



# JOB of the Week



**Job name: Personal Assistant**

**Job description:** A Personal Assistant carries out support tasks for individuals and managers including administration, diary management and event planning.

## Tasks you will undertake in the job: :

- As a personal assistant (PA) you'll work closely with senior managerial or directorial staff to provide administrative support, usually on a one-to-one basis. You'll help a manager to make the best use of their time by dealing with secretarial and administrative tasks.
- PAs need extensive knowledge of the organisation in which they work. You'll need to know who key personnel are, both external and internal, and understand the organisation's aims and objectives.
- Managers often rely heavily on their PA, trusting that work will be handled efficiently in their absence. Discretion and confidentiality are therefore essential attributes of a successful PA.
- A personal assistant is sometimes called an executive secretary, as well as a personal or private secretary.
- As a Personal Assistant, your tasks will include:
- devising/maintaining office systems, including data management and filing
- arranging travel, visas and accommodation, and occasionally travelling with the manager to take notes or dictation at meetings or to provide general assistance during presentations
- screening phone calls, enquiries and requests, and handling them when appropriate
- meeting and greeting visitors at all levels of seniority
- organising and maintaining diaries and making appointments
- dealing with incoming email, faxes and post, often corresponding on behalf of the manager
- carrying out background research and presenting findings
- producing documents, briefing papers, reports and presentations
- organising and attending meetings and ensuring the manager is well prepared for meetings
- liaising with clients, suppliers and other staff.
- **In addition to supporting managers, their team and departments, many PAs also have their own personal workload and responsibilities. The scope of the PA's role can be extensive and additional duties may include:**
- carrying out specific projects and research
- taking responsibility of accounts and budgets
- working more closely with management if taking on some of the manager's responsibilities
- deputising for the manager, making decisions and delegating work to others in the manager's absence
- being involved in decision-making processes.
- Some PAs do all the secretarial work themselves, while others take responsibility for recruiting and training junior staff and delegate some of the less demanding and confidential work to them.

## Skills required for this job (core competencies):

Communication	Resilience	Organisation	Teamwork
Problem Solving	Initiative	Creativity	Digital literacy

**Salary:** Personal Assistants are typically paid a starting wage of £18 000, this increases with experience, skilled Personal Assistants can expect to earn approximately £50 000 p.a.

**Working hours:** Working hours are usually around 37-40 hours per week. It is likely that you will work during some evenings.



## Qualifications for a Personal Assistant:

Although this area of work is open to all graduates and those with a HND, a degree in business or management may increase your chances. Some subjects are more relevant for certain industries, e.g. English literature for publishing and law for legal work. For HND holders, the following subjects may increase your chances: administration; business; management and secretarial studies. Entry without a degree, HND or foundation degree is possible as personal qualities, experience and general office skills are typically considered more important.

GCSE English and mathematics (or equivalent) are standard entry requirements for many positions. A qualification in IT may also be required.

It's unusual to enter directly into a PA position as a recent graduate due to the level of experience expected of you. However, it's not impossible and one way of increasing your chances would be to study for a relevant qualification, such as a Level 2 Certificate in Business Support and a Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration. These courses are designed to equip students with the skills essential for this profession: Institute of Administrative Management (IAM) - Level 3 Award in Professional PA and Administration Skills and Pitman Training - Professional Executive PA Diploma.

**Essential skills you need to show:** To succeed as a Personal Assistant, the following personal skills and attributes would give you an advantage:

- exceptional written and oral communication skills, including knowledge of a range of software packages
- the ability to work under pressure and to tight deadlines
- good organisational and time management skills
- the ability to research, digest, analyse and present material clearly and concisely
- excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to work on your own initiative
- honesty and reliability; attention to detail
- flexibility and adaptability to juggle a range of different tasks and to work extra hours to meet deadlines
- discretion and an understanding of confidentiality issues.

**This job in the future:** The workforce is projected to decline by -34.9%, losing 63 900 jobs; in the same period, 102.7% of the workforce is likely to retire, creating 188 000 job opportunities.

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