

Apprenticeships

What are apprenticeships?

An apprenticeship is a mix of studying and on-the-job training in a particular field such as engineering, transport, childcare, catering, design and many others. As an apprentice, you will work alongside more senior and experienced staff and earn a wage. You get a certain amount of time in your working week for study, usually one day per week. This study is done as part of a college or university course.

The length of apprenticeships varies from 1 up to 5 years, depending on the particular apprenticeship level. For example, a level 2 apprenticeship (equivalent to a GCSE) would take less time than a level 7 apprenticeship (equivalent to a degree). You may even gain other qualifications during your apprenticeship, such as a diploma. After completing an apprenticeship, you will be qualified and experienced in your chosen field.

What are the pros and cons of apprenticeships?



One of the big advantages of apprenticeships is that you get paid to learn (the average pay for an apprentice is £400 per month), including holiday pay. This is in stark contrast to people who choose to go to university and have to pay £9,000 per year in tuition fees alone, as well as finding money for rent and living costs. So in many cases an apprenticeship can be a sound financial decision- but that's not the only benefit of an apprenticeship. Your employability is greatly increased by doing an apprenticeship because of the practical skills and experience that you have gained over the course of the apprenticeship. You have access to good support through your training providers. You are also trained in skills that employers actually want, and your chances of progressing in your field are good if you have completed your apprenticeship successfully: 90% of apprentices go on to find employment in their field.

The disadvantages of an apprenticeship include lower pay than some other workers, despite being similarly qualified in some cases. This can lead to low job satisfaction and potentially feeling undervalued. You also may find that you are limited in the kind of work you are allowed to do as an apprentice, as well as limiting yourself to a particular field of work at a young age. Apprenticeships can also be quite stressful for some young people who might not be used to the expectations of professional environments, particularly coming straight out of school. So, while apprenticeships won't be the right choice for everyone, they are a good choice for many.

How do I apply for an apprenticeship?

Firstly, you need to decide what sector you want to work in. This is a very big decision and you need to spend some serious time thinking about your own aims for your career. You need to research any potential sectors thoroughly to find out whether an apprenticeship in that area of employment is right for you. You also need to find out whether there are any available apprenticeships in your chosen career. You can search for available apprenticeships in your



area using the Apprenticeship Search at www.gov.uk. If you are not sure what area you would like to work in, you can run a search just using your postcode and see what positions are available. You would still need to research each of these very carefully in order to decide which would provide the right environment for you.

Once you have found an apprenticeship you want to apply for, and have researched it carefully, you should contact the training provider, either directly or by following the instructions online if there are any. Some apprenticeships can be applied for directly through www.gov.uk; others are applied for via training centres or the employers' website. You can use resources like the National Careers Service to help you with your application, including personal statements and details of relevant information.

What if I decide the apprenticeship isn't for me?

Legally, an apprenticeship cannot be terminated earlier than the agreed period of its duration (this might be a number of months or it might be until a certain qualification is gained). If an employer ends an apprenticeship early then you have the right to claim breach of contract. However, if you are the one who wants to end the apprenticeship before its agreed duration, you may be able to do so without having to pay fees in most cases.

It is usually a bad idea to drop out of an apprenticeship. This is because it looks bad on your CV and sends a negative message to your potential future employers. Certainly, you could argue that it shows you're passionate and uncompromising, but many employers would interpret your dropping out as uncommitted, unreliable and other less desirable traits. A better idea if you are not enjoying your apprenticeship is to seek



help from your training provider (not your employer). They may be able to switch your apprenticeship to a different employer, or negotiate better terms with your employer on your behalf.

Do I have to be 16 to get an apprenticeship?

The minimum age for an apprenticeship is 16, but there is no maximum age. If you are over 24 years old when applying for your apprenticeship, there is less government funding available and you may have to finance it yourself.