Your gender is usually obvious from your CV (though of course not always,) so the focus is on demonstrating how your strengths and skills match the job.

Finding a gender-positive employer

Employers know that having a diverse workforce is essential for commercial as well as ethical reasons. Most employers have equal opportunities policies in place and are committed to preventing gender discrimination.

In spite of this, there's still a gender pay gap. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the gender pay gap between male and female full-time employees is 10%.

The 'glass ceiling' for women is still an issue in some industries while certain sectors have trouble recruiting a particular gender. For example, men are under-represented in primary school teaching.

How do you know if an employer is dedicated to equal opportunities?

Try to find organisations with equal opportunities policies and those which take active steps to promote equality in the workplace. Here are some signs that may indicate an employer is gender-positive:

- Organisations that hold open days for women to give them a realistic insight into the career. The employer can also demonstrate the steps they’re taking to develop the full potential of their female graduates.
- Employers who have women in senior management roles, as this suggests a positive attitude towards women’s training and development.
- Companies that have ‘family-friendly’ policies such as access to childcare or flexible working arrangements, as this indicates an understanding of issues that can possibly prevent women from reaching their potential.
- An equal opportunities form as part of the standard recruitment process suggests a commitment to equality and diversity, as these employers will usually be monitoring who applies to their positions to ensure their marketing and recruitment practices are open and fair.
- The way an organisation presents its workforce in advertising material and on their website may provide clues about diversity in the organisation. Researching the proportion of male/female workers in senior positions within the organisation can provide a valuable insight.
- Due to the Public Sector Equality Duty, public sector employers have to promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination, so it's worth considering this sector.

Don't be afraid to ask

You can question potential employers about their approach to female employees (or to male employees if you're a man entering a traditionally female profession). You may want to investigate their approaches to:

- Flexible working opportunities
- Networks and role models
• How they ensure fair and accessible processes for pay, or deal with any pay-related disputes
• Any initiatives or awards that the organisation has achieved

**Diversity issues and resources**

These include:

• **Opportunity Now** has a list of members on their website who are committed to creating an inclusive workplace for women.
• *The Times* produces a list of Top 50 Employers for Women. This provides information on the top 50 progressive organisations and their commitment to equal opportunities.
• Springboard Consultancy offers development programmes for both women (Springboard) and men (Navigator) and has a list of employers whose staff have attended these courses.
• TARGETjobs Events run recruitment events for women in areas such as IT, engineering and investment management, which give an insight into the industry and feature successful women and equal opportunities employers.
• Organisations and support networks for women. Many professional bodies have specialist networks like Women in Management (WiM) UK, which works in association with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). There are also independent organisations such as the Women's Engineering Society (WES), The Association of Women Barristers or the British Federation of Women Graduates. Many of these offer mentoring, discussion boards or scholarships for women.

All of the resources mentioned above are listed under “Further Information” at the end of this handout

**Disclosing your gender when marketing yourself to employers**

Fortunately, disclosure is not usually an issue in terms of your gender; your name is often enough to inform a potential employer whether you’re male or female. Many application forms ask for a title, for example, ’Mr’, ’Miss’ or ’Mrs’, which will make your gender obvious.

You don’t generally put ’male’ or ’female’ on your CV and there’s no need to disclose your gender at any stage of the process, unless you’re applying for a position that requires a certain gender for a genuine occupational requirement. This might include some jobs in single sex schools, some jobs in welfare services or acting jobs that need a man or a woman.

Discrimination can be both positive and negative and some employers have misconceptions that men and women have particular strengths as well as particular weaknesses.

**Using your skills and experiences in a positive way**

Whatever your gender, your experiences can demonstrate your strength and skills:

• If you’ve been raising a family or are returning from a career break you may need to translate this into language that the employer is looking for. For
example, can these experiences be used as examples of managing your time effectively?

- Be positive and focused when you show an employer how your relevant skills match those they’re looking for. Provide evidence of how you meet an employer’s specific needs and it’ll make it harder for the employer to reject your application.
- At interview, be confident and be prepared to demonstrate evidence of your abilities with examples from your previous experiences. You shouldn’t have to answer questions on circumstances that aren’t related to your ability to do a job, but preparing a positive response to such questions can be useful.
- Get some help with your applications and selection processes whenever you can. Your university careers adviser can give you tips on how to market your experiences effectively on a job application, including experience gained outside of paid employment. Professional bodies or women’s networks can also provide advice, strategies and access to female mentors. Mentors can often provide useful tips on how to combat negative perceptions, maximise your progression or provide a positive angle on any of your previous experiences.

Your rights around gender

The main law against gender discrimination is the Equality Act 2010. It brought together existing regulations against gender discrimination and other forms of discrimination into a single act to make the law simpler and remove any inconsistencies. The act states that it is unlawful for an employer to treat you unfairly because of your sex.

The act also covers other matters related to gender, for example, employers mustn't discriminate on the grounds of marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, or because you’ve undergone or intend to undergo gender reassignment.

The Equality Act covers almost all workers (men and women) and all types of organisations in the UK. It covers:

- recruitment
- employment terms and conditions
- pay and benefits
- training
- promotion and transfer opportunities
- redundancy
- dismissal

Equal terms – equal pay

Where men and women are working for the same employer they’re entitled to the same terms of employment, provided they’re doing one of the following:

- the same or similar work
- work rated as equivalent in a job evaluation conducted by the employer
- work of equal value
There may be exceptions where there's a genuine material factor which explains the difference.

Make sure you know your rights in terms of equal opportunities and fair practice in the workplace and don’t be afraid to ask questions and speak out if you think you are being treated unfairly.

You should approach your manager in the first instance, but if that's unsatisfactory there are organisations such as the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the Citizens Advice service and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) that can help.

**Further Information**

**Equality Act 2010**
https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance

**Equality and Human Rights Commission – Gender Equality**

**Gov.uk – Discrimination: your rights**
https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/discrimination-at-work

**Opportunity Now – list of organisations showing their commitment to progressing women in the workplace.**
http://opportunitynow.bitc.org.uk/membership/list-members

**The Times’ Top 50 Employers for Women**
http://www.ri5.co.uk/resources/digitaleditions/TopEmployersForWomen3Apr14.htm

**Springboard Consultancy – development programmes for men and women**
http://www.springboardconsultancy.com/

**TARGETjobs Events**
http://targetjobsevents.co.uk/

**Women in Management UK**
http://wimuk.co.uk/

**Women’s Engineering Society**
http://www.wes.org.uk/

**The Association of Women Barristers**
http://www.womenbarristers.co.uk/

**British Federation of Women Graduates**
http://bfwg.org.uk/bfwg/