



BECOMING AN APPRENTICE

Hints and tips to secure your apprenticeship



Your Apprenticeship - Your future

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended to give you useful hints and tips on how to apply for a job. After all, an apprenticeship is not guaranteed until you have secured employment. How you stand out from the competition is essential, as you are always competing with others for the job.

SEARCHING FOR JOBS

Apprenticeships are offered by a wide range of employers and you'll find them advertised on the Government's official Find an Apprenticeship website.

We advertise ours weekly:

www.hopwood.ac.uk/search-apprenticeships

Once registered we will contact you when opportunities arise.

Finding an apprenticeship can be slightly confusing until you get familiar with the different search techniques.

The National Apprenticeship Service site is an alternative place to visit for general information and you can use their helpline for support and general advice.

www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch

OTHER PLACES TO SEARCH

Large employers: If there is a large company based in your local area they may well have a regular supply of apprenticeship vacancies. Public sector organisations such as local councils and health authorities tend to be keen on apprenticeships too. You might find the perfect opportunity right on your doorstep so go to their website to see what's on offer.

NGTU: You can also search for vacancies and apply online on the notgoingtouni site: www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

findapprenticeships.co.uk: An easy to use search site that brings together vacancies advertised on other sites.

UCAS Progress: This search facility allows you to put in the name of your town. This will bring back apprenticeship training providers as well as colleges in the results. Some local 14-19 Prospectus sites (there is a separate one in each local authority area) actually link to UCAS Progress.

Job Boards: You may also like to try searching on the big job vacancy sites. Examples of such sites (sometimes referred to as 'job boards') include:

www.careerjet.co.uk/

www.cv-library.co.uk/

www.gov.uk/jobsearch

www.indeed.co.uk

www.jobsite.co.uk/

www.jobsgopublic.com/

www.jobs.nhs.uk/index.html

www.totaljobs.com/

Don't attempt to use all of these! Pick a couple that you like the look and feel of and bear in mind that some are "meta search engines" which just means that they pull together vacancies listed on other sites.

Tip: try entering "apprentice" in the 'job title' box and your nearest town or city in the 'location' box.

Some of these will allow you to upload your CV so that employers can search for you. You can also set up email alerts to your inbox when they have vacancies that match your chosen criteria such as location, job category or keywords.

YOUR CV

A CV (curriculum vitae) is a summary of your education, skills and experience, selling yourself to employers. This is the first impression of you.

How long should a CV be?

A standard CV should be no longer than two sides of A4.

Only include the main facts. If your CV is just one page, that's fine, as employers only want to read relevant information.

CV format

- Avoid fonts such as Comic Sans. Instead, choose something more professional such as size-10 Arial.
- List everything in reverse chronological order so the employer sees your most impressive and recent achievements first.
- Keep it concise and easy to read by using clear spacing and bullet points. This type of CV layout allows employers to skim your CV and quickly pick out the important information.

What to include in a CV

- **Contact details** - Include your full name, home address, mobile number and email address.
- **Profile** - Placed at the beginning of the CV, a profile is a concise statement that highlights your key attributes or reasons for deciding to work in a particular field. Pick out a few relevant achievements and skills, while clearly articulating your career aims. You should keep it short and snappy - 100 words is the perfect length.
- **Education** - List and date all previous education, including professional qualifications, placing the most recent first.
- **Work experience** - List your experience with most recent first. If you have plenty of relevant work experience, this section should come before education.
- **Skills and achievements** - This is where you talk about the foreign languages you speak and the IT packages you can competently use.
- **Interests** - Simply writing 'socialising, going to the cinema and reading' won't catch the attention of the employer. However, when relevant to the job, your interests can provide a more rounded picture of you and give you something to talk about at interview. Examples include writing your own blog if you want to be a journalist, or being part of a drama group if you're looking to get into sales.
- **References** - available upon request.

How to write a good CV

- There should be no spelling or grammar mistakes in your CV. Use a spell checker and enlist a second pair of eyes to check over it.
- Take a look at the company's website, local press and the job advert to make sure that your CV is targeted to the role and employer.
- Don't put the term 'curriculum vitae' at the top of the page.
- Provide a professional-sounding email address.
- Never lie or exaggerate on your CV or job application. Not only will you demonstrate your dishonesty to a potential employer, but there can be serious consequences too.
- You should always include a cover letter unless the employer states otherwise. It will enable you to personalise your application to the job. You can draw attention to a particular part of your CV.



CV Example 1

Jane Hopwood
123 Green Lane
Middleton
M24 6XH
Telephone: 07979 123 456 / 0161 123 1234
Email: jane.hopwood@exampleemail.co.uk

Personal Profile

I am a confident and enthusiastic young person looking for an opportunity to gain on-the-job training and qualifications within the Business Administration field. I have excellent I.T. and written communication skills, and I gained work experience in this sector through working for a local primary school. I am certain that this is the right career choice for me, and I am looking forward to starting work and learning new skills.

Education/Qualifications

Moorhouse Secondary School	Sept 2008 – June 2013
GCSEs	
Music	Grade A
Business Studies	Grade B
English Literature	Grade B
English Language	Grade B
Mathematics	Grade C
Double Award Science	Grade C, C
Physical Education	Grade C
BTEC I.T.	Distinction

School Work Experience

St Joseph's Primary School

Two weeks' experience as an Office Junior within the school administration office.

My duties included:

- Photocopying and printing important documents – maintaining confidentiality
- Filing alphabetically
- Answering telephone calls in a professional manner and directing calls appropriately
- Typing and posting letters, including using the franking machine
- Any other tasks asked of me – following instructions, being flexible and working unsupervised
- Working as part of a team – developing my verbal communication skills

Voluntary Work / Achievements

Duke of Edinburgh

3 core units:

Voluntary work – I assisted with the running of the school tuck shop two lunchtimes per week. My duties included ordering stock, assisting with the finances and serving customers. This experience involving using my initiative and working unsupervised.

Fitness – Two-day expedition, which I completed successfully. As a team of four, we were given a map that we used to navigate ourselves from point A to point B. This involved 10 miles of walking and overnight camping. The expedition helped me to develop problem-solving and teamwork skills.

Skill – I am a very enthusiastic and committed guitar player and I practise most days of the week.

Additional Information

I am confident using a variety of software packages, including Microsoft Word and Excel, and I have excellent typing skills. In addition, I am responsible for looking after my younger brother and sister at weekends whilst my mother is at work. This shows that I am a mature and trustworthy young person.

Excellent references supplied on request.

CV Example 2

Joe Hopwood
123 Red Drive
Middleton
M24 6XY
Telephone: 07799 123 456 / 0161 223 1234
Email: joe.hopwood@exampleemail.co.uk

Personal Profile

I am a confident and hardworking young person looking for an opportunity to gain on-the-job training and qualifications within the plastering trade. I have a good knowledge of the trade and excellent communication skills, in addition to having undertaken practical work experience in this field. I am certain that this is the right career choice for me and I am looking forward to starting work and learning new skills.

Job - Specific Skills

- Health & Safety awareness – CSCS card holder
- Competent using the appropriate tools for the trade, including trowel, hawk and sprit level
- Team player but can also be trusted to work independently
- Reliable and punctual – excellent school attendance record and references
- Full, clean driving licence.

Education/Qualifications

Heywood Secondary School	Sept 2006 - June 2011
9 GCSEs including:	
Physical Education	Grade B
Mathematics	Grade C

BTEC Extended Certificate in Construction (Level 2) - Merit

Units included:

- Exploring Health & Safety
- Associated Theory & Underpinning Knowledge
- Practical Plastering

BTEC Certificate in Construction (Level 1) - Merit

Units included:

- Building Maintenance Skills
- Moving and Handling Resources
- Developing Bricklaying, Carpentry & Joinery, Painting & Decorating, Plumbing, Electrical Installation and plastering skills

Paid Employment

Dearden Construction	Sept 2013 - April 2014
Temporary Labourer	

Typical domestic contracts included: new homes, flats, extensions and refurbishments.

My duties included:

- Assisting the plasterers with their work and cleaning working areas
- Loading out materials within the working areas
- Assisting with constructing, repairing and restoring walls and other surfaces
- Mixing up and heavy lifting
- Abiding by health and safety regulations and carrying out own risk assessments
- Working weekends and evenings and traveling to various locations
- Any other duties asked of me

- If you do not have any A* - C grades, put: 'GCSEs in the following subjects: Mathematics, English and Science'
- If you have more than three A* - C grades, put: '10 GCSEs, including Mathematics Grade C, English Grade C and Physical Education Grade C'

School Work Experience

Hurst Plastering Ltd

Two weeks' experience as a Trainee Plasterer

Duties included:

- Assisting the qualified plasterers with the completion of jobs within domestic and commercial properties (including social housing)
- Tiling kitchens and bathrooms, dry lining and skimming
- Using the appropriate tools in a safer manner
- Working as part of a team, ensuring that jobs were completed on time
- Liaising with customers in a polite and professional manner
- Arriving on time every day, also working weekends - attendance records available

Additional Information

CSCS card holder - in date until September 2017

First Aid Certificate - in date until December 2017

Hobbies / Interests

In my spare time, I attend the gym five nights a week in order to keep fit and healthy. I play football for my local team, which shows that I am committed, reliable and a team player. I am also responsible for arranging the weekly tournaments, which requires good organisational skills,

References supplied on request

References

When an employer asks for your references, you need to include one from school/college and one from your work experience/past employers.

These cannot be friends or family members!

Achievements / Voluntary work

Try and think hard about the extra activities that you have done. These could be:

- Being a school prefect
- Mentoring
- Assisting with the family business
- Fixing computers for friends and family
- Being part of a band
- Sports or musical achievements
- Childminding for your siblings
- Organising events or sports matches
- Co-ordinating groups i.e. drama or dance groups.

Don't forget to bullet point the skills and qualities that you have gained from these activities.

YOUR COVERING LETTER

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a document sent alongside your CV when applying for jobs. It acts as a personal introduction and helps to sell your application.

A cover letter is necessary as it gives you the chance to explain to an employer why you're the best candidate for the job.

You do this by highlighting relevant skills and experience; therefore you should always write your cover letter with the position you're applying for in mind.

Typically three to five short paragraphs, cover letters should not exceed one A4 page. If sending electronically, put the text in the body of the email rather than as an attachment, to avoid it being detected by spam filters.

Applications should always include a cover letter unless the job advert instructs you differently.

How to write a cover letter

Keep your cover letter brief and to the point. Cover letters should complement your CV but not duplicate it. It can be broken down into the following sections:

- **First paragraph** - The opening statement should set out why you're writing the letter. Begin by stating the position you're applying for, where you saw it advertised and when you are available to start.
- **Second paragraph** - Cover why you're suitable for the job, what attracted you to this type of work, why you're interested in working for the company and what you can offer the organisation.
- **Third paragraph** - Highlight relevant experience and demonstrate how your skills match the specific requirements of the job description. Summarise any additional strengths and explain how these could benefit the company.
- **Last paragraph** - Use the closing paragraph to round up your letter. Reiterate your interest in the role and indicate your desire for a personal interview. Now is the time to mention any unavailable dates. Finish by thanking the employer and say how you are looking forward to receiving a response.

Speculative cover letter - Speculative applications can sometimes be an effective method of creating a career opening.

What is the difference between a covering letter and a speculative letter?

A covering letter is in response to a job that you have seen advertised, whereas a speculative letter is when you are enquiring as to whether they may have any suitable vacancy for you. You can source a list of employers via www.yell.com (this is the online yellow pages.) or through specific internet searches.

Top tips for speculative applications

If you decide to write to an employer to find out if there are any potential jobs:

- Spend a little time doing some background work. Find out as much as you can about the company that you would be interested in working for.
- Find out if they offer the type of jobs that you are interested in.
- Do not send one generic letter/email to numerous companies, as this will just be a waste of your valuable time. Speculative applications need to be targeted.



Cover Letter Example

Jane Hopwood
123 Green Lane
Middleton
M24 6XH

Telephone: 07979 123 456 / 0161 123 1234
Email: jane.hopwood@exampleemail.co.uk

Mr Smith
Business Manager
Rochdale Business Solutions
Rochdale
OL12 6RY

1 May 2017

Dear Mr Smith

I am very interested in your recent job advertisement for a Business Administration Apprentice, as advertised on the National Apprenticeship website, reference number 155268. I have enclosed a copy of my CV for your consideration.

I am about to leave school with predicted GCSE grades A-C in nine subjects, including business studies, English and I.T. I have excellent keyboard skills and I have completed two weeks' work experience as an Office Junior at a local primary school. This experience enabled me to develop many skills, including telephone skills, team work and filing skills, which I feel would help me to successfully complete an Apprenticeship in Business Administration.

I would particularly like to work for Rochdale Business Solutions because your company takes great pride in offering the highest quality customer service, and you support employees with their professional development. Excellent customer service and continuing professional developments are areas that I personally feel are important; therefore, I am sure that, if given the opportunity, I would become a valuable member of your team.

I am a very enthusiastic and approachable young person, and I am eager to work alongside experienced professionals in order to learn new skills. I hope that you will consider me for interview, for which I can make myself available at any time to suit your convenience.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Jane Hopwood
Enc. C.V

Speculative Letter Example

Joe Hopwood
123 Red Drive
Middleton
M24 6XY

Telephone: 07799 123 456 / 0161 223 1234
Email: joe.hopwood@exampleemail.co.uk

Mr Jones
Plastering Manager
Jackson Construction Ltd
Rochdale
OL12 5RR

1 May 2017

Dear Mr Jones

Having recently completed a BTEC Extended Certificate in Construction (Levels 1 and 2), I am now extremely keen to secure employment as an Apprentice Plasterer within your team at Pioneer Construction Ltd.

There is a variety of funding available to encourage organisations to employ young apprentices, which could help towards the cost of wages. I hope that this is of interest to you, and for further information, I ask that you contact Hopwood Hall College Apprenticeship Team by email training@hopwood.ac.uk or by calling 0161 654 4373.

As you will see from the enclosed copy of my CV, I have gained over two months' valuable experience working as a plasterer's Labourer, which has enabled me to develop various job-specific skills. These include:


- Carrying out own risk assessments
- Working to customer and building specifications
- Working as part of a small team
- Communicating effectively with customers

I am flexible with working hours and willing to travel, and am currently awaiting my provisional driving licence so that I can start lessons immediately. I have already purchased various plastering tools, and I am looking to expand my toolkit once I secure employment.

I am very enthusiastic and confident young person, eager to work alongside experienced professionals in order to learn new skills. I hope that you will consider me for interview, for which I can make myself available at any time to suit your convenience.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Joe Hopwood
Enc. C.V

Remember!

The aim of your cover letter is to attract the employer's interest so that they read your CV. Your opening paragraph needs to get straight to the point but also show enthusiasm.

APPLYING FOR JOBS

Application forms

The vital first step when you apply for jobs is to complete an application form - it's your chance to show recruiters that you deserve to be shortlisted for interview.

While for some jobs you will be asked to send a CV and cover letter, some roles require you to fill in an application form instead.

You will need to complete most job application forms online via the company's website, but paper forms are still accepted in some cases.

Before you start

Research the company to gain an understanding of what they do, and study the job description so that when you complete the application form you can refer back to the specific skills and qualities that the employer is looking for.

Finally, read the instructions carefully to ensure that you complete the correct sections of the form and know when the deadline is.

What to include in a job application form

The application form should give the employer an insight into you and make them want to meet you to find out more. Typical sections of an application form include:

- **Personal information** - give basic details such as name and address.
- **Educational background** - provide information on your academic achievements and qualifications gained.
- **Work experience** - list your employment history and describe your main duties and responsibilities in each role, emphasising those most closely related to the job you're applying for.
- **Skills and knowledge** - give specific examples of times when you've demonstrated the skills required for the role.
- **Personal statement** - write a well-structured and well-argued case for why you are the right person for the job, referring to the person specification set out in the advert.

Most application forms will also require you to provide details of at least two people who can provide references.

Never lie on your job application form. Not only will this demonstrate your dishonesty to a potential employer, but there can be more serious consequences too.

Disclosing personal information

You're not obliged to divulge details regarding your age, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation, and shouldn't be asked for them on an application form. Only provide information that you feel will help support your application.

However, you may be asked to provide these details on a confidential equal opportunities form. It is usually the last page of an application form, or completely separate, and is used solely for monitoring the employer's commitment to equality and diversity. It should not be seen by the people involved in recruiting for the role or used in the selection process.



OFFERED AN INTERVIEW

Well done on being offered an interview! Now it's important to make sure that you are properly prepared. Before a job interview, you need to think about all the reasons why you are attending it and what you have to offer the organisation.

Remember, when interviewing for an apprenticeship, the employer is not expecting you to have lots of experience; they just want to see that you are enthusiastic about the job, willing to listen and learn, and that you are reliable.

Before your interview...

• Do your homework

Find out as much as you can about the company and what the job will involve. If you know anyone that works for them, ask them for advice. You should know what they do, what the apprenticeship involves and why you'd be great for the company.

It's also worth looking at the job description and trying to get a sense of the attributes they are looking for.

• Know your CV

Read over your CV and Cover Letter and application form - the details you've shared in these will most likely shape some of the interview questions.

• Practice

One of the best ways to prepare is to practice answering some of the questions they might ask you. Get someone you know to pose as the interviewer so you get used to talking aloud and thinking on your feet.

Make a list of your interests, strengths and weakness with accompanying examples or evidence to back up each one. For example, if they are looking for an organised person with good attention to detail, think about examples of times when you have been organised.

• Plan

Plan your journey. Do a trial run and ensure that you arrive on time or early. Double check the time and date of interview. If you are unable to attend, notify us or the employer as soon as you are able. Employers' time is very valuable and failing to tell them ruins your chances of rearranging your interview.

• Prepare what to take

Get things like GCSEs, certificates, sporting achievements, driving licence or photo ID out a few days beforehand in case any are missing. A note pad and pen - do write down notes in the interview. The job description - you can refer to this in the interview.

Your questions - Make sure you write down the answers to show that you really care about them.

On the day...

Handling interview nerves

There's really no reason to be nervous. Remember: they aren't just interviewing you, you are interviewing them. An apprenticeship interview is also your chance to find out more about the company and the people that work there.

The key is to position yourself so it looks that, whilst you're interested and enthusiastic about the job, you have a sense of your own self-worth; you aren't desperate for the role.

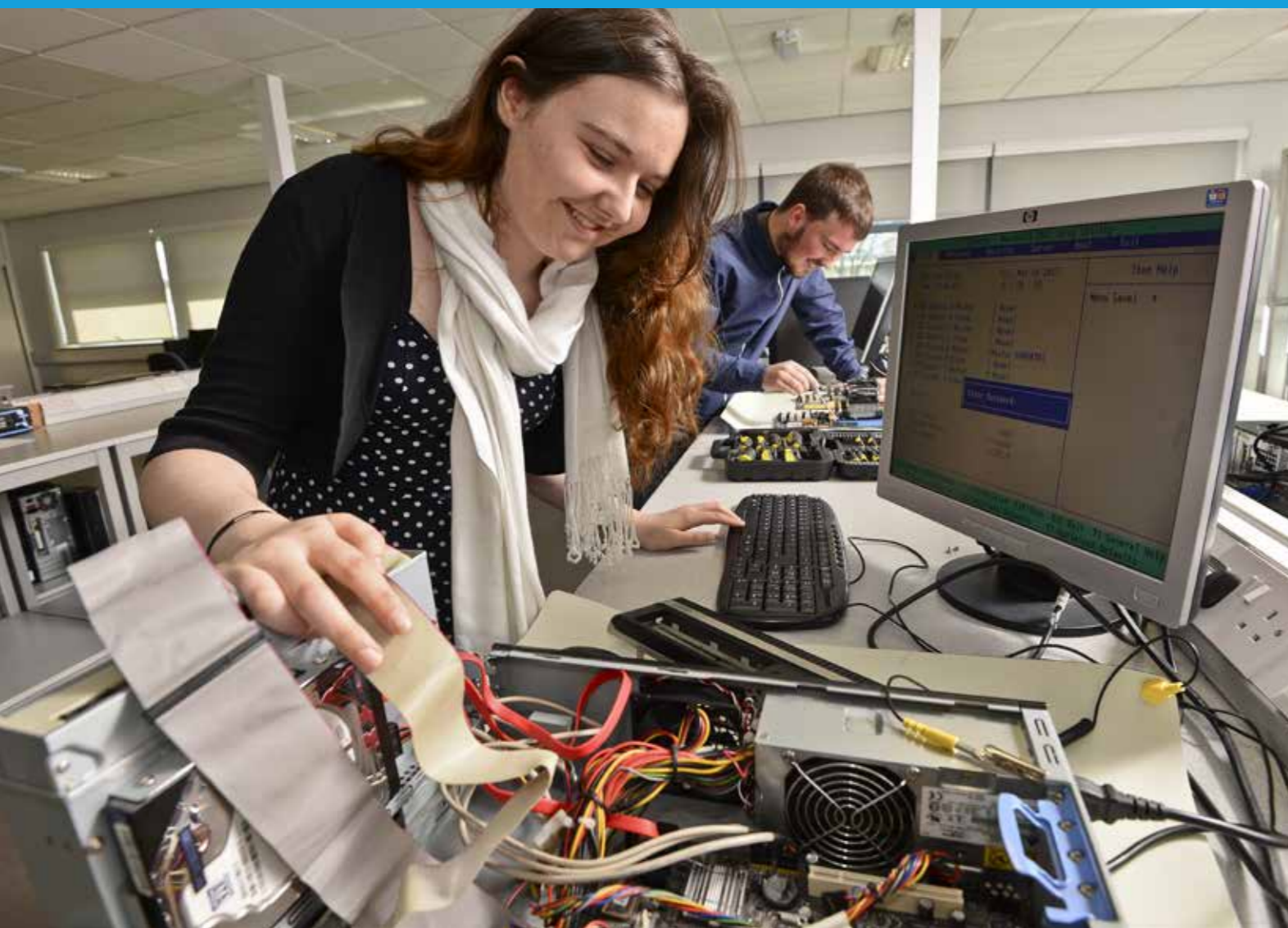
Try to relax; it'll really help you in the interview.

What to wear

First impressions do count and how you dress is one of the most important things to consider.

Female: Smart trousers/skirt, blouse and jacket. No short skirts, low cut tops or flip flops.

Male: Black, dark or grey trousers, clean and smart dark shoes, shirt and appropriate tie, plus a suit jacket if you feel comfortable. No trainers, boots, t-shirts, joggers, hoodies, jeans and shorts.



The interview

- Smile. As soon as you enter the building you are being noticed. You will be nervous (the employer is expecting this) but do smile. Employers will always remember a happy person.
- Shake hands.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Introduce yourself. They will probably ask how the journey in was. It's always good to reference your pre-planning to make sure that you arrived early.
- Ask them how they are.
- Don't be afraid to tell the employer if you are nervous. Anyone interviewing an apprentice will try to make you feel as comfortable as possible - remember they are just humans. Many interviewing managers are equally nervous about interviewing young people as it's not what they do every day.
- Be yourself!
- Listen - make sure you are answering the questions that are asked. If you don't understand the question then say so. Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat the question.
- Ask questions - Don't forget to bring out your pre-prepared list of questions. The hiring manager will love that you have been thinking about the interview.

Typical interview questions that can be asked

- Why have you applied for this apprenticeship?
- Give an example of a time when you have coped well under pressure.
- What do you think we want from our apprentice?
- Apprenticeships mean working full time alongside studying for a qualification. How will you prioritise your workload?
- Rate your organisational skills on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest). Give an example of when you have used these skills.
- Give an example of how you have dealt with a difficult situation.
- What do you think we mean by customer-focused service and how will it relate to this job?
- What is your understanding of equal opportunities and how it applies to this job?
- Give an example of a time you have worked independently.
- Give an example of a time you have worked as part of a team.
- Where do you see yourself in five years time?
- Have you got any questions for us?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us to support your application?

What employers want

Employers look for punctuality, reliability and having a real interest in the job, coupled with a willingness to learn.

Many employers also value any voluntary work experience, especially if it relates to that particular role or sector.

Apprenticeships@hopwood

Remember our team will contact you before your interview and after. However you can always contact the team anytime for advice, guidance and support.

Apprenticeships@hopwood.ac.uk
t. 0161 654 4373



FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

Being well presented and appropriately dressed makes a huge impact

KNOWLEDGE IS KING

There is no excuse not to come armed with information about the position and company you have applied for. Employers expect you to have done your homework

BE ENTHUSIASTIC

They will be looking for someone who is eager to learn. Employers understand that young people don't come as pre-made packages with all the right skills in all the right places

MAKE SURE THIS IS THE RIGHT JOB FOR YOU

It's important that you do your research and see if the job is really what you want and that it interests you. Employers will be able to see if you aren't really bothered. If you aren't passionate about the industry then perhaps it's time to explore other sectors and find a more suitable job for you

EYE CONTACT AND SMILE

Body language can speak volumes - look your interviewer in the eye and smile, it shows confidence.