

SO YOU WANT TO BE AN APPRENTICE: SIX EASY STEPS TO SUCCESS

STEP 1: Decide whether an apprenticeship is right for you

Apprenticeships are fast becoming a great way for companies to employ young, enthusiastic, motivated people. Many employers have realised that apprenticeships are a fantastic way to attract and train-up the best future employees for their businesses.

An apprenticeship is right for you if you want to:

- Earn money whilst you learn on the job
- Get a secure job for about 12 months (the length of apprenticeships vary)
- Keep learning and studying but in a different way from school and college

Remember that you will also have to:

- Have a positive attitude towards work
- Work and study at the same time
- Be punctual and turn up to work every day

If you've answered yes to the above questions, then start by doing some basic background research. The National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) website www.apprenticeships.org.uk is a great place to start. Here you can get information about apprenticeships, read through frequently asked questions, hear stories from past and present apprentices and find out what employers are saying about apprenticeships.

STEP 2: Research employers and different apprenticeship opportunities

Great, you've decided that an apprenticeship is for you! The next thing to do is to start thinking about what type of apprenticeship you would like to do, but before you start looking, ask yourself a couple of basic questions:

1) What am I interested in?

Like anything in life, we try harder and do better when we do something that we are actually interested in. When thinking about what type of apprenticeship you would like to apply for, think of things that you are generally interested in, whether its sport, organising outings, maths, etc.

2) What experience do I have?

Don't worry if you don't have any/ much work experience, the whole point of an apprenticeship is that the employer will train you on the job. However, if you have previous work experience, this might give you a clue about the types of roles that you enjoy (or don't enjoy) at work. For example a job walking your neighbour's dog might suggest that you like working with animals or enjoy being outside where as doing a paper round would suggest that you don't mind early starts.

To begin your search for an apprenticeship, go to the National Apprenticeship Service [website](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk), here you will be able to search for jobs nationwide.

STEP 3: Get application fit

Fantastic, you've found the perfect apprenticeship and you've decided to apply. To ensure you do the best possible application, here are a few basic pointers:

- Make sure that you have read and understand the job description. You should know what the role involves, what the apprentice will be expected to do, what knowledge, skills and previous experience applicants should have.
- Research the company that are offering the apprenticeship. Using Google to find the company and explore their website isn't difficult and won't take long. Companies want to know that you are interested in them, and have an idea about what they do. Demonstrating that you have knowledge of the business will definitely make you look like a more motivated, employable applicant.
- Find out more about the application process. Gone are the days that you can just hand in your CV, have a quick chat and start the next day. Employers want to know that the people they are employing, whether experienced professionals or apprentices are the best people for the job. Nowadays when applying for a job you should at least expect to complete an application form and attend an interview. If you are applying to a large national company, many of these companies will require you to attend an assessment centre where you will complete a number of individual and group exercises. Go to the [Prospects](#) website to find out more about assessment centres.

STEP 4: Start applying and draft your application form

You should have already looked at the job description and will know what the apprenticeship involves.

Remember! Your application must demonstrate that you meet the job description and that you are capable of working in the company as an apprentice. So if the job description says that the apprentice will need to use Microsoft Word to type letters, then your application should state that you have experience using Microsoft Word at home and at school. It should also have very good spelling as you will be filling it in on Microsoft Word!

It's always a good idea to have a thorough look at the application form before you start writing anything down. Most application forms will ask you standard questions about your personal details, education and previous work experience.

Applications may also ask you other questions, for example they may ask you to describe a situation when you have worked in a team or about a time that you have had many tasks to complete by a deadline. These questions are designed to give the employer a better understanding of how well you will fit with their company and how good you will be as an apprentice by finding out how you have acted in past situations.

When answering these questions, make sure that you understand what the question wants you to demonstrate e.g. your ability to plan and organise or work with other people, then brainstorm some ideas for your answer. When writing your application or when being interviewed, use the STAR technique.

The **STAR** technique for application forms and interviews

Situation - describe the situation

"I was employed by XYZ Company as a part-time customer service advisor."

Task - describe what you had to do

"I was helping a customer to select a pair of earrings for her teenage daughter's birthday."

Action - describe exactly what you did

"I asked the customer what type of colours/ jewellery her daughter liked, the customer said her daughter loved baby blue. I then identified and showed the customer all the baby blue earrings in the shop. Unfortunately the customer didn't like any of the items, so I then sat with the customer and went through the company website to show her other items that could be ordered online."

Result - describe what the outcome was

"From the online catalogue, the customer found the perfect pair of earrings for her daughter. I then ordered the earrings for the customer and explained that they could be delivered free of charge to her address. I also suggested that the product could be gift wrapped, which made the customer really happy as she had previously said that she was terrible at wrapping. The customer was delighted with her purchase and the service she received, she even completed a feedback form and when my manager saw the feedback he praised me for providing outstanding customer service."

STEP 5: Prepare for your interview

If your application form is successful and you are invited to an interview, then congratulations you've passed the first hurdle.

- You can go to Google to search for common interview questions. This will help you to prepare for the types of questions that interviewers are likely to ask you. You should also read through and make sure you are thoroughly aware of what you have written on your application form as interviewers are also likely to ask you questions based on what you have written on your application form.
- Get your friend and family to help you do practice interviews. This will be fantastic practice for the real thing and you'll feel more relaxed being interviewed by your mum or your best mate.

STEP 6: Stay motivated and keep looking

Remember that there are thousands of apprenticeships being offered by hundreds of companies in dozens of business sectors, so even if you don't bag the first apprenticeship that you apply to you can always apply to more.

The [National Apprenticeship Service website](#) is regularly updated with new apprenticeship opportunities, so it's worth checking them at least once a week.

Also, whilst you are looking for an apprenticeship, keep yourself busy and your CV up to date. Volunteering, doing short courses or other types of training will show employers that you have drive and initiative. Employers want apprentices who will be motivated to come into their business, work hard and start learning from day one, so whilst you are applying check out the V inspired [website](#) for volunteering opportunities.