

WORK EXPERIENCE GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS / CARERS



WHAT WORK EXPERIENCE TEACHES YOU

This guide explores the traditional and emerging opportunities that work experience introduces you to, as you look towards your future.

Student voices



See what two students, Noman and Khaleel, learned about work and about themselves during work experience at ANT Telecom where they shadowed and learned from people across the company.

[Watch the video](#)

“I’ve seen a big difference in students after completing their work experience, especially in their confidence and their ability to put the best version of themselves forward.”

- Lyndon Ferguson, Teacher at Cressex School, High Wycombe

“At work, you feel a bit grown up. I’ve experienced a lot of things I’ve not experienced before. The skills that I’ve developed most are my communication and listening skills.”

- Noman Mohamed, Student, Cressex School, High Wycombe

WHY WORK EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Every experience of work or interaction with an employer is a chance for you to gather information that will help you decide on a career path, whether it be a sector you want to work in, or a particular role you want to do.

Through work experience, you can:

- Discover and investigate careers that match your interests, skills and passions
- Build your confidence, communication skills, and teamwork
- Get first-hand experience of different industries and work settings
- Understand workplace expectations, dos and don'ts
- Make informed decisions and be inspired about your future in education or employment
- Stand out from others with no experience when applying for future jobs
- Understand how what you are learning in school relates to the world of work



FIND WORK EXPERIENCE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

The earlier you start exploring whether your interests can lead to a career, the sooner you can get excited about what the future has in store.

1

Start early

Experiences of work can begin as early as Year 7. At first, you might just visit a workplace for a few hours to see what it's like, or carry out a team challenge or project. Or you could go to work with a parent / carer for the day. Then there's virtual placements where you don't even leave home or school. From Year 9 or 10 onwards, you'll be looking at spending a whole week or two working with a company.

2

Talk to your teachers

Teachers and Careers Leaders at school will have contacts at local employers and business organisations. Schools can also directly arrange work experience opportunities for you, making it even easier to get started.

3

Use the networks closest to you

Your family and friends might hear about a company offering work experience, or have a great idea about an employer to approach. Or they could bring you to their workplace for a 'Bring a Child to Work Day'. Ask them to help you with ideas.

4

Explore local platforms

Carry out your own online research to learn more about work experience. Here are some websites to start you off where you'll find live opportunities, guides to different sectors, case studies about employers, and a virtual work experience platform.

Bucks Skills Hub

National Careers Service

Springpod Virtual Work Experience

5

Go directly to the company

If there's a company you really want to work for, go to their website to see if they offer work experience and if there's a formal process to apply. If there's a sector you like, apply to different companies to ensure you find a winner.

FIND WORK EXPERIENCE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

6

Attend big skills & careers events

Local skills shows and careers fairs are a great way to meet employers. You'll often meet 50 or more in one day, so there's bound to be something to capture your imagination. That's what happened for Lawrence, who ended up with a full-time job with a company he met: *"I am really pleased my dad talked me into visiting the Bucks Skills Show!"* **Read Lawrence's story.**

7

Don't give up!

As Noman says: *"Don't be worried about finding a placement, it'll come to you eventually, and then you're just going to have a positive experience."*

Top tip:

If a company specialises in making or selling one thing, it doesn't mean that's all the work experience will be about. A company that makes parts for rockets might still need people in marketing, sales, finance, HR, etc. When you do work experience, you might get to try out everything, like Khaleel: *"We attended a meeting with a client, learned about the marketing department, learned about engineering, and tested out the radios and walkie-talkies."*



PREPARING FOR WORK EXPERIENCE

Different types of work experience last for different amounts of time, ranging from a few hours to two weeks. Whatever the case is for you, make sure you are ready to go and prepared for your work experience.

Think about what you want to achieve

To make the most of this opportunity, think about what skills you want to learn and develop. What questions about work have you always wanted to ask? Is there a certain job you want to know more about? Consider the skills, knowledge and behaviours you would need to do one of the jobs. What would make you feel more confident and fulfilled at the end of the work experience?

Research the company and its values

Read a bit about the company and its history so you can ask more specific questions that show you've really taken an interest. Research the company values so you know what's expected of you in terms of how you behave in the workplace.

Tell the company you're looking forward to it

If you're going on a work placement, make a great early impression by sending an email to the employer the day before you start (or on a Friday if you start on a Monday) to say you're looking forward to it and can't wait to meet everyone.

Work out what to bring and wear

As a rule, bring a water bottle and a notepad and pen. Ask if there's a cafeteria on site or if you need to bring lunch. What counts as appropriate clothing depends on the workplace and type of work you do. It could be smart, casual, 'smart casual', or a uniform. Check with the employer or ask your school to confirm.

Arrive on time

The worst kind of first impression is to turn up late, so set off a little earlier than you need to on the first day of your placement, just in case of delays. Plus, this will show how enthusiastic you are!

PREPARING FOR WORK EXPERIENCE

For schools: how you can help

- Coordinate with employers early on to ensure their expectations are realistic
- Ensure permissions and safeguarding policies are in place
- Share resources like the **Employer Standards Toolkit** to support participating businesses

For parents / carers: how you can help

- Encourage your child to reflect on what they hope to learn
- Help with logistics like timings, travel arrangements, and permissions for being out of school
- If your child is coming to your workplace for a 'Bring a Child to Work Day', help them prepare by sharing information about the workplace ahead of time



DURING WORK EXPERIENCE

Keep a diary of your experience

This can keep you on track with the goals you set yourself before the work experience began. Your experiences could even form part of a future job application or LinkedIn post.

Talk to your new colleagues

They will be full of information and experiences that can benefit you, so *“relax and don’t be afraid to ask questions,”* says Khaleel. You’ll meet a range of different people from the workplace, so ask them how they got into their job, what they like about their role, or what a usual day at work looks like for them. If there are workers around your age, ask them for their experiences as a young person in the world of work.

Make notes during the day

From how to perform a certain task to how to pronounce someone’s name, make a note of anything you want to get right. Make sure you record the skills you have gained for your CV. Go back over your notes when you have a quiet moment.



Don’t be afraid to make mistakes

Everyone does, so use this time to ask for feedback. That’s how you learn. If there’s something you don’t know, ask someone. Remember: there’s no such thing as a silly question.

Ask for more work

If you’ve run out of things to do, tell someone and ask how you can be of help to them. This shows your employer that you’re eager to work and learn.

AFTER WORK EXPERIENCE

Talk about your experience

Reflect on the insights, knowledge and skills you gained. Talk to the employer and get feedback on how they felt you did during your time with them. Talk it through with friends, family, teachers and Careers Leaders too. Each person might ask you different questions that make you think more deeply about what you learned.

“There’s no such thing as a work experience which is a waste of time. What you learn about yourself is really valuable - what you do like as much as what you don’t like.” - Marina Jackson, Under 19s Manager, Bucks Skills Hub

Update your CV

Work experience demonstrates determination, motivation and a go-getter attitude, which employers value and are on the lookout for. You’ll now have lots of experiences to draw upon and include on your CV, from specific skills you learned to tasks you completed. Look back at your diary for reminders.

Have your hopes and expectations changed?

What kind of career were you thinking about pursuing before your work experience? Is that still the same now? Is there something you learned about that you want to explore further? Talk with your family and school about what you see in your future now that you’ve gained some valuable experience.



VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE

Virtual work experience placements offer a way to explore careers remotely rather than in-person

This might benefit you if you struggle to find an in-person placement because of your location or limited suitable opportunities. Or it may be that you don't quite feel confident enough to step into a physical workplace yet. Either way, virtual work experiences can give you a flavour of different careers and give you confidence to carry out an in-person work experience visit or placement later on.

Practical skills development

You can complete real-world tasks and projects designed with top employers, helping you gain practical insights and workplace skills. Because of its online nature, virtual work experience can greatly enhance your digital skills.

Flexible and accessible

Programmes can be completed at your own pace and often include live talks or webinars with industry professionals. It all takes place in a supportive, accessible environment. designed to help you build confidence and try something new.

Below are some free online platforms that promote virtual work experience opportunities and lots of information to inspire and empower young people. You can also search for more online.

Springpod

Futures For All

UCAS

USEFUL RESOURCES

Buckinghamshire Skills Hub

8 Ways to Maximise Work Experience

Top Tips from Young Professionals

10 ways to get the most out of work experience

Preparing students for the modern workplace

Hello Student: a guide to career success

Work experience in action on 'The One Show'

Unifrog: a guide to work placements





A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR ALL SKILLS
AND WORK-RELATED ADVICE.



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