



Turning rejection into an opportunity

Job applications and interviews can be challenging, and rejection is part of the process. It's completely natural to feel disappointed, but important to remember that no matter the outcome, it's a chance for you to learn, grow, and refine your approach to securing success.

This guide is designed to help you reflect on your journey, process your emotions, and identify actionable steps to move forward with confidence and clarity.



Remember, rejection is not a reflection of your worth or abilities.

Every experience brings you closer to finding the right opportunity. By reflecting on your journey, acknowledging your strengths, and learning from each experience, you'll be better equipped to handle future challenges with confidence, commitment, and resilience.

Celebrate your efforts

Reaching the interview stage is an achievement worth celebrating; it took effort to get there. Out of hundreds of applicants, you were selected to progress further. Reflect on the aspects you can be proud of: overcoming interview anxieties, traveling to attend, or preparing yourself for a new chapter. Acknowledge the challenges or barriers you've overcome to make it this far. The outcome may not be what you hoped for, but it doesn't diminish

the hard work and determination you invested. Reward yourself for the dedication you've shown, the energy you put into the application, and the courage it took to go through the process.

Give time and space to your emotions

It's natural to feel disappointed, frustrated, or sad after a rejection. Allow yourself time to process these emotions instead of bottling them up. Ignoring them could negatively affect your wellbeing or future performance. Talking to someone you trust, such as a friend, family member, or mentor can help you gain perspective, process the experience, and move forward with clarity.

It's not personal

Rejection can feel like a personal failure, but it's important to recognise numerous factors influence hiring decisions, and only some are related to your performance. Some factors will be beyond your control, such as organisational needs, competition from other candidates, or internal hiring policies. Avoid internalising the outcome as it's not a reflection of your worth or abilities.

Don't blame yourself

If you gave your best effort throughout the application and interview process, then you've done everything within your power. Look at the external factors that you couldn't influence — things like organisation budgets, the hiring manager's preferences, or timing. The rejection is not a statement about your value or skills, so don't let it undermine your confidence or self-belief.

We are all human

Both you and the interviewers are human, and sometimes life's unpredictability plays a role. A bad night's sleep, unforeseen delays, or personal stress can impact your performance. Likewise, interviewers may have off days that influence how they perceive candidates. Despite your best preparation, some factors remain beyond your control. Be kind to yourself and acknowledge that no one is perfect.

Continual reflection and learning

Once you've had time to process your emotions, take a constructive approach to what you've experienced. View each step in the process as a learning opportunity.

Seek feedback

Whenever possible, request feedback from the employer. This can provide valuable insights into what you did well and areas for improvement. Even if you don't receive specific feedback, knowing that competition was fierce or that you made it to the final stages can boost your confidence. Remember that some organisations may not provide detailed feedback due to policy, but it's worth asking.

Philosophical approach

Sometimes, the role you didn't get wasn't the right fit for you — something better may lie ahead. Keep



Ask yourself:

- **Was there an aspect** you could have been more prepared for?
- **Are there new skills**, training, or experiences, such as volunteering, that could strengthen your future applications?
- **Did you receive feedback** or notice patterns in questions that you can better prepare for next time?

Each experience adds to your growth, helping you become a stronger and more confident candidate.

this in mind as you prepare for future opportunities, to allow yourself to approach each one with a fresh perspective. Every interview is unique, and each panel evaluates candidates differently. By starting with a positive mindset, you can avoid dwelling on past experiences and focus on what lies ahead.

Remain proactive and passionate

Rejection can test your resilience, but it's essential to maintain your motivation. Your worth and value are not diminished by this setback, so continue striving for future opportunities with confidence. Be proactive in your job search — keep learning, networking, and building your skill set. These actions not only enhance your chances of success but also help you stay engaged and optimistic.



Remember, Rejection at any stage of the application process can impact your confidence and self-esteem, but how you handle it determines how well you move forward. Give yourself the time and space to process your feelings, reflect on your experience, and decide what lessons you can take on board to your next opportunity.

By celebrating your efforts, managing your emotions, and embracing a mindset of continual learning, you can turn setbacks into stepping stones toward your future success.

By exploring this worksheet and reflecting on your experiences, you will gain valuable insights, ensuring you approach future opportunities with renewed confidence, motivation, and a clear plan of action.

You'll have the opportunity to:

- **Celebrate your efforts** and acknowledge the progress you've made
- **Process your emotions** in a healthy and constructive way
- **Identify lessons learned** that can strengthen your future approach
- **Reframe rejection** as a stepping stone toward success
- **Build a proactive plan** to stay motivated and resilient.

Celebrate your efforts

Reflect on what you achieved during this process. Write down specific actions or moments you're proud of.

Consider:

- What steps did I take to reach this stage (e.g., applications, interviews, preparation)?
- What challenges or barriers did I overcome during this process?
- What personal qualities or strengths did I demonstrate?

Example: "I overcame my fear of interviews and confidently answered difficult questions."

Acknowledge and process your emotions

Use this space to acknowledge how you feel and how you can process these emotions constructively.

Consider:

- How do I feel about the outcome (e.g., sad, frustrated, disappointed)?
- Who can I talk to for support (e.g., friend, family, mentor)?
- What self-care activities can I do to help myself feel better?

Example: "I feel disappointed, but I wonder whether that actually was the right job for me upon reflection."

Reflect on what's beyond your control

List factors that were outside your control to help gain a balanced perspective that this rejection doesn't define your values or abilities.

Consider the factors such as:

- Competition for the role
- Internal hiring decisions or company priorities
- Timing or budget constraints.



Identify areas for growth

What do you think you've learned from this process and what are the ways you can improve for the future?

Consider:

- What feedback did I receive?
- Was there an area I could have prepared more for?
- Are there skills or experiences I could gain to strengthen my next application?

Example: "I'll practice answering difficult questions. I could start reading up on time management."

Seek feedback

Plan how you will request feedback from the employer, if possible.

Consider:

- Who can I contact for feedback?
- What specific questions should I ask?
- How will I use the feedback to improve?

Example Questions: "Was there a specific skill or experience the selected candidate had that I could work on?"

Reframe the experience

Reflect on how this rejection could be a stepping stone for future opportunities.

Consider:

- Why might this job not have been right for me?
- What qualities or experiences can I focus on to find a role better suited to me?
- How can I approach the next opportunity with a fresh perspective?

Example: "This role didn't quite suit me, but there might be a better position that utilises my strengths more."

Build a resilience plan

Write down strategies to maintain motivation and stay proactive in your job search.

Consider:

- What actions will I take to keep improving?
- How can I stay connected with my professional network?
- How can I balance my job search with my wellbeing?

Example Plans: Dedicate time each week for skill-building or research. Schedule regular breaks to take a walk outside.

Motivational affirmations

Write affirmations or reminders to keep yourself confident and motivated.

Consider:

- "This rejection is not a reflection of my abilities."
- "Every interview is a learning experience."
- "I am growing stronger and more prepared with every step I take."

Action Plan for Moving

Outline your next steps for your job search.

Consider:

- What's my immediate next action (e.g., update CV, apply for specific roles)?
- How will I incorporate what I've learned into future applications and interviews?
- What's my timeline for achieving these goals?

Example: "Update my CV this week, apply for five new roles, and practice interview questions with a friend."

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[mentalhealth-uk.org/into-work](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org/into-work)

