

## **Making an apprenticeship application**

### **When do I apply for an apprenticeship?**

Unlike most college courses, apprenticeship vacancies appear all year round – each will give a deadline for applications, and start dates. Something you should note is that you shouldn't wait until the deadline to make an application as some companies close their recruitment as soon as they have a sufficient number of suitable candidates.

Vacancies with larger firms often start appearing from September, but most start to be advertised from January or February onwards. Smaller businesses might start recruiting a month or two before the job starts, so if you hope to start work in August or September, start looking from March/April onwards. If you're interested in working for a particular employer, you should take a look at their website – most have a page on careers, apprenticeships, or vacancies. Some employers constantly recruit all year round so if you have been unsuccessful with a company once before, don't let this put you off applying again.

### **How do I know which level apprenticeship to apply for?**

It is very important that you search for apprenticeships of the right level for you. If you already have a level 2 intermediate qualification in your chosen sector, then you should be applying for an apprenticeship at level 3, advanced level. If you don't have a level 2 in your chosen sector then you would need to gain this firstly as opposed to jumping straight to level 3.

If you have a level 2 qualification in a completely different area then you would usually still need to do a level 2 apprenticeship in the new sector because the content will be completely different. So for example, if you have a level 2 NVQ in hairdressing but you want to do an apprenticeship in childcare, then you would be looking at applying for a level 2 apprenticeship in childcare. Sometimes if you already have a level 2 qualification then you may not be funded to do another level 2 qualification so you would need to check with the training provider whether or not this is going to be possible.

### **Do you have English and maths level 2?**

If you don't have English and maths level 2 qualifications then this can affect your chances of getting on to certain apprenticeships. If you have a level 2 in hairdressing for example and you wish to complete a level 3 in hairdressing but you don't have your English and maths at level 2 (C or above / functional skills level 2) then you would usually have to obtain these qualifications first.

You may even be asked to hold 3/5 GCSE's at grades A\*-C or A\*-D including maths and English to do a level 2 apprenticeship, however if you don't have these qualifications then you are usually able to sit your maths and English level 2 functional skills alongside your apprenticeship so check if this is possible before applying. This would be detailed in the apprenticeship vacancy advert. If you do not meet the requirements for an apprenticeship then a traineeship could be a good route for you, as this is a stepping stone onto an apprenticeship.

### **General tips for your apprenticeship application**

- Applying for an apprenticeship is like applying for a job – it can be very competitive so your answers need to be of a high standard!
- Make sure that you type your apprenticeship application answers into a word document so that your answers are checked for spelling and grammar mistakes and so that the page you

are applying on does not time out whilst you were busy writing your answers. This is also good in case you are invited to an interview and you need to look back on your answers to help you in the interview situation.

- Don't be shy, and try not to undersell yourself! Be confident about what you have achieved and what you can offer the employer. Equally, be careful of overselling, as anything you write may be explored further at interview.
- When providing personal contact details, make sure your email address and any voicemail greeting on your mobile are appropriate for an employer!
- If you're applying for apprenticeships on a particular website where your previous application is saved, be careful not to use the same answers for the next application as each of them will need to be edited to suit the vacancy you are applying to.

## **Applying for an apprenticeship on the GOV UK website (National Apprenticeship Service)**

### **Creating an account**

**Registering on Find an apprenticeship service** is completely free of charge. To start your search you need to visit the website below:

[www.gov.uk/further-education-skills/apprenticeships](http://www.gov.uk/further-education-skills/apprenticeships)

You can then either search the Find an apprenticeship website or create an account. If you search the website, you cannot apply for a vacancy until you have created an account so it could be a good idea to create an account as early as possible to avoid delays at a later date. You would enter your personal details to create an account so make sure they are all accurate and professional. Your email address will be used as your username to sign in to your account. The email address you choose will be seen by employers. Always try to include a telephone number if you have got one, it is important that training providers and employers can contact you to discuss your application if they need to.

*Remember that you need to activate your account. You will need to go into your email account (that you used in your registration form) and you will have an email waiting for you. You need to enter a 6-character code from the email to **activate** your account. You may need to check your junk mail folder as sometimes the activation email may be filtered to this folder instead of your inbox.*

### **Searching for vacancies**

There are a few ways in which you can search for vacancies using this resource. It is important to use a few different techniques in order to generate as many vacancy results as possible and so you do not miss out on vacancies which you may be suited to. You can use the 'Search' facility and type in a key work such as 'dog groomer' or 'nursery assistant' or you can use the 'Browse' tool. Clicking on 'Browse' will allow you to browse different sectors of work. You may know that you want to work in engineering for example, however you may not know which area of engineering you wish to work in this tool will allow you to take a look at the sub-categories within a sector of work. This is also a good tool to use in case your key word search was spelt incorrectly or does not feature in the advert title for example.

One other way to search for apprenticeship vacancies is to leave the keyword section completely blank so that you can take a look at all of the apprenticeships in your area; this can be extremely useful if you are not 100% sure of the type of apprenticeship you would like to do and you are open to different options. You are not going to be aware of all of the types of apprenticeships that are available so this can be a really good way to generate ideas and broaden your horizons!

When selecting the radius distance you would be willing to travel, be careful not to restrict yourself too much. Set your limit to at least 10 miles and if there is a vacancy which really appeals to you and seems a little far away, do not rule this out immediately; check on google maps to see how far you would need to travel and how you would get there, as you may be surprised! Remember, you get paid to do an apprenticeship so even if you have to travel that little bit further, it could be worth it to eventually secure your dream job!

### **Completing an apprenticeship application on the GOV UK website**

When you apply for an apprenticeship on this website, you will either be redirected to the employer website where they will have their own application process, or you will be directed to the application page on the GOV UK website where the questions are always the same for each apprenticeship you apply for. If you are applying on the GOV UK website then you should follow all of the tips below:

1.

When filling out your personal details, be careful to get all of these details correct and use CAPITAL LETTERS where necessary. It can be very off putting to employers when spelling and grammar mistakes are present and this could even be the difference between getting an interview and not being short listed.

After this, you will be asked to fill in your education, qualifications and work experience. You will firstly be asked to input the last school or college that you attended. Don't worry if you haven't been at school or college for a number of years as it won't affect your application at all. The qualifications section enables you to enter all of the qualifications that you hold or are currently undertaking and you must make sure that these are accurate and ordered from most recent to least recent and include all of your predicted grades and any other qualifications or grades that you hold. e.g. sport, music, dance, drama, Duke of Edinburgh, Asdan, St Johns Ambulance etc.

The work experience section enables you to enter all of your work experience, whether this is paid or unpaid work. When you start typing in the box that says 'main duties' you will notice that a character count will appear underneath the box. You have 200 characters to describe the main duties that you completed. If you can't remember the exact dates then you can select the approximate dates. Note, with 'employer,' this should be the name of the company you worked for, not the employer's name such as 'John Smith.' With the 'main duties' section, make sure you go into as much detail as possible but keep this section clear and concise. Type the answer into a word document to avoid making spelling and grammar errors.

2.

The next section is 'About you' and this section is one of the most important parts of the application form that will help you to get through to interview. You need to be prepared to put in a great deal of work to get this section looking really good as this is going to help you really stand out from the crowd. It cannot be rushed and must be tailored to each apprenticeship you apply for.

#### **What are your main strengths?**

This section is your chance to show the employer why you are suited to the apprenticeship you are applying to. You can show them the skills you have and how they will be useful in the vacancy they

want to fill. This question is all about **providing examples and evidence** to back up whatever you state as your skills. If you do not have much work experience then don't worry, it's fine to use examples of where you developed skills throughout your education or during your personal life such as team work skills when playing football or strong ICT skills gained when completing your GCSE's.

We advise that you include around three or four main skills in this answer and use the apprenticeship vacancy advert to help you pick out the most useful and relevant skills for the job. The employer will almost always include the skills which they are looking for in a candidate so this is your chance to reflect back in your application that these are skills which you possess and where you adopted these skills.

There will also be a list of duties which you will be involved in during the apprenticeship so you could think about the skills which are needed for those duties. So for example, say you were applying for an apprenticeship in retail and the vacancy states that you will be welcoming customers into the store and serving customers, you may want to state that you have excellent communication skills which you developed whilst completing your college course as you had to work in groups on assignments and talk to classmates to update them on how you were progressing with your particular section of the assignment. You could also add that you needed to be confident when communicating with teachers so that you could express any concerns during lessons and ask questions where necessary.

#### **What skills would you like to improve on?**

This question is proposed in the application so that you can demonstrate to the employer why this particular apprenticeship will help you to meet your career goals. You want to show them that this apprenticeship is going to help you to develop and that it will provide you with the tools to do well in the area of work you wish to work in, in the future. So for example, if you were going for a job in the IT Industry you could say something like, 'I would like to improve my knowledge and awareness of the latest programming techniques being used in the workplace,' or if you were going for a job in hairdressing you could say something like, 'I would like to improve my knowledge of the latest cutting and colouring techniques being used within the fashion industry and how these could be adapted to suit high street fashion trends.'

Again, you should use the apprenticeship vacancy advert to help you to pick out the skills which you would like to improve on, as the advert will include details of the work which you will be involved in so you can think about how those tasks and duties will help you to develop your skills. You should never word your answers in a negative light, such as 'I am not very confident so would like to use this apprenticeship to develop my confidence.' You don't want to show the employer where you may feel you have weaknesses; the question asks where you would like to improve, not what you are bad at.

#### **What are your hobbies, interests?**

This section is here to show the employer more of your personality; it is not here to judge you on your hobbies or interests. You should be careful about what you write and remember that the employer will use this section (and all of the application form) to start to create an impression of the kind of person that you are.

It is quite likely that if you are invited for interview, that the employer will use this section to help to 'break-the-ice' and make you feel more comfortable in your interview. They might start by asking you something like 'So, I notice from your application form that you are interested in films. What was the last film that you saw and what did you like about it?' This is another reason why you should

consult your application before any interview so that you can jog your memory about what you wrote in the application and perform well in the interview situation. You should never just list your hobbies and interests in this section – you should always write in full sentences and if you mention a particular hobby or interest, try to provide details of the skills which you feel this helps you to develop.

So, if you state that you enjoy watching and playing football then you could firstly state the football team you support and how often you play football (or indeed other details such as if you have a season ticket or details of the last match you watched.) You could then explain why you like to play football – does it help you unwind and release stress / keep you fit? Do you like to be tested and play against your friends to see who can score the most goals and have tournaments against each other? All of this will give the employer a clearer picture of you, in comparison as to if you said, ‘football’ or ‘I like football.’ Similarly, if you want to explain that you like to watch movies in your spare time, then you could provide more details such as the type of movie you like to watch or what the last movie you watched was. You could mention your favourite actor / actress and why you like them so much.

If you feel that you have a lack of hobbies or interests then remember in this section you can also include details of any achievements you have. This could be something from raising money for charity by taking part in a run or swim or it could be that you care for your younger siblings or a family member. Whatever you see as an achievement to YOU, then put it down and explain why this is such an achievement and which skills you feel this has helped you to develop.

### **I’m struggling with what to include in this section, what should I do?**

If you find it difficult to talk about yourself then you could always ask a friend or family member to help you with your application. Sometimes it’s easier to talk about someone else than to talk about ourselves. We might forget what we are interested as it seems obvious to us but the person reading your application does not know you. If you feel something is irrelevant to the job you are applying to, then this is never the case. Your hobbies, interests and achievements will show more about you, strengthen your application and help you to stand out so make the most of this section. Don’t be shy or hold back – you aren’t going to be judged on this. You could provide examples from your school life or throughout any work experience gained. It could be something that you particularly enjoyed during school or an award you won, or it could be an achievement in a job role such as employee of the month or that you had a particular good idea which was incorporated into the company which you were proud of.

If you do have an interesting or unique hobby or interest then of course include it in this section, but be careful about over-embellishing or ‘making up’ a hobby or interest as you don’t want to get caught out and be asked about it at interview, then not be able to talk about it honestly. Something else which you should also never do in this section if you are unsure of what else to write, is say that you like to ‘socialise.’ This could give the wrong image of you as the word ‘socialising’ usually portrays the image of going out to the pub and drinking alcohol. Straight away, the employer could assume that you will often call in sick on a Monday if you have had a heavy weekend. If you state that you like to socialise then you should explain what this includes such as that you like to go to the cinema or shopping with friends.

### **Is there anything we can do to assist you in the interview?**

This question is there to make sure that the employer can support someone with learning difficulties or disabilities and that they can provide them with an equal chance of doing well in an interview as

those without any disabilities or difficulties. If you do need any adjustments or support then remember to include this in your answer so that you do have an equal chance of performing well in an interview and so that you aren't putting yourself at a disadvantage to the other candidates who don't require support or who have stated the type of support they need. Employers cannot discriminate against people who do have learning difficulties or disabilities so don't let this put you off answering this question honestly. **If you don't require support** then you should still answer this question and state 'No thank you' or 'not applicable.'

### **Additional questions**

With every job application that uses 'Find an apprenticeship' form, the employer is only allowed to change one thing, the rest of the form has to stay the same. The only thing that they may change is to ask you two additional questions that are relevant to their job application. Common employer questions include:

- What interested you in this role?
- Why do you feel you are a suitable candidate for this role?
- Why are you interested in completing an apprenticeship?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
- What experience of dealing with customers do you have?
- What qualities do you think are important in this job role?
- What do you think makes the difference between a good customer experience and an excellent one?

These extra questions are as, or if not MORE important than the other three questions asked because they are set by the employer which means the answers are very important to them and the answers are going to help them to decide which candidates are most suited to the vacancy and their company in terms of their principles and aims. You do need to answer these questions fully and should put in just as much effort as you did in the other application questions. You should think about the job advert, the employer, and what you can tell them that might make you stand out from other applicants. You can do this by researching the company online, thinking about what qualities or skills they will be looking for and how this apprenticeship will help you to develop personally. You should also make sure that you have clear knowledge on what an apprenticeship involves. You should always answer the application as though you plan on staying with this company for a long time. Never state that you are considering starting your own business and this will help you to do that as an employer is spending time, effort and money on training you so they want to know that you are dedicated to their company and won't leave once you have the qualifications.

### **What happens after I have applied for the vacancy?**

You have submitted your application - well done, the hard work is over... for now. Once your application is submitted, this would usually go through to the training providers who will short list the applications for the employer. You would usually have to wait until the deadline date passes, plus a couple of weeks for the training provider to go through applications and pick out the strongest, most suitable candidates based on application answers.

If they feel your application is strong enough, they will shortlist you and you will be put forward for an interview / assessment day with either the training provider or the employer. If you have been successful then you would usually receive a call or an email and the status of your application will

change on the GOV UK website to 'successful' then a start date will be agreed. If you are unsuccessful then you would be provided with feedback as to why this was.

### **Final notes**

- Make sure that an apprenticeship in your chosen sector is definitely right for you before making an application because you don't want to waste your own time as well as the training provider and employers' time.
- Make sure you are applying for the right level apprenticeship as you won't be employed in an apprenticeship at level 2 if you already have a qualification in this area for example.
- Check that you meet the entry requirements for the apprenticeship that you are applying for.
- Check over your application answers before submitting it and check for spelling and grammar mistakes, check that you have answered every question and make sure you have spent enough time on the application and have not rushed it because the training provider will see this a mile off!
- Make sure that all of your contact details are accurate and professional. An email address such as [amylovesjoeforever@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:amylovesjoeforever@hotmail.co.uk) or [mattynufc@yahoo.com](mailto:mattynufc@yahoo.com) is not acceptable.

Good luck!!!