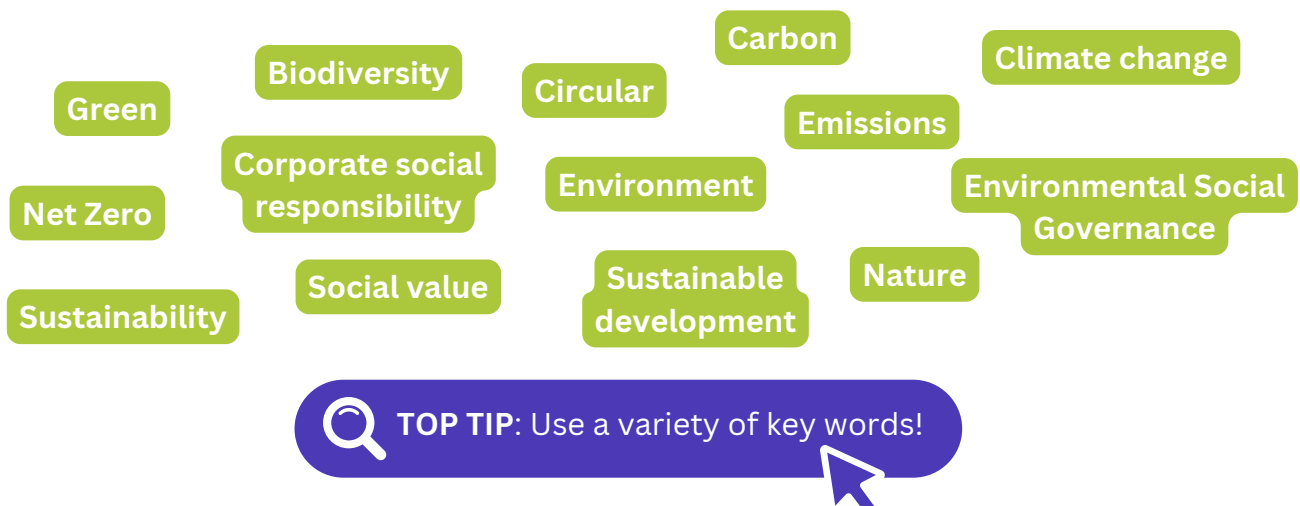
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Employment: Finding and getting a green job

Now that you have a better understanding of what green jobs are, their benefits, and some training routes – how do you actually get a green job? We will walk you through searching, applying, and interviewing for a green job in this section.

4.1 Searching for a green job

There are many different green jobs, and they hide between many different key words. Next to any specialism words you might search for (e.g. engineer, administrator, developer), use a variety of ‘green’ key words in your search:



The [Green Careers Hub jargon buster](#) is a great way to further browse some key words – from behaviour change to triple bottom line – and get an explanation for terms you might not be sure about. This extended keyword collection is especially useful to look for jobs that require more non-technical or ‘non-green’ skills.

Use environmental job search engines

You can use specific environmental job search engines to browse for jobs. Different organisations advertise their jobs through different platforms, so using a variety of websites will help you find the right opportunity.

- [CharityJob](#)
- [Countryside Job Service](#)
- [EnvironmentJob](#)
- [Environment Jobs](#)
- [Goodmoves](#)
- [GreenJobs.co.uk](#)
- [JobsforSustainability.com](#)
- [Change Agents Job Board](#)

Some generic job engines also have sustainability categories to browse, including [Guardian Jobs](#), [Indeed](#), [Job Is Job](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Finding green organisations

Especially if you are looking for a [Behaviour and System Change](#) or [Green-enabling](#) job, it can help to just search for your background or skills – and then identify which organisations work towards environmental solutions.

However, it's worth looking at these organisations a little more closely – are they really working to solve environmental and social issues, or are they greenwashing? Check for:



Signs of Greenwashing: Greenwashing means to make something look environmentally friendly, when it actually isn't. The BBC has published a list of [ways to spot greenwashing in businesses](#). These include false claims and vague language, or a strong focus on offsetting rather than reducing emissions. Greenpeace has a [quiz to test how well you can spot greenwashing](#).



Certifications and standards: There are various accreditation processes businesses can go through to certify their “greenness”. Greener Matters has published a list of some [UK business accreditations](#) and [international certifications](#). While these certifications are not a guarantee, the more rigorous ones can be a good indicator.



Company reviews: [Glassdoor](#) is a website where employees can anonymously rate and review their employer. Of course, these are subjective reviews based on people's experiences rather than objective criteria, but some [reviews highlight greenwashing](#).

Try speculative or creative job hunting

There are more jobs out there than search engines suggest – for example, when a company is expanding or when a position is about to become vacant. You can hunt for such hidden jobs “speculatively”, meaning to go directly to employers and see what they have coming up. Change Agents has published [these top tips on creative job hunting](#).



4.2 Applying for a green job



TOP RESOURCES: My World of Work has a number of useful tools like [general advice](#), [webinars](#), a [skills discovery tool](#) and a [values assessment](#). **Change Agents** have produced some great [guidance for people applying to jobs in sustainability](#) - see also their [blog](#) and [events](#).

Your CV

Once you have found an interesting job opportunity, it's time to start thinking about your application. Your CV is the main arsenal in your application toolkit and what will be most commonly requested from prospective employers.

Your CV is the perfect opportunity to highlight your sustainability credentials and promote any work (voluntary or paid), education or hobbies that are applicable to the job. Make sure that your CV is updated for each application - this means tweaking a core version of the document each time to highlight areas that will be most relevant for the company and position you are applying for. Never submit a CV over two pages long, and structure it clearly so it is understood at a glance.

Find more tips and tricks on how to write your CV:

- The Guardian has [guidance on designing your CV for environment and sustainability sector](#).
- Change Agents has [CV guidance for sustainability professionals](#).
- The Institution of Environmental Sciences has CV guidance for [graduates entering the environmental sector](#).
- Give Google a go to find specific guidance and example CVs for your background or job you are applying to.

Your Cover Letter

Cover letters are typically one page long and provide an opportunity to present your personal narrative, as well as express your personality, ethos and motivation. If you do not have previous experience working in the sustainability sector, your cover letter is the perfect opportunity to clearly explain your applicable and transferable skills, and highlight your desire to move into work within this sector or in a specific job role.

To show that you are the right fit for the organisation, it can help to research their ethos, history, and current work. This can usually be found in the 'About Us' section of their website.

[Prospects](#), [Reed](#), [The Guardian](#) and [Change Agents](#) have guidance that will help you write an excellent cover letter.

4.3 Interviewing for a green job

The interview is one of the last crucial steps of securing the job you have been pursuing. Your cover letter and CV have been successful in attracting the attention of the employer: **now is your chance to expand on your relevant experience and express your enthusiasm for the role.** The interview is the best way for the employer to get a feel for your personality and how you would fit with the company, as well as to make sure that you know what you are talking about.

The best way to succeed at the interview stage is to **plan and practice.** Generally interviews will be based around your CV, cover letter and the job description, all of which you should be familiar with before an interview.

When preparing to talk about transferrable skills such as communication, collaboration or project management, make sure that you have examples of **times you have exhibited these skills in mind** and use the STAR framework to construct your response. These situations don't have to be exclusively from previous jobs: Experience from volunteering or other non-work contexts is valuable, too.

You should prepare for **common interview questions** and **trickier questions** too. Study the job description and try to think about situations where you demonstrated the skills they are asking for – either in work, your personal life or volunteering.

Interviews can take **multiple forms**, from one to one or panel interviews to test centres, with the style used depending on the type of job applied for and the preference of the company. It is not uncommon for interviewees to be requested to pre-prepare a presentation or perform some tasks which will be part of the job role to demonstrate your ability. This can be a great opportunity to shine - prepare in advance and you should do well.

TOP GUIDANCE: Check out these top tips for interviews [My World of Work](#), and Change Agents' [14 Steps to Smash an Online Interview](#).



Last but not least: You got this! If you're here, that already shows that you care and that you are preparing. From our personal experience as a team here at the EAUC, we can say that none of us landed their dream job right in their first ever interview. Interviewing can be nerve wrecking, but it really does get better with practice and the right support (check out all the links to further guidance). That's why it can be worth it to apply to jobs you are only kind of interested in - you might get feedback for your application, or the chance to practice your interview skills and build your confidence!



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We hope you found this guide useful and wish you all the best for your (green) future!

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Have any feedback, questions or would like to be featured in this guide as a case study? Just email scotland@eauc.org.uk!

HOW TO FIND a job that's GOOD FOR YOU AND THE PLANET

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