

Career conversation starters

Career conversations allow students to reflect on their interests, skills and career options in a safe and guided way. They help potential employers like you get a sense if someone's a good fit for your business.

These conversations can be informal, but they are powerful. They help young people reflect and picture themselves in a specific industry, while giving you the insight to identify emerging talent.

Example career conversation starters

- What do you enjoy doing at school and in your own time?
- I can see from your CV that you *[mention specific experience]*. Can you tell me more about that?
- I noticed you *[mention something of interest]*. How did that come about?
- What are the most important things you are looking for in a future career?
- How do you think this job or experience could help you achieve your career goals?
- What have you done on your own to work towards your future goals?
- What has influenced your ideas about the kind of work you'd like to do?
- What have you enjoyed most during your time with us?
- What would you like to do more of, and what would you like to do less of?
- What help do you need to make decisions about your next steps?
- If you were offered a job here in the future, what kind of role could you see yourself doing?

Ending the conversation

- Summarise what you have heard.
- Provide feedback on their strengths and potential fit with your business.
- Discuss possible next steps, such as further work experience, training opportunities, or future roles.
- Offer encouragement and leave the door open for future contact.



TIPS FOR CAREER CONVERSATIONS

- Set a welcoming tone
- Use open-ended questions
- Acknowledge nervousness and silence
- Provide strengths-based feedback
- Offer encouragement and potential next steps

What have you enjoyed most during your time with us?

What are the most important things you are looking for in a future career?

Adapted from:

Careers NZ Employer Toolkit: *Engaging with Young People* (2018)

Hays New Zealand Skills Report (2025) - www.hays.net.nz/skills-report

9cv9 NZ Workforce Trends Report (2025) - www.blog.9cv9.com/recruitment-and-hiring-in-new-zealand-trends-and-outlook-for-2025