



I think I want to do an **apprenticeship**

It's one of the most important decisions you'll make, and getting it right will kick-start your career, so if you think an apprenticeship might be right for you, here are some tips.

Step 1 – What are your reasons for wanting to go into an apprenticeship?

- Have you considered all the possible different pathways you could take?
- How much do you know about apprenticeships, the qualifications you can gain, the assessment methods, what's involved, and the different levels available? You can [find out more about higher and degree apprenticeships](#) on [ucas.com](#).
- Are you ready for work, and can you balance the demands of work and study?
- Below are some pros and cons to consider.

Pros	Cons
Apprenticeships offer a direct alternative to full-time higher education for those who would prefer to start employment.	It can be difficult to balance academic study with work commitments – you need to be well organised!
You can earn a wage while completing a higher education qualification, and you won't have to pay tuition or course fees.	Although you will study a higher education qualification, your experience of student life will be limited compared to those attending full-time courses at university or college.
You will gain real knowledge, skills, and experience required for specific careers, and possibly professional accreditation.	You need to have a clear idea of the type of career you wish to pursue, as this is a vocational qualification.
Your investment in high level training and study can provide a long term career path and increase your earning potential.	There is the possibility you may have to pay back your course fees if you decide to leave your apprenticeship early.
Your work experience, transferable skills, and high level qualifications may leave you well placed to obtain employment in a number of related careers.	The initial apprenticeship wage you start on may be quite low compared to other employment, and you'll need to cover your day-to-day living costs, rent, travel costs, equipment, and materials. Tax and National Insurance contributions will come out of your salary.

Step 2 – Do you have a particular career or career sector in mind?

Yes – It would be useful to research your ideas further. You can find more information about different careers on the UCAS website, or job profiles sections of your national careers website (such as National Careers Service). In particular, take note of entry requirements – is an apprenticeship a valid pathway into this career?

No – If you are not sure what you want to do longer term, you should think carefully about whether an apprenticeship is the right option for you at this stage. Apprenticeships provide a route into a specific career or career area and so can narrow future options more than other pathways.

Tip: Consider using a computer based careers interest guide to help you identify possible careers / job families that match your interests. No computer programme can tell you what career you should or shouldn't be doing, but they can be a helpful starting point for more research and a good basis for a discussion with a careers adviser. Programmes may be available at your school / college and at local careers centres. There are also some versions available online – seek advice about which ones to use.

Step 3 – Search for and compare vacancies

Get a feel for how many vacancies there are for the job roles you're looking for in your preferred locations. Try to do this over a few months so that you can get an idea of how competitive it may be to get the apprenticeship you want.

Find two or three vacancies for the kind of job roles and apprenticeships you're interested in.

Consider the following questions:

1. What do you know about the employer – is this the type of company you want to work for?
2. How confident are you that you are ready to commit to a particular job in this career area / sector?
3. If you only study part-time, will you feel you've missed out on a full higher education student experience?
4. Can you manage your time well so that you can complete the study, assignments and work at the same time?
5. How do you feel about a job which may require you to work in different locations across the country, and will you mind if you have to move away from home for work?
6. What for you are the three most and three least positive aspects of this apprenticeship opportunity?
7. Have you achieved the required qualifications, subjects, and grades they are looking for?
8. Can you find examples of how you meet the 'essential' and 'desirable' skills and experience requirements the employer is asking for?
9. Can you give reasons why you want to work for this employer?
10. What interests you most about working in this job role / sector?



You can do any further research you need to do and check out the employer's website for any details and information you want. Remember, you can contact the employer and university, college, or training provider to ask any questions you have.

To search for vacancies, you can use the following government websites:

- England – www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
- Wales – Careers Wales – ams.careerswales.com/Public/Default.aspx?mode=vacancy
- Scotland – My World of Work – www.apprenticeships.scot
- Northern Ireland – www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships

Step 4 – Get advice

Now you can narrow down your choices but before you apply, it is really important to discuss your ideas further with teachers, parents, and a careers adviser.

Call the helpline number or visit the website for the region of the UK you live in:

- England – National Careers Service – 0800 100 900
- Wales – Careers Wales – 0800 028 4844
- Scotland – My World of Work – 0800 917 8000
- Northern Ireland – Northern Ireland Careers – 0300 200 7820

Step 5 – Make your applications

There are no fixed deadlines for apprenticeships and vacancies can occur throughout the year, although larger firms tend to recruit from September.

Remember to check any apprenticeship start dates to make sure you are going to be available if you haven't finished at sixth form / college yet!

You can [find out more about higher and degree apprenticeships](#) on ucas.com.

Also, take a look at our [tips and guides to applying for apprenticeships](#).

Good luck!

What next?

You can use the 'Doing your research' template and the 'Research Resources' which have suggestions and sources for your research. Once you have completed some initial research, you may find it helpful to discuss your findings with a careers adviser.

See also:

See also: 'How do you make decisions' resource.