# C1-C2 English Worksheet

## The First-Job Trap: Why Do Entry-Level Jobs Require Experience?

23 November 2026 | The Guardian, 17 and 20 November 2026

### Article

After completing an art diploma, 19-year-old Amy Butterworth entered a relentless job search in Blackpool. To apply for a retail position, she was asked to jump through hoops: film herself from several angles, read words aloud and submit identity details. When an invitation finally appeared, the interview slots had vanished within two minutes. The absurdity encapsulates a demoralising vicious circle: newcomers are expected to bring experience to jobs that should help them acquire it. Young applicants may find themselves at the mercy of opaque screening systems before a human being has assessed their potential.

In Blackpool, more than one in five 16- to 24-year-olds are not in employment, education or training, according to Guardian reporting. Some employers receive around 200 applications per vacancy; the newspaper also described concerns about algorithmic bias and postcode screening. Even seemingly neutral screening can stack the odds against marginalised candidates, while those without professional networks may slip through the net. Amy volunteered at a primary school, yet repeated rejection eroded her confidence. If companies refuse to take a chance on beginners, how can they ever get a foot in the door? The question deserves scrutiny rather than superficial assurances that recruitment is fair.

Local schemes try to break the cycle. Blackpool's Platform hub helps with CVs and interviews; Amy has since found bar work and hopes to become a tattooist. In east London, a supported internship combines workplace experience with specialist coaching for young people with learning disabilities or autism. Although both initiatives aim to level the playing field, a sustainable solution requires employers themselves to rethink entry-level requirements. Paid placements may widen access; unpaid ones risk excluding less affluent applicants. Employers cannot merely pay lip service to equal opportunity: tackling entrenched barriers requires holistic support and a willingness to recognise potential.

### True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

| No. | Statement | T / F |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Amy had to complete an elaborate verification process during a retail application. | |
| 2 | She successfully reserved an interview slot before they disappeared. | |
| 3 | Apparently neutral selection procedures can still produce unfair outcomes. | |
| 4 | The article presents automated screening as a reliable way to eliminate recruitment bias. | |
| 5 | Volunteering at a school prevented Amy from facing further rejection. | |
| 6 | The London programme combines workplace experience with tailored coaching. | |
| 7 | The article argues that specialist schemes alone can solve the problem. | |
| 8 | The writer suggests judging candidates by their potential, not just their experience. | |

## Phrase Match

Match each phrase (1-10) to the correct definition (A-J).

| Phrases (1-10) | Definitions (A-J) |
|---|---|
| 1. jump through hoops | A. a situation in which problems repeatedly reinforce one another |
| 2. vicious circle | B. make opportunities or conditions more equal |
| 3. at the mercy of | C. make success less likely for someone |
| 4. stack the odds against | D. claim to support an idea without acting on it |
| 5. slip through the net | E. stop a harmful, repeating pattern |
| 6. take a chance on | F. meet a series of difficult or unnecessary demands |
| 7. get a foot in the door | G. fail to receive help within an existing system |
| 8. break the cycle | H. secure an initial opportunity in an industry |
| 9. level the playing field | I. vulnerable to decisions or forces beyond one's control |
| 10. pay lip service to | J. back someone despite uncertainty about the outcome |

## Synonym Match

Match each word (1-10) to the correct synonym (A-J).

| Words (1-10) | Synonyms (A-J) |
|---|---|
| 1. relentless | A. lasting |
| 2. absurdity | B. excluded |
| 3. demoralising | C. deep-rooted |
| 4. opaque | D. ridiculousness |
| 5. bias | E. unclear |
| 6. marginalised | F. unceasing |
| 7. scrutiny | G. comprehensive |
| 8. sustainable | H. close examination |
| 9. entrenched | I. prejudice |
| 10. holistic | J. disheartening |

## Use the New Language

Choose 5 words or phrases from the worksheet and write your own sentences.

| No. | Your sentence |
|---|---|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |

## Discussion Questions

| Student A | Student B |
|---|---|
| 1. What was the most daunting part of your first job search? | 1. To what extent do experience requirements create a vicious circle, and who benefits from maintaining them? |
| 2. Have you ever had to jump through hoops to apply for a job? | 2. How might seemingly neutral screening systems reproduce social inequality, and what safeguards should employers adopt? |
| 3. Have you been rejected for a role you felt qualified for? | 3. How should employers balance transparency with confidentiality when explaining recruitment decisions? |
| 4. How important were personal connections early in your career? | 4. Do unpaid internships level the playing field or reinforce inequality? |
| 5. Have you ever benefited from a mentor's guidance? | 5. Should employers be legally obliged to train inexperienced recruits, or could this discourage hiring? |
| 6. Would you accept lower pay in exchange for valuable training? | 6. Should support prioritise rapid placements or sustainable careers? |
| 7. When have you encountered a recruitment process that seemed opaque? | 7. How could specialist coaching ensure that vulnerable applicants do not slip through the net? |
| 8. What helped you get a foot in the door in your field? | 8. How can we tell when firms merely pay lip service to meritocracy? |

## Answer Key

| | |
|---|---|
| **True/False** | 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=F, 5=F, 6=T, 7=F, 8=T |
| **Phrase Match** | 1=F, 2=A, 3=I, 4=C, 5=G, 6=J, 7=H, 8=E, 9=B, 10=D |
| **Synonym Match** | 1=F, 2=D, 3=J, 4=E, 5=I, 6=B, 7=H, 8=A, 9=C, 10=G |

## Example Sentences With the Phrases

| No. | Example sentence |
|---|---|
| 1 | Candidates should not have to jump through hoops for a basic interview. |
| 2 | Demanding experience for every junior vacancy creates a vicious circle. |
| 3 | Applicants should not be entirely at the mercy of automated decisions. |
| 4 | Unfair selection criteria may stack the odds against poorer candidates. |
| 5 | Without reliable advice, some young people slip through the net. |
| 6 | A supportive manager may take a chance on a promising beginner. |
| 7 | An apprenticeship can help a graduate get a foot in the door. |
| 8 | Paid placements could help break the cycle of repeated rejection. |
| 9 | Transparent criteria can help level the playing field. |
| 10 | Employers must do more than pay lip service to fair recruitment. |