

the apprenticeship guide

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# Starter Guide

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A straightforward guide to  
starting an apprenticeship.

2026



# Becoming an apprentice

## WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships have come a long way since they were started off in the Middle Ages when craft guilds trained young people in trades. By the Tudor period, apprenticeships were a well-respected way to learn a trade, with masters providing both skills and moral guidance. In the early 1900s, apprenticeships thrived in new industries like engineering and shipbuilding.

Fast-forward to today. These days, they provide an alternative path to education while ensuring that professions and industries have the skilled workers they need.

The world—and education, training and employment—have changed, and so too have apprenticeships, which were expanded to include all ages. Today, apprenticeships are a viable alternative to university and ensure that industries have the skilled workers they need. Apprenticeship programmes are accessible, flexible, and a smart choice for both apprentices and employers.

## FIND YOUR LEVEL

An apprenticeship, which must last for a minimum of 12 months, combines hands-on work with the opportunity to train and obtain qualifications. It's also a paid position, so you earn while you learn. At least 20% of your time is set aside for learning, usually at a college, university or with a training provider.

The rest of your time is spent applying your knowledge and skills in the actual workplace, doing the job that you set out to get. At the end of it, you'll gain official certification, which will be equivalent to traditional qualifications. Apprenticeship levels are set and equivalent to as follows:

- **2 (Intermediate): GCSEs**
- **3 (Advanced): A-levels**
- **4 (Higher): foundation degree**
- **5 (Higher): foundation degree/first year of bachelor's degree**
- **6 (Degree): bachelor's degree**
- **7 (Degree): master's degree**

Apprenticeships are designed to be flexible. That means that one employer may offer a higher level 6 or 7 apprenticeship without giving you the

option of getting an actual degree qualification, while others will.

It's essential that you check before applying. Employers and training providers will be clear about the qualifications on offer and the level at which you'll train. It's up to you to decide if you're happy with the level of your apprenticeship, and what you get at the end of it.

Many intermediate, advanced, and higher apprenticeships will also give you the opportunity to obtain qualifications such as diplomas in relevant areas.

There is no maximum age limit for an apprenticeship, but they are for those aged 16 or over, living in England, and not in full-time education.

## EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

As an apprentice, you'll earn a wage. The current minimum wage rate for an apprentice is £6.40 per hour. This rate applies if you're under 19, or if you're in the first year of your apprenticeship. You must be paid the national minimum wage for your age if you're an apprentice aged 19 or over and have completed your first year. The national minimum wage is currently set at £8.60 for 18- to 20-year-olds, and £11.44 for those aged 21 and over.

You'll be paid for your normal working hours and the training that's part of your apprenticeship, usually one day per week. You'll also be entitled to the statutory minimum of 20 days of paid holiday per year, plus bank holidays, of which there are usually eight.

These pay rates and holiday entitlements? They're the minimum. Employers will often set their salaries on offer at higher rates, depending on company policy, to make their apprenticeships competitive. Some might have monthly wage structures and others might pay staff weekly.

Many employers also offer additional benefits: things like gym memberships, private healthcare, or wellbeing support. The current minimum age for a workplace pension is 22, but check with the employer when you apply, as they may offer a pension to all their employees.

# How to choose the right apprenticeship level for you

*Whether you're looking for an entry-level position, wanting to retrain in a new career, or you're searching for an alternative to university, there is an apprenticeship out there for you. But it's important to know ahead of time what level you should be looking out for. Here's what that all means:*

## INTERMEDIATE (LEVEL 2)

Intermediate (level 2) apprenticeships are designed to cover entry-level roles, providing the essential skills and knowledge to kickstart your career. If you're 16, it's a great way to gain further training outside the classroom. Typically spread out over at least 12 months, you'll work towards qualifications equivalent to GCSEs, usually through a diploma relevant to your field.

Entry requirements will vary from one or more GCSEs to no formal qualifications or experience. Employers generally aim to keep these apprenticeships accessible and will consider any relevant experience and skills you might have. Once you've completed an intermediate apprenticeship, you might be able to advance at your current employer, undertake an advanced qualification at your current employer or elsewhere, or move into further education at a higher level than when you left school.

Some of the intermediate apprenticeships on offer can be found across sectors such as agriculture, environmental, animal care, construction, business, administration, vehicles, transport, engineering, manufacturing, healthcare, science and hospitality.

## ADVANCED (LEVEL 3)

Advanced (or level 3) apprenticeships are the next step on the apprenticeship ladder. These offer an alternative to A-levels, of which they're considered equivalent. They're usually best for people who already have skills, experience or qualifications in a sector and are looking to progress. Typically taking place over an 18-month to 24-month period, you'll delve into more technical detail and gain greater expertise in your chosen sector.

Entry requirements are stricter for advanced apprenticeships, with many often requiring up to five GCSEs, including maths and English. At this level and depending on the apprenticeship, you may achieve professional recognition upon completion by the relevant professional organisation or institute.

## HIGHER (LEVEL 4 AND 5)

Higher (or level 4 or 5) apprenticeships are designed to offer degree-equivalent qualifications and experience while doing the job. They typically take between 12 and 60 months (about 5 years) to complete, with a significant proportion of that time

spent with a training provider, college or university, to develop knowledge and skills.

Employers offering higher apprenticeships will usually expect some form of previous experience or subject knowledge.

Generally, you'll need some qualifications to be considered: five GCSEs and level 3 qualifications such as A-levels tend to be required. As ever, equivalent experience is often considered. Higher apprenticeships tend to be the level at which those already in work or leaving higher education such as university will apply, so expect competition to be that much more intense.

## DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS (LEVEL 6 OR 7)

A degree apprenticeship is like a higher apprenticeship, but apprentices will also work toward a bachelor's degree at level 6 or a master's degree at level 7.

Degree apprenticeships are a popular alternative to the traditional route of obtaining a degree directly from a university, because the employer will cover the cost. Going to university to study for a three-year bachelor's degree as an individual student, for example, will set you back thousands of pounds. Degree apprenticeships are entirely funded by the employer. As an apprentice, you'll also be paid a salary while you study, and be entitled to holiday.

Where degree apprenticeships and traditional degrees differ is the method of learning. Work placements will often come in the final year of a degree, with studying on campus taking up most of your time.

On a degree apprenticeship, you'll mix learning with working, so you'll split your time between a training provider or education institute and an employer, meaning you'll be able to put your knowledge and skills into immediate practice, and take away those burning questions that you want to pose to your teachers.

These days, degree apprenticeships cover a breadth of topics and are offered by higher education providers like universities as well as professional bodies. These apprenticeships range from aerospace software development engineer apprenticeships to diagnostic radiographer apprenticeships; from psychological wellbeing practitioner apprenticeships to senior leader apprenticeships.

# Flexi Jobs

Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs) support apprenticeships in sectors with short-term or non-standard employment by employing the apprentice for the duration and arranging placements with host businesses.

## KEY FEATURES OF FJAAS

### INCLUDE:

- Employment Stability:** Agencies employ apprentices throughout their apprenticeship, providing stability in industries known for transient job roles or short-term projects.
- Diverse Placements:** Where required, they can facilitate placements with multiple host businesses, offering a breadth of experience and learning opportunities.
- Quality Assurance:** There are specific conditions and quality frameworks that agencies must adhere to, ensuring a consistent and high standard of apprenticeship experience.
- Government Support:** FJAAs are registered with the Department for Education, reflecting a commitment to enhancing vocational training and skills development across multiple industries.

For employers, FJAAs offer a way to navigate the complexities of directly employing apprentices and make greater use of apprenticeships within their business models.

For individuals seeking apprenticeships, these agencies provide a pathway to gain industry experience and skills in a structured yet flexible manner.

FJAAs can also support the delivery of new Foundation Apprenticeships; working with host employers to develop young people's core skills, knowledge and behaviours and nurture a talent pipeline in key sectors.

### Benefits For Employers:

- Access to Top Talent:** They help businesses with non-standard employment models find and work with top apprentices, reducing the commitment usually required for traditional apprenticeships.
- Closing Skills Gaps:** By providing a diverse range of apprentices, they assist in closing skills gaps within organisations and across industries.
- Flexibility:** Employers can benefit from the flexibility of hiring apprentices for short-term projects or on a need basis without long-term commitment or where headcount restrictions are in place.



### Benefits For Apprentices:

- Stable Employment:** Apprentices are employed for the duration of their apprenticeship, providing them with job security in sectors known for short-term contracts or project-based employment models.
- Diverse Experience:** They can gain experience working on different projects with different employers, which can lead to wider exposure to various ways of working across a sector.
- Social Mobility:** Flexi Job Apprenticeships improve social mobility by giving candidates the chance to learn new skills on-the-job, pursue their dream careers, and build sector networks and contacts.

Overall, Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agencies contribute to a more adaptable and responsive apprenticeship system that benefits the modern, dynamic workforce.

You can find the current list of approved FJAA's in England here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexi-job-apprenticeships/flexi-job-apprenticeship-agencies](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexi-job-apprenticeships/flexi-job-apprenticeship-agencies)

# Alternative options to consider

If an apprenticeship doesn't seem right for you, consider doing a T-level, Skills Bootcamp, or other work experience to prepare you instead.

## TRAINING-FOCUSED

### T-levels

T-levels are two-year technical study courses equivalent to three A-levels, combining classroom learning with 'on the job' experience through industry placements. Students spend 80% of their time in a classroom and 20% on a 45-day employer placement, helping develop the skills and knowledge companies want.

T-levels are similar to apprenticeships, but differ in that T-level students spend most of their time in classrooms, and may not be paid by their employer. The T-level curriculum includes a technical qualification, an industry placement, and transferable skills in English, maths, and digital technology.

There are over 20 T-level subjects available in sectors like health, construction, education, and business. Upon completion, you will gain a nationally recognised certificate, and your qualification will be worth UCAS points if you want to continue in education.

Find out more by visiting [www.tlevels.gov.uk](http://www.tlevels.gov.uk).

### Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps are only open to adults aged 19 or over. They're designed to help you develop new skills that employers are looking for, so are great if you want to train in a new industry or open doors in your current career.

These are free, flexible courses lasting from 10 days to 16 weeks, and can take place at a college, a training provider, or online. If you're eligible for Universal Credit, you can apply to a Skills Bootcamp and continue to claim benefits.

Bootcamps cover various skills, from software development and data engineering to logistics, construction, and manufacturing. Some courses will have entry requirements, but most don't require any previous knowledge.

Upon completion, you're guaranteed a job interview with the employer. Some, but not all, Skills Bootcamps will give you a qualification when you're finished. Completing a Skills Bootcamp can contribute to an accelerated apprenticeship, because it is considered prior learning.

Find out more at [www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/your-training-options](http://www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/your-training-options)

## WORK EXPERIENCE-FOCUSED

### Traineeships

Traineeships develop skills for those with no work experience or qualifications above GCSE level, offering a work placement and time in college or a training centre. The course can last from six weeks to a year, though most traineeships last less than six months.

Trainees may not be paid, but eligible participants can keep their benefits while they're on a traineeship. Typically, traineeships are open to those eligible to work in England, aged 16 to 24, with no qualifications above GCSE level. Training in English, maths, and life skills like interview training and CV writing are provided.

Since August 2023, traineeships are no longer standalone programmes but are available directly from colleges and other training providers. Check the directory in section 3 of this guide for local providers.

### Internships

An internship is a period of work experience offered by an organisation. They'll help you to develop valuable skills and experience that can make you stand out in a competitive job market.

Internships can vary in length. Some are summer schemes designed to fit around studies; some are longer six- to 12-month placements.

Interns should receive at least the national minimum wage in the UK if performing the role of a worker. Most interns are classified as workers, except when shadowing someone.

Internships can be accredited or acknowledged by professional training organisations. For instance, experience on an accountancy internship may count towards the ACCA Qualification needed to become a qualified accountant.

The application process can be competitive, particularly in sought-after sectors like law or media. You might have to apply at least six months in advance, so do thorough research, and manage your time well.

Internships differ from apprenticeships as they don't result in formal qualifications and are more flexible in commitment. Apprenticeships require a minimum 12-month commitment to obtain a qualification, whereas internships are more flexible.

For more information, visit [www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience)



# Finding the perfect apprenticeship for you

**With more than 600 options available, you're spoilt for choice in your search for an apprenticeship...**

There are more than 600 apprenticeships currently available in England. But how do you identify an apprenticeship that may interest you and become your future career choice? How do you match who you are now with what you want to do with the rest of your life? These are important and complicated questions, but they needn't be difficult to answer, if you consider these four questions first:

## WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING?

Your interests and hobbies are the things you enjoy doing most, so they're a good basis for choosing a career. Unless you were lucky enough to be born a squillionaire, it's very likely that you'll spend a good proportion of your adult life at work, so it should be doing something that you're committed to and wish to develop in. Above all, you need to bear in mind that you could be spending eight hours per day in an office. You could be giving up your weekends because you work on a rota. You could be spending

extended periods of time away from home. Your ideal apprenticeship needs to be something you have a passion or interest in.

A good example is being outdoors. Do you like going for walks? Do you spend a lot of your time in the countryside, or surfing at the beach? If you live for fresh air, you may not enjoy spending your entire working day behind a desk, looking at a computer screen. Instead, the ideal place to start is the agriculture, environmental and animal care group of apprenticeships. You might pursue a golf greenkeeper apprenticeship, maintaining perfect courses and lawns; or maybe as a vet technician, working closely with livestock.

Or maybe you like playing video games in your spare time? Here, you need to break down what you really love about your hobby. Do you play world-building games like Minecraft or the Sims? Maybe an apprenticeship in a construction role, like architecture or stonemasonry, might suit you. Do you love the artwork and the storytelling of your favourite video games? Perhaps creative and media apprenticeships,

like those in animation or content creation, might suit you best. Or maybe you're interested in how these games come together with roles in software development under the digital and ICT section.

## WHAT ARE YOUR STRONGEST SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?

Your school subjects are important to your apprenticeship choices, especially if you did well in any particular subjects.

Throughout school, you have been given a broad academic grounding. Studying all kinds of subjects will have given you the chance to try out different topics and develop and flourish in certain areas. If some subjects really didn't interest you, then you can accept that that area will never become a passion, and so won't be a career option. Bye-bye to those!

However, where you did excel is extremely important. That's because it means you have the academic grounding as well as the basic skills to take it further. Maybe you enjoy being outdoors, like running, and loved PE at school; that might mean that your next step is the sport and fitness group of apprenticeships, where you can learn about the sporting excellence apprenticeship and what you'd need to do to become a professional sportsperson. Or use your passion to work with others as a personal trainer or sports coach.

Of course, not everyone has a clear pathway from a young age. Maybe your interests didn't really match up with your school subjects. Maybe you're less academically inclined and so you didn't excel in a school environment. That's not a problem. Apprenticeships offer vocational training that can provide an alternative.

Apprenticeships focus your education on directly applicable subjects, such as specific training relating to a particular trade or profession. It's worth bearing in mind that most school subjects and interests teach widely applicable skills. Take English Literature: during your education, you'll learn to interpret texts and understand context, which are two essential skills for almost every job in the world. Be broad-minded during this step, because you'll be pleasantly surprised by just how much you can do when you think about it.

## WHAT IS THE APPRENTICESHIP LIKE?

When all is said and done, you need to understand what the apprenticeship you take a fancy to is really like. What does the role actually entail? What are the advantages and disadvantages? (Every job comes with both.) Is it something you can develop a passion for? If you're going to find and keep a career, you need to know what's in store and whether it's something you want to do.

In this guide, you'll find Success Stories. You'll hear from apprentices who've already completed their apprenticeship, or they're still doing them. You'll hear what they really think and get a chance to learn more about particular apprenticeship schemes. Throughout the guide, young people from different

backgrounds and across the sectors reveal why they chose their apprenticeship, what they've gained from it, and what you can do to enjoy the successes they have.

At this point, it's also worth speaking to the people around you. Your peers may be able to tell you why they have chosen a certain apprenticeship, and their answer can help inform your decision. Your teachers and parents, even your GP or the owner of a local business you frequent; they can all help influence you. It's just about gathering as much information as you can.

## ARE THERE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR APPRENTICESHIPS?

Entry requirements represent the first and most obvious obstacle between you and your future. In the context of apprenticeships, however, entry requirements are not inflexible.

In the end, it's up to the employer offering the apprenticeship. In general, a prospective apprentice may need three GCSEs, but other qualifications and experience will almost always be considered, particularly when employers are specifically on the lookout for apprentices from different backgrounds, upbringings and educations, because they know that they run the risk of missing out on the best talent if they do not.

Still, there are general guidelines around what is expected of applicants at every apprenticeship level, and knowing them will help you to decide what's best for you before you apply.

**Level 2 (Intermediate), equivalent to GCSEs:** The only actual requirement is that the applicant's age must be at least 16. Employers may ask for a demonstrable interest in the area covered by the apprenticeship and the ability to complete it.

**Level 3 (Advanced), considered equivalent to A-levels:** At this level, employers will typically seek GCSEs, usually three or more, particularly in English and maths. Relevant experience will also be useful.

**Level 4 (Higher), considered equivalent to a foundation degree:** Employers will look for GCSEs and level 3 qualifications, such as A-levels, or their equivalents, such as a BTEC. It's at this point where experience in a relevant subject is also desired.

**Level 5 (Higher), considered equivalent to the first year of a bachelor's degree:** The same as level 4, but with higher minimum grades and a definite requirement for previous experience.

**Level 6 (Degree), considered equivalent to a bachelor's degree:** The same as level 5, but with higher minimum grades and a definite requirement for previous experience.

**Level 7 (Degree), considered equivalent to a master's degree:** A bachelor's degree or equivalent level 4 or above qualifications, with a number of years of previous experience.

# Nailing your application

As well as offering training, an apprenticeship is a paid job. That means you need to apply in the same way you would apply for any job.

The keys to a successful application for an apprenticeship are a good CV and cover letter. They're your opportunity to show your prospective employer that you have the skills and experience that make you suitable for the apprenticeship you're applying for.

Before you start, make sure you have researched the role, the employer, and the apprenticeship standard, so you can show how well you match their criteria.

Writing a CV can be stressful, especially if you're starting from scratch. Although there is no right or wrong way to create the perfect application, there are a few things you should always remember to include:

## HOW TO PRODUCE A GOOD CV FOR YOUR APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATION

**Clear presentation:** Type up your CV using a clear, uncomplicated font (Times New Roman or Arial tend to work best). Make sure to keep the same size font throughout (12 is standard) and avoid trying to do clever visual things. Clean and tidy are far more important to the prospective employer. Plus, awkward CVs might get filtered out if your employer uses any kind of screening software.

**Keep it concise:** Keep your CV to one page. Managers and other professionals focused on hiring will be busy and have many applications to consider. Plus, keeping to a single page will force you to be concise and stick to the important points.

**Organise your skills:** Categorise your skills, experience and achievements under the following headings: work experience, education and extracurricular activities. Part-time jobs go under work, secondary school under education, and anything you've done in your own time should go under extracurricular activities. List them in chronological order, with the most recent first. Restrict the information you include to dates, locations and, most importantly, achievements. Employers want to see what you've accomplished.

**Customise it to the job you want:** Tailor your CV to the job you're applying for. Use the job description to match the skills you include with the ones the employer is looking for. Ensure you are ticking all of their boxes.

**Check it:** Make sure your CV is mistake-free, including spelling and grammar. Read it over several times and then ask someone else to check it. Show it to a careers advisor who is trained to help you do this kind of thing. Then check it again.

## HOW TO PRODUCE A GOOD COVER LETTER FOR YOUR APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATION

**Why you want the job:** Lead with what attracted you to the job in the first place. Keep it to two or three sentences. You might be attracted to the company, the position may offer certain benefits, or the career area is something you have a passion for. Let them know why you're interested.

**Key person specifications:** Almost every job advert will list the key qualities that a person must have to get the job. These will range from previous experience in the particular field, to demonstrable skills such as teamwork and organisation. Depending on the job you're after, they may include more specialist requirements, such as experience in certain software packages, or familiarity with certain methodologies and regulations. Match your own experiences and achievements with as many as you can in your cover letter, outlining what you meet and how you've met it, as succinctly as possible.

**Anything else you bring to the table:** An avid reader? Keen on sports? Add some personal details to close, to give the employer an insight into you as a person.

## OTHER POINTS TO REMEMBER

**References:** You'll usually need at least two references when applying for a job. These are usually sought once you've been offered the position. They'll be former employers, teachers, or anyone who knows you well, although relatives and friends are out of bounds.

**Format:** Every employer will accept CVs and cover letters in different formats, but as a rule, expect to submit both as Word documents or PDFs. There may be application forms to fill out online instead of submitting a CV and cover letter. Rest assured, these almost always follow the path of a CV, so you'll be able to transfer the information from one to the other with relative ease.

**Accompanying evidence or information:** Certain jobs, such as graphic design or journalism, will require a portfolio of work, to demonstrate previous experience. This requirement will be made explicit, but it's worth remembering that it may come up, so you can take the time to build one.

**Track your applications:** Remember to keep a record of all the apprenticeships you apply to, along with their closing dates. If you don't hear back after a few weeks, contact the person dealing with your application to ask about the interview process or to provide any feedback if you were not successful this time.

# Preparing for a successful interview

Once you've had your interview confirmed, you only get one opportunity to make a good first impression. Make sure you're prepared for the apprenticeship interview.

There are few things more stressful than a job interview. Luckily, there's no need to worry about it, if you prepare, prepare, prepare!

## RESEARCH

**Do your homework:** Fail to plan, plan to fail. You are certain to be asked specific questions about the company, so make sure you've done your homework. You can usually find useful information on their company website, where you can look for details about the company culture, and their mission and values. You could also speak to someone who already works there, and look up the latest industry developments, so you can talk with confidence.

**Prepare your answers:** You can't predict what questions you'll be asked, but you can plan general answers that can be narrowed down on the day. Common questions include: What are your goals? Why do you want the job? What are your strengths and weaknesses? Why should they hire you? The less you have to improvise, the better, so practise potential questions and answers on your own or with a parent or teacher.

**The interview:** Interviews vary depending on the employer. Remote interviews (either over the phone or via video call) are becoming commonplace. Some companies still do lots of one-on-one interviews on a single day, and then make their decision. Others prefer two interviews; the first to whittle down applicants from a long list, the second to make their final decision. Some employers even meet their applicants all at once, to see how you would react in a group setting. Find out what the format of the interview will be when the employer gets in touch so you can prepare. If you are booked in for an online video interview, it's a good idea to test out the interview platform in advance. Use the best internet you can access and find a nice, quiet place where you will be able to talk without distraction – it might be a quiet café or a local library if your home is noisy or has dodgy wifi.

**The location:** There's nothing worse than stressing about being late to an interview! Make sure you know where you're going ahead of time, and how you will get there on the day. It might even be a good idea to visit the location ahead of your interview, to time how long it'll take you to get there.

## THE DAY BEFORE

**Dress code:** It's always best to wear something smart, even if the employer is a casual startup,

or if your interview is online. 'Smart' is open to interpretation, and you should always wear what makes you most comfortable, but don't let your appearance speak louder than your words. Make sure you look clean, your clothes fit correctly, and that any accessories are subtle. Dressing one level above the job you're applying for shows a desire to succeed. Don't be afraid to seek a second opinion about your outfit choice from a friend or relative.

**Things to bring with you:** You may need to bring a portfolio of work, a passport to prove you have the right to work in this country, or your CV. Check you have everything and make sure it's ready the day before, so you won't forget it.

**Get to bed early:** Getting a good night's sleep before the interview will help you feel fresh, clear-minded and motivated. And don't doomsroll!

## THE INTERVIEW

**Be punctual:** Don't be late. It's easy to be delayed or get lost. If it's an online interview, test out any links to your video interview early, and make sure your camera and microphone are working so you don't lose precious conversation time to technical difficulties. If it's in person, give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview - arriving frazzled after a mad rush is not the best way to start! Arriving too early (more than five minutes) is also a no-no. Employers need to know that you can keep to schedule, so go and get a coffee if you're early.

**Keep calm:** You're going to be nervous, but you've got this. Shake the hands of everyone present when you arrive and keep it natural. Don't fidget and keep your hands clear of your pockets. Remember to speak clearly, smile, and remember that your interviewers are just normal people who want you to succeed. If it helps, ask for a glass of water. Even if you're not feeling confident, fake it 'til you make it!

**Show interest:** You should always have some questions for your interviewer to demonstrate your interest in the position. Prepare around three questions, some which will give you more information about the job and some that delve deeper into the culture and goals of the company. Good examples of questions could include: What would a 'day in the life' of this role look like? What can I expect from you in terms of development and support? What is the company culture like? Questions about pay or benefits might be appropriate but ask them tactfully and save them for the end of the conversation - employers want to know that you care about the work, not the money.

# Adult apprenticeships: upskill or start a new career

**Don't hesitate to take advantage of the diverse opportunities that adult apprenticeships offer**

Apprenticeships are often associated with young people entering the workforce for the first time. However, adult apprenticeships are increasingly recognised as valuable opportunities for those seeking to upskill or make a significant career change. With no upper age limit, adult apprenticeships offer a practical and financially viable way to gain new qualifications and experience.

## HOW COULD AN ADULT APPRENTICESHIP HELP ME?

Whether you're looking to climb the career ladder or pivot to an entirely new field, an adult apprenticeship can provide the training and support needed to achieve your goals. An apprenticeship offers structured learning and hands-on experience. So if you're considering a career change, an apprenticeship can help you transition smoothly by equipping you with the necessary competencies and industry-specific knowledge.

Adult apprenticeships are also beneficial for individuals who need to adapt to changing circumstances, such as health issues or promotions. By offering a blend of practical and theoretical learning, apprenticeships ensure that you're well-prepared for the demands of your new career.

## AN APPRENTICESHIP IS AN EDUCATION

An apprenticeship is more than just a training programme; it's a journey. As an apprentice, you'll receive guidance and mentorship, allowing you to grow from a beginner to a seasoned professional in your chosen field. This process not only develops your technical skills but also fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and a lifelong passion for learning and growing - all invaluable attributes for any employer.

## BUSINESS BENEFITS FOR YOUR EMPLOYER

Did you know that you can continue working for your current employer while you take on an apprenticeship? By offering adult apprenticeships, companies can tap into a wider talent pool

and benefit from a more varied range of perspectives and experiences. Supporting employees through apprenticeships not only promotes equality, but also drives innovation and improves overall business performance.

## FUNDING

Financing an apprenticeship can be a concern for many adults. You will earn at least the minimum apprenticeship wage while you are undertaking your programme, and many employers will offer a higher wage. You may be able to access additional funding such as grants or bursaries to cover costs associated with your apprenticeship, such as travel expenses or childcare. Do your research and speak with your training provider before undertaking an apprenticeship to ensure you can afford it.



# Support for apprentices' mental health and wellbeing

**It's OK not to feel OK and there is help for apprentices who are struggling to cope**

*Life can get a bit overwhelming. Starting a new apprenticeship can be harder to cope with because of the pandemic and the events over the past few years.*

*There is always help and support available for you. Whether you're feeling sad or hopeless, have problems with your friends or family, feel anxious about the future, have trouble sleeping or are struggling to concentrate or control your behaviour, remember, you're not alone. If you experience these feelings, try talking to someone at work or college, a parent, or your GP about your mental health.*

*Understanding mental health can be tricky, but there is plenty of help available for teenagers and young people and finding the right support is important. We have put together a list of resources available and details of how to get in touch if things are getting too much for you.*

## CHILDLINE

Childline is here to help anyone under 19 years old in the UK with any issue they're going through. You can talk about anything to trained counsellors who are there to support you. It's normal to feel worried about your future and Childline can help you work through it. Call Childline free on 0800 1111. For more information, visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk).

## Kooth

Kooth is an online mental wellbeing community, offering free, safe and anonymous support. You can join a discussion board, chat or message a member of a team, or write in your own daily journal, to track your feelings or emotions and reflect on how you're doing. They also provide a magazine with helpful articles, personal experiences and tips from young people. For more information, visit [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com).

## MENTAL HEALTH UK

The charity has developed a young people's programme to help equip 14 to 18 year olds with the tools and knowledge to maintain their mental health through life's transitions, both now and in the future. For more information, visit [www.mentalhealth-uk.org](http://www.mentalhealth-uk.org).

## NHS BETTER HEALTH: EVERY MIND MATTERS

Every Mind Matters has plenty of free tools and support to help you kickstart your physical health too. With a focus on the impact of COVID-19, it looks at anxiety, job worries and how to sleep better. Self care is important, so check out their videos for loads of tips and techniques to help you do just that. For more information, visit [www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters](http://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters).

## PAPYRUS

PAPYRUS is the national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide. With a vision to speak openly about suicide, it provides resources to help young people who may have suicidal thoughts, giving support and advice to struggling young

people through their helpline, HopelineUK. For more information, visit [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) or call HopelineUK on 08000 684141.

## MAXIMUS

Maximus supports individuals with mental health issues and provides confidential work or apprenticeship-focused mental health support tailored to an individual's needs. The Access to Work Mental Health Support Service, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, can help if you're about to start or are on an apprenticeship programme and are finding it difficult to attend or concentrate due to a mental health condition, or you have been signed off sick with a mental health condition but want to go back to your apprenticeship. For more information, visit [atw.maximusuk.co.uk](http://atw.maximusuk.co.uk).

## SAMARITANS

If you're having a difficult time, you can get in touch with the Samaritans about anything that's troubling you, no matter how large or small the issue feels. They are here to listen, with no judgment and no pressure, only to help you work through what's on your mind. Call the Samaritans for free on 116123.

## SHOUT 85258

Shout 85258 is a free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. After launching in May 2019, they have had more than 500,000 conversations with people who are anxious, stressed, depressed, suicidal or overwhelmed. If you're struggling and need to talk, the trained volunteers are here for you, day or night. To start a conversation, text the word 'SHOUT' to 85258. For more information, visit [www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org).

## THE MIX

Whether you're worried about your mental health, or someone else's, The Mix have everything you need to know about mental health, from anxiety and depression to self-care and counselling. You can find plenty of information and expert advice on the website, or for more support, visit their discussion boards, use the group chat service, or speak to a member of their trained team. Call the free helpline on 0808 808 4994. For more information, visit [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk).

## YOUNGMINDS

The charity's purpose is to stop young people's mental health reaching crisis point by making sure young people get the support they need, when they need it, no matter what. Their three programmes include Never Alone, helping young people to look after their own mental health; Someone To Turn To, making sure young people have adults around them who can really help; and Powerful Young Voices builds a youth-led movement to make sure support is there for anyone who needs it. For more information, visit [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk). If you need urgent help, text YM to 85258.

# Top 100 Apprenticeship

Every year, the **Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers** list celebrates the best organisations offering apprenticeships in England. The 2025 list, created by the Department for Education and RateMyApprenticeship, shows which employers are providing the most opportunities, supporting their apprentices, and helping them to succeed. From the armed forces and hospitals to big companies like Amazon and John Lewis, the list highlights the wide range of career paths available through apprenticeships.

RANK	EMPLOYER	SECTOR
1	Mitchells & Butlers	Catering & Hospitality
2	BAE Systems Plc	Engineering & Manufacturing
3	Amazon	FMCG & Retail
4	John Lewis Partnership PLC	FMCG & Retail
5	Busy Bees Nurseries Ltd	Early Years / Childcare
6	Department for Work and Pensions	Business & Administration
7	GXO Logistics UK Ltd	Transport & Logistics
8	Whitbread plc	Catering & Hospitality
9	McDonald's UK	Catering & Hospitality
10	PwC	Accounting
11	Lloyds Banking Group	Finance & Banking
12	Go-Ahead	Transport & Logistics
13	Royal Air Force	Protective Services
14	BT Group	Digital Media & IT
15	Bupa	Health & Social Care Services
16	Mitie	Business & Administration
17	Specsavers	FMCG & Retail
18	Greene King	Catering & Hospitality
19	British Army	Protective Services
20	Tesco PLC	FMCG & Retail
21	EY	Accounting
22	Network Rail	Engineering & Manufacturing
23	JLR	Engineering & Manufacturing
24	B&Q Ltd	FMCG & Retail
25	Aon	Insurance
26	KPMG UK	Accounting
27	British Broadcasting Corporation	Digital Media & IT
28	North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust	Health & Social Care Services
29	Babcock International Group Ltd	Engineering & Manufacturing
30	Balfour Beatty	Construction, Property & Surveying
31	British Gas	Construction, Property & Surveying
32	Travis Perkins Plc	Construction, Property & Surveying
33	Howdens Joinery Group PLC	Engineering & Manufacturing
34	NatWest Group	Finance & Banking
35	Compass Group UK & Ireland	Catering & Hospitality
36	Transport for London	Transport & Logistics
37	HMRC	Business & Administration
38	ALDI Stores Limited	FMCG & Retail
39	Hays Travel Limited	Travel & Tourism
40	Priory Group	Health & Social Care Services
41	Kier Group	Construction, Property & Surveying
42	Co-op	FMCG & Retail
43	East Suffolk & North Essex NHS Foundation Trust	Health & Social Care Services
44	ASDA	FMCG & Retail
45	VOYAGE Care	Health & Social Care Services
46	Sodexo	Catering & Hospitality
47	HC-One Ltd	Health & Social Care Services
48	TUI UK&I	Catering & Hospitality
49	Softcat	Digital Media & IT
50	Crowe UK LLP	Accounting

# Employers 2025

RANK	EMPLOYER	SECTOR
51	Savills UK Ltd	Construction, Property & Surveying
52	Screwfix Ltd	FMCG & Retail
53	BMW Group	Engineering & Manufacturing
54	Norfolk County Council	Local Authority
55	Department for Education	Education & Childcare
56	Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited	Early Years / Childcare
57	Superdrug Stores PLC	FMCG & Retail
58	Royal Navy	Protective Services
59	Capgemini	Digital Media & IT
60	British Airways	Transport & Logistics
61	Merseyside Police	Protective Services
62	London Fire Brigade	Protective Services
63	E.ON UK Ltd	Transport & Logistics
64	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Local Authority
65	BDO	Accounting
66	Mace Limited	Construction, Property & Surveying
67	Royal Mail	Transport & Logistics
68	West Midlands Police	Protective Services
69	Virgin Media O2	Digital Media & IT
70	WTW	Insurance
71	Cummins	Engineering & Manufacturing
72	AstraZeneca	Medicine, Science & Pharmaceutical
73	The Automobile Association Limited	Transport & Logistics
74	IBM UK LTD	Digital Media & IT
75	BAM UK & Ireland	Construction, Property & Surveying
76	Bank of England	Finance & Banking
77	Tarmac	Engineering & Manufacturing
78	RSM UK	Accounting
79	WM Morrisons Ltd	FMCG & Retail
80	Northumbria Police	Protective Services
81	Halfords	Automotive
82	Grandir UK	Early Years / Childcare
83	Cooper Parry	Finance & Banking
84	Unilever	FMCG & Retail
85	Kids Planet Day Nurseries	Early Years / Childcare
86	Barchester Healthcare Limited	Health & Social Care Services
87	Cheshire West and Chester Council	Local Authority
88	Forvis Mazars	Accounting
89	VolkerWessels UK	Construction, Property & Surveying
90	Computacenter (UK) Ltd	Digital Media & IT
91	University of Oxford	Education & Childcare
92	AWE plc	Engineering & Manufacturing
93	Savers	FMCG & Retail
94	Mott MacDonald	Engineering & Manufacturing
95	Aspens-Services Ltd	Catering & Hospitality
96	Pearson plc	Education & Childcare
97	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Local Authority
98	Arup	Engineering & Manufacturing
99	CBRE Ltd	Construction, Property & Surveying
100	David Lloyd Clubs	Travel & Tourism

## Summary

This year's results show just how important apprenticeships are for both employers and learners. Mitchells & Butlers took the top spot, with companies like BAE Systems, Busy Bees Childcare, Amazon, and the Department for Work and Pensions also ranked highly. The British Army, which welcomed more than 5,000 new apprentices across 39 different programmes, topped the Sunday Times UK-wide list. Overall, the Top 100 employers account for around 10% of all new apprenticeship starts in the country, with most reporting growth in their apprentice numbers this year. These results show that apprenticeships are not only helping young people start their careers but also giving employers the skilled staff they need for the future.

Best of luck on your  
**apprenticeship**  
journey!

**The Apprenticeship  
Guide: Online**

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