Pathways

East of England COOP

Your Application Guide

Helping you take your next step

Seen a role you'd love to apply for but not sure what to do next?

Applying for a new role can feel daunting, especially if you haven't done it before. Our guide is here to help you feel more confident at every stage, from writing your CV and submitting your application to preparing for your interview.

At East of England Co-op, we're interested in more than just your experience. We want to understand who you are, what motivates you and what you could bring to our team.

Ready to get started? Let's take it step by step.



1 Your CV

For some roles at East of England Co-op, you'll need a CV as part of your application.

What is a CV?

A CV is your opportunity to tell us who you are, what you've done and what you could bring to the role.

It usually includes your:

- Work history
- Education and qualifications
- Skills
- Achievements
- Volunteering or other relevant experience



What makes a great CV?

Hiring managers may review lots of applications, so make it easy for them to understand why you could be a good fit.

Make it relevant

Read the job description carefully and highlight the skills and experience that are most relevant to the role.

Show your transferable skills

You don't always need direct experience to be a great candidate. Think about the skills you've developed through previous roles, education, hobbies or other experiences.

For example, working in a café could demonstrate customer service, teamwork, communication and the ability to work under pressure.

Show what you've achieved

Don't just tell us what you were responsible for. Where possible, explain what you achieved.

Instead of:

"Responsible for serving customers."

Try:

"Provided friendly customer service to around 50 customers per shift, helping to create a positive experience."



Use numbers where you can

Figures can help bring your experience to life. Think about how many customers you helped, how much money you raised, how many people you worked with or how quickly you completed something.

Focus on outcomes

Where possible, explain the impact of your work. Did you save time or money, improve something, receive positive feedback or take on more responsibility?

Keep it clear and consistent

Use a simple layout, clear headings and bullet points. Check your spelling and grammar and use the same tense throughout your CV.

Starting your career?

Don't worry if you don't have lots of work experience. We don't expect everyone to have a long list of previous jobs.

Think about the experiences you've already had and what they say about you.

You could include:

- School, college or university projects
- Coursework or academic achievements
- Part-time jobs
- Volunteering
- Work experience
- Sports, clubs or societies

Think about the skills and behaviours you've developed, not just the experience itself.

We're interested in your potential, your attitude and what you could bring to the team, not just how long you've been working.

What not to include on your CV

Try to avoid:

- Information that isn't relevant to the role
- Long paragraphs instead of concise bullet points
- Unnecessary personal information
- Exaggerated or untrue experience
- Spelling or grammatical errors
- An overly complicated design
- Avoid including unnecessary personal information, such as your full home address, date of birth or photographs.

Top tip: Keep your CV concise. For most candidates, two pages is plenty.

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2 Your Cover Letter



Some roles may ask you to provide a cover letter or supporting statement.

Think of this as your opportunity to explain why you're interested in the role and why you could be a good fit.

A strong cover letter should:

Tell us why you want the role

What attracted you to the opportunity? What interests you about the responsibilities?

Tell us why you want to work for us

What interests you about East of England Co-op? Perhaps it's our values, the work we do in local communities or the opportunity to develop your career.

Connect your experience to the role

Use examples that demonstrate the skills and qualities we're looking for. Remember, these don't always need to come from previous employment.

Keep it focused

You don't need to repeat everything that's already on your CV. Use your cover letter to bring your application to life.

Top Tip: Always tailor your cover letter to the role. Avoid sending the exact same letter to every employer.

Cover letters aren't required for every vacancy, so check the advert for the specific requirements. If a cover letter or supporting statement is requested, follow the instructions provided in the advert.

3 Submitting Your Application

How do I apply?

All applications must be submitted through our careers homepage.

You'll need to create a careers account before starting your application. You'll then be guided through the application process, which may include pre-screening questions relevant to the role.

These questions help us understand whether you meet the essential requirements for the position. For example, you may be asked about your right to work in the UK or other requirements specific to the role.

Once you've applied, keep an eye on your inbox, including your junk folder, for updates about your application.

A quick note about our diversity questionnaire

As part of our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, we invite applicants to complete an anonymous diversity questionnaire.

Your responses are not linked to your application and are used for statistical purposes. This helps us understand our applicant pool, identify opportunities to improve our recruitment processes and work towards a more inclusive workplace.



Top tip: Before submitting, make sure you've completed every required section. Only completed applications will be considered.

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4 You've Been Invited to Interview!

Congratulations! Being invited to interview means we've seen something in your application that we'd like to explore further.

Interviews can feel daunting, but they don't need to. We want our interviews to feel as relaxed and conversational as possible, giving you the opportunity to show us who you are, talk about your experiences and ask questions about the role.

Before your interview

We'll always aim to give you as much notice as possible. Use this time to prepare.

Read the job description

Look at the skills, experience and behaviours we're looking for. Think about examples from your own experience that demonstrate these.

Research our co-op

Spend some time finding out about East of England Co-op, what we do, our values and the communities we serve.

You could explore our website and social media channels to get a better understanding of our business and the different opportunities available.

Prepare your examples



Think about situations where you've:

- Solved a problem
- Worked as part of a team
- Helped someone
- Overcome a challenge
- Taken responsibility
- Learnt something new
- Achieved something you're proud of

These examples can come from work, education, volunteering, hobbies or other experiences.

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Understanding our values

At East of England Co-op, our values are at the heart of how we work. During the recruitment process, we may ask value-based questions to understand more about you, your experiences and how you approach different situations.

These questions help us understand how you might bring our values to life in your day-to-day work.

Our five values are:



Each value is supported by behaviours that help bring it to life. We've included some examples below so you can understand what they mean in practice and how you might demonstrate them through your own experiences.

Do the Right Thing

Act with honesty, integrity and take responsibility for your actions.

Unstoppable

Embrace change, take initiative and look for ways to improve and overcome challenges.

Stronger Together

Work collaboratively, share ideas and support others to achieve shared goals.

A Place for People to Grow

Be open to learning, welcome feedback and encourage yourself and others to develop.

Respect for the Individual

Treat everyone with kindness and fairness, value differences and make people feel included.

How can you prepare for value-based questions?

Think about examples from your own experiences that demonstrate these values.

You might reflect on a time when you:

- Did the right thing, even when it wasn't the easiest option.
- Learnt something new or helped someone else develop.
- Overcame a challenge or kept going when things were difficult.
- Worked with others to achieve a shared goal.
- Adapted your approach to support someone's needs.

The questions you're asked will vary depending on the role you're applying for, so focus on preparing a few examples that show who you are and what you could bring to our co-op.

Using the STAR method

The STAR method can help you structure your answers to interview questions, making it easier to explain your experience clearly.

S **Situation** – What was happening? Give some context.

T **Task** – What did you need to do? What was your responsibility?

A **Action** – What did you do? Explain the steps you took and why.

R **Result** – What happened? What was the outcome, and what did you learn?

For example, if you're asked about a time you worked well in a team, explain the situation, your role, how you worked with others and what you achieved together.

Don't worry about memorising your answers word for word. The aim is to feel prepared, not rehearsed.

Remember: There isn't always one perfect answer. We're interested in understanding what you did, why you approached the situation that way and what you learnt from the experience.

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5 On the Day

A little preparation can help you feel more relaxed and confident.



If your interview is in person:

- Check your journey and plan to arrive a little early.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get there.
- Make sure you know where you're going and who to ask for when you arrive.



If your interview is online:

- Check your internet connection, camera and microphone beforehand.
- Make sure you can access Microsoft Teams if that's the platform being used.
- Find a quiet space where you feel comfortable speaking.

Most importantly, take a breath and be yourself.

What to Wear

We have a smart-casual dress code for our colleagues and have similar expectations for candidates attending interviews. This could include a shirt, blouse, smart top, chinos, tailored trousers, a skirt or a dress. Choose an outfit that feels comfortable, looks neat and helps you feel confident.

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6 During the Interview

Take your time

Be present and confident: Arrive on time, greet everyone in the room and make good eye contact. Project a positive and enthusiastic demeanour throughout the interview.

Listen carefully to each question. It's completely fine to pause and think before answering, and don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you're unsure what we're asking.

Use your examples

Don't just tell us you're a good communicator or team player. Show us through an example.

Explain what you did, how you approached the situation and what the outcome was.

Be yourself

We're interested in getting to know you, not hearing a rehearsed version of what you think we want to hear.

Be honest about your experiences, what you've learnt and where you'd like to develop.

Ask questions

An interview works both ways. You should use the opportunity to find out whether the role and our co-op are right for you.



You could ask:

- What would a typical day look like?
- What would success look like in this role?
- What opportunities are there to learn and develop?
- What support or training would I receive?
- What do you enjoy most about working here?

Asking questions shows curiosity and helps you make an informed decision about your next step.

Finally...Whatever the outcome, an interview is a chance to learn more about yourself, your strengths and what you're looking for in your career. Good luck. You've got this!

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