

EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS GUIDE

for young people



Types of work opportunities and how to access them
Revised September 2020

Introduction

Leaving school brings many new opportunities including further learning, employment or a combination of both.

For example, apprenticeships are full-time jobs with learning included, whilst many post-16 courses now also require you to gain industry experience. Or you may simply wish to earn some money through part-time work whilst studying.

This booklet will help you to look for jobs, complete applications and prepare for interviews.

To learn about further study options please see 'Your future – Choices for 16-19 Year Olds' available at www.somerset-ebp.co.uk



Where do I start?

There are many different types of job, so before you start looking for work it is useful to think about what you are good at and what you might enjoy.

You can start by:

- Talking to family, friends and teachers. They can share their experiences of work and may have contacts in areas you are interested in. They might also see skills and abilities that you didn't know you had.
- Thinking about your interests and what you enjoy. Do you like to work with people? Do you like practical tasks? Do you like working on screens or being outside?
- Working out how far you can travel and how you will get to work.

Once you have an idea of what you might like to do and where, you can look for employers in your area that may have these opportunities. Talking to people you know, making internet searches and looking in local shop windows can help you to do this. [For more ideas see Page 7.](#)

Remember that your first job is likely to be at an 'entry' level. For instance, if you would like to be a veterinary nurse you might initially seek part-time work at a pet-shop. Showing yourself capable in your first role will encourage your employer to offer you more opportunities as you gain experience.

When can I work?

Many businesses have busy times and quiet times, so often require part-time or temporary staff as well as full-time employees. You could also work for yourself.

Read on to see which opportunities might suit you:

Saturday/weekend job

A good way to earn some money and get experience if you attend school, college or university during the week. It involves working during the weekend and often includes jobs such as working in a shop or restaurant.

Temporary job

This is a job that is advertised for a fixed amount of time – such as Christmas seasonal work. For a certain number of weeks or months you will have a job, but when your contract ends the job will be over.

Part-time job

Working less than 35 hours in a week. This might involve working on specific days or evenings. Or you might work different shifts based on a rota. Your employer may ask you to do extra shifts to cover for illness or holidays.

Casual or zero hours

In this situation you do not work a set number of hours. An employer may request you to work when they need staff and you can choose whether to work when asked.

Full-time permanent job

Usually this involves working 35+ hours per week. If you begin full-time employment between 16 and 18 this should include some ongoing training. This may be through an apprenticeship. [See page 6 for further details on apprenticeships.](#)

Self-employed

This is where you work for yourself – you might set up your own business, selling products (such as clothes) or a service (such as graphic design) to customers. [See page 6 for more information.](#)

TOP TIP

If you are balancing study and work, be realistic about the hours you can work. You will need to be available for your teaching hours and to leave enough time for study and assignments.



How do I know I have the skills to work?

Whether you are going through a formal job application and interview or have found an opportunity through a contact, you need to show that you can do the tasks involved and fit well into the workplace.

You may be able to demonstrate job specific skills from your hobbies or school- work. For example, if you enjoy baking this is relevant to working in a coffee shop. If you are good at sports this is relevant to working at a leisure centre.

Whilst your employer can train you to do specific tasks such as operating a till there are key skills and behaviours that are important in every job.

These include:

Reliability: you will need to get to work on time, when needed. You can demonstrate this through a good school or college attendance record.

Communication: you will need to listen to instructions and pass information on. Think about situations where you have done this previously. Perhaps taking instructions at school or home; or explaining something to a sibling or friend.

Team-work: you will need to work with others, perhaps of different ages. You may have done this in a youth club, a sports team or music and drama group. If you are not part of any formal clubs or groups, think of when you have done something together with family or friends.



How can I get experience?

You can gain experience to prepare you for work in several ways. This is a great way to see what it is like to work and to test out different career options. It can also help you develop skills and contacts to secure a job in the future.

Work Experience and Industry Placements

Getting work experience is a great way to see what it's like to work and test out different career options – it can also help you to build up your skills and be more likely to secure a job in the future.

Whilst you are at school you may have time scheduled for workplace visits or work experience. Often you will need to find the placement, perhaps through contacts or by approaching companies that interest you. If you struggle to find a placement your school careers coordinator should be able to help.

You can also contact businesses to arrange work experience during your school holidays.

Many college courses now involve longer industry placements. These will relate to the course you are studying and help you link your learning to the workplace. They might take place for one day a week over a year, in several one- or two-week blocks or a single placement of up to a month.

A good work experience or industry placement will include an introduction to the business and some time working alongside other staff, so that you understand their roles. You should also spend some time working on a task that contributes to the business. Ideally your employer will give you some feedback after your placement.

Volunteering

Volunteering is doing things, unpaid, to benefit others apart from your friends and family. It can be an organised activity, perhaps with a club or interest group or it might be helping someone with their garden.

Volunteering can boost your job prospects by helping you to get regular experience of a role.

You can often find volunteering opportunities in your local community. This might include helping at groups that meet at community centres, schools, churches and other places of worship.

You can also check the following websites for opportunities:

www.volunteering.somerset.gov.uk

www.vinspired.com

www.do-it.org

www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk

Work Experience Case Studies

Name: Anya

Placement: Primary School

Type of work I did:

I was a teacher's assistant for reception/year 1 class, helping the children in their learning.

The best bit:

Talking with the staff and helping the children to make progress.

The worst bit:

I did not have a bit that I didn't enjoy.

I would recommend this work experience placement because - it is very enjoyable and improves your confidence in working alongside strangers/new people.



Name: Henry

Placement: Buglers

Type of work I did:

I did not have a daily routine as every day was different. One day I was stock taking, the next was helping replace a fuel filter on a tractor.

The best bit:

The best bit was doing a pre-delivery inspection on a tractor and checking the hydraulic pressure on a T6.140.

The worst bit:

I did not have any bad experiences at all.

I would recommend this work experience placement because - if you like practical work this would be a good job for you.



Name: Amy

Placement: HMV

Type of work I did:

Tagging and labelling stock, putting stock on the shelves.

The best bit:

Talking to the staff and being treated as an equal in the workplace.

The worst bit:

There wasn't anything that I didn't enjoy.

I would recommend this work experience placement because - it was a great opportunity to see what happens behind the scenes in a store and it is a good way of building up your people skills.



How do I make this experience count?

- Have the right attitude – be punctual, reliable and willing to learn. This will impress your employer who will feel able to trust you and help you to learn your role.
- Ask for a reference or testimonial – you can use this in future job applications.



What are Traineeships and Apprenticeships?

Traineeships

If you are 16-24 years old and are unemployed then a traineeship can help you to find your way into work. A traineeship usually lasts 6 weeks to 6 months and will provide work experience and help with English and maths if you need it.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is a real job with training so you can earn while you learn and pick up recognised qualifications as you go. If you live in England and are over 16 you can apply.

To find out more about traineeships and apprenticeships visit

www.skillupsomerset.org.uk

This website will explain what you can expect from a traineeship or apprenticeship – and provide links to current opportunities.

Can I start my own business?

Yes. If you have skills that people will pay for or can make or sell goods then you can become self-employed or start your own business.

Many people in the roles below are self-employed:

- Gardeners
- Music teachers
- Painters and decorators
- Graphic designers

If you are successful then you might employ other people, in which case you have started a business.

One of the main advantages of self-employment is that you are your own boss and can manage your own working time.

Things to think about before committing to self-employment include:

- You will not have a fixed income from an employer or paid holidays.
- You will need to invoice your customers and manage your accounts
- You may need some money to buy equipment or materials

If you are considering self-employment then you can find help and advice at:

www.princes-trust.org.uk



Where do I look for jobs?

There are many ways to look for a job. Here are some ideas for you to try:

Family, friends and contacts

If you know what you are interested in and good at, then speak to people you know to see if they are aware of any opportunities. Many jobs are never advertised but are found through contacts. Contacts that you have made through work experience and volunteering may be able to help.

Social media

LinkedIn is a social media platform that people in work use to share news and ideas. Jobs are often advertised on the site also. You can showcase your skills and abilities through creating a profile on LinkedIn then begin connecting with people in the work areas you are interested in.

Many businesses share job opportunities through Twitter and Facebook. You can follow companies in the areas you are interested in to see what opportunities they may have.

Job Sites

Many jobs are advertised online. An internet search using key words for the job you are interested in will give you an idea of what is available locally. The search results are likely to include some of the larger job search sites. You can then use search tools to narrow your options and set-up alerts.

Some of the larger sites are:

www.findajob.dwp.gov.uk
www.indeed.co.uk
www.monster.co.uk
www.reed.co.uk

Once you have identified a job you are interested in you will need to apply for it either through the job site or directly with the employer.

Recruitment Agencies

You can register with recruitment agencies that help businesses to find employees. You will need to tell the agency what skills and qualifications you have so that their recruitment consultants can match you to relevant roles. Visit www.agencycentral.co.uk to find a recruitment agency near you.

Newspapers and news-sites

Many businesses still like to advertise opportunities in local newspapers and these vacancies may also appear on the newspaper's website.

Job Centre Plus

Your local Jobcentre Plus will know about the jobs available locally. Visit www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus to find your nearest one. As a young jobseeker, you may be eligible for benefits or loans for things like transport to interviews.

Shop windows

You may see vacancies advertised on the windows of post-offices, local shops, cafés and restaurants.

How do I plan my job hunt?

01

Keep a note of the types of job your are interested in and the places you can travel to.

02

Make a note of the people you can talk to and the places you can look to find these jobs (see above).

03

Start talking to your contacts and searching job sites

04

Start applying for relevant jobs – using the advice below.

05

Keep going until you are successful – remember to ask family and friends for support on the way.

How do I apply for a job?

This will depend on who is advertising the job. Sometimes its as simple as a conversation with the owner of a business who needs some help, such as an independent shop or café.

Usually however you will need to apply in writing. This might mean using an online application portal or writing a letter of application with a CV.

Letters and CVs

You will need a computer to write your letter and CV. If you don't have one at home, then you can use your nearest library. You may be able to email your letter and CV, but if not will need to print it. Again, you can ask your library for help. Remember to save drafts of your letter and CV as you work.

What is a CV?

Your CV, short for Curriculum Vitae, outlines your skills, attributes and experience for an employer. It is a good idea to have a CV prepared that you can 'tweak' to suit specific jobs.

See the example CV structure and content below. This should be typed in no less than 10 point font.

Forename Surname

You may wish to include a photograph

Contact details including:

Telephone number and email address

Postal address

Short Summary statement of your skills, attributes and experience

For example:

A reliable and conscientious care worker with a supportive and patient attitude with clients

An efficient coder working in Linux and Python to create effective solutions for clients.

Brief outline of previous experience

Remember all experience is relevant. A paper-round demonstrates reliability and punctuality. Volunteering can develop many skills depending on the context.

Details of school and college (university if attended)

- **University name** – Dates attended (from – to)
 - **Degree subject** – Classification
Add some detail on modules, specialisms, projects, papers etc.
- **College name** – Dates attended (from – to)
 - **Qualification** – Grade
 - **Qualification** – Grade
 - **Qualification** – Grade
- **School name** – Dates attended (from – to)
 - **Qualification** – Grade
 - **Qualification** – Grade
 - **Qualification** – Grade

Details of any further qualifications or achievements relevant to the role e.g. food hygiene certificate, school journalism prize.

A brief statement of your work and personal interests

For example:

I flourish in busy environments and enjoy cooking. I have previously enjoyed volunteering in a community café.

I like to be active and I work effectively in a team. I was invited to return as a children's activity camp leader after my first successful camp.

References available on request

You need to have 2 people outside of your immediate family who are willing to confirm your skills and abilities. If the employer contacts you for a reference, you can then let these people know before passing their details to the employer).

Your Covering Letter

The employer might state what they expect your letter to cover, but if not ensure it outlines why you want the job and why you have the skills and experience they require.

Here are some key tips for writing your letter:

- Include the full postal address of the company at the top left of the letter.
- Include your own address on the right-hand side of the letter and put the date below this.
- Address the letter to the contact on the advert if named. If not address it 'Dear Sir / Madam'.

Then

- State that you are writing to apply for the role advertised.
- Explain why you are interested in the company and the specific role e.g for a customer adviser role at an electrical goods store: 'I am interested in electronic devices and would enjoy advising customers on different choices. I believe your company provides an excellent selection for customers at a range of price points for different customers.'
- State why you have the skills necessary for the role. If the company has detailed specific skills or abilities that they require you should address these individually. Often a 'person specification' will state specific skills and abilities such as 'good customer service'.
- For the example above: 'I have two years customer service experience from my Saturday job in a local supermarket. During this time I have been punctual and reliable and customers have complimented my helpful service. I have also learnt key retail skills including stock taking, restocking and till management. I believe that these skills and attributes combined with my interest in electronic goods will enable me to perform this role well.'
- Finish by highlighting that you would welcome the opportunity to discuss the role further at interview.

If you know the person's name finish the letter 'Yours sincerely'. If you do not know their name finish it 'Yours Faithfully'.

You will either need to attach a scan of your signature or you can type your name in italics.

You should then email, post or take your letter and CV to the address provided.



Online applications

Many larger companies have online application processes. These will ask for much of the same information as you would provide in a CV and covering letter.

When using an online application system, you should be aware that

- The system will guide you through the information you need to provide at each section
- You should check that you are happy with the content and spelling of your application before submitting it.
- If you are having problems or are not sure you have submitted the application successfully then find the helpline phone number or email and check that your application has been received.

Jargon buster

Job description – as you'd expect this explains what the person in the job does.

Person specification – a statement of the skills, attributes and behaviours a person needs to do the job successfully.

Skills / competencies – these might be technical skills such as 'proficient with Adobe Creative Suite' or broader skills such as 'good listening and communication skills'.

Attributes / Values / behaviours – these describe how you act in the workplace for example 'treats others with respect'.

Whenever an application process details the above you should give very specific examples of how and when you have demonstrated these characteristics.



Top tips for job applications

Check that you meet the minimum requirements for a role before applying.

Check your spelling, grammar and presentation.

If you have copied and pasted content from another application check that it is appropriate. An employer won't want to see another company mentioned or irrelevant skills explained.

Ask someone else to check your application. Often a different person spots mistakes the writer misses.

What happens next?

If the employer thinks you may be suitable for the job, they will invite you to the next stage of the process.

Many employers let you know if you have been unsuccessful. However, some do not contact unsuccessful applicants. They will usually let people know this in the job information that they provide for applicants.

Advice on Social Media

An employer may check your social media profiles and usage before offering you a job.

You can take some simple steps to ensure that your social media activity does not spoil your career chances.

Make sure that your posts do not include:

- bad language
- references to alcohol and drugs
- offensive statements – if you are unsure if something may be offensive then it is better not to post it.

As far as possible delete any earlier posts with the above content.

Think about any photographs that appear on your profile or feeds and what impression they might give an employer.

You can also use social media to help your job hunt – [see page 7](#).



What are interviews, tests and assessment centres?

Employers have lots of options for selecting the right candidate. These include:

Informal conversations

This is most likely for weekend or evening jobs with a small business. You should still dress smartly and prepare answers to questions about your skills and experience.

Formal interviews

This is the most common type of interview and often involves 2 or 3 people from the company asking you questions about your suitability for the role.

You may be asked to prepare a presentation for the interview panel. If so, check whether you need to prepare slides and how you should save or provide these.

Telephone and video interviews

You will need to find a quiet place where you can speak to the interviewers without interruption.

For telephone interviews you should either have a strong signal or use a landline.

For video interviews check that you have a good connection. If possible, use a tablet or computer placed on a stable surface. The larger screen will help you to see the interviewers. Do not hold your device in your hand as it will move about, making things difficult for the interviewer.

You may be asked to submit a video interview with your answers to automated questions. The same advice regarding location, connection and devices applies. Then simply follow the company's instructions.

Group interviews, assessment centres and tests

You may be invited to an assessment centre with other candidates. This might include an interview, some tests and group work. The company will advise you on what to expect. Even though you are competing against the other candidates it is important to be professional and show that you can work well with others.

Group exercises might involve problem solving or tackling scenarios related to the role. This helps the employer understand how candidates communicate and work together in a team.

Individual tests might include:

- practical tests: to see how you complete a task related to the role - for instance creating a press release or completing a coding challenge
- aptitude tests: these often test numerical and verbal reasoning skills
- Personality profiling – these usually involve multiple choice responses to questions about situations. There is no right or wrong answer but being honest allows the employer to understand better how you might fit into their workplace.

What next?

The employer might offer the role after one interview – or invite some candidates back for a further interview. If you are unsuccessful the employer may offer you some feedback which can be helpful for preparing for further interviews.

This type of interview can typically last anywhere from 30-90 minutes.

How do I prepare for an interview?

Get the logistics right

Always confirm that you will be attending either by phone or email to the contact you have been given.

If you are travelling to a company for the interview, make sure you know where it is and how long it should take to get there.

If it is local do a practice trip first. If the interview is by phone or video call then find a quiet place for this.

Research the company

Look at the company's website so that you feel familiar with what they do and how they present themselves. Most company websites have an 'about us' page, which will give you an insight into what is important to that business

Prepare for the situation

Ask family, friends or a teacher to practice some questions with you. This will help you get used to the interview situation. Ask them for feedback on how you present yourself – are you looking confident and speaking clearly?

Prepare for the questions

Most questions are likely to focus on the skills, competencies and behaviours in the person specification. You can prepare to answer questions with the acronym STAR as outlined opposite >

S.T.A.R

Required behaviour: Good time management

Situation

Describe a situation where you had to demonstrate a relevant skill or behaviour

'Last year I needed to revise for my GCSEs whilst helping to look after my Gran'.

Task

Explain the task you had to complete

'I had to visit my Gran two evenings a week to check she was ok and I had to leave enough time to revise'.

Action

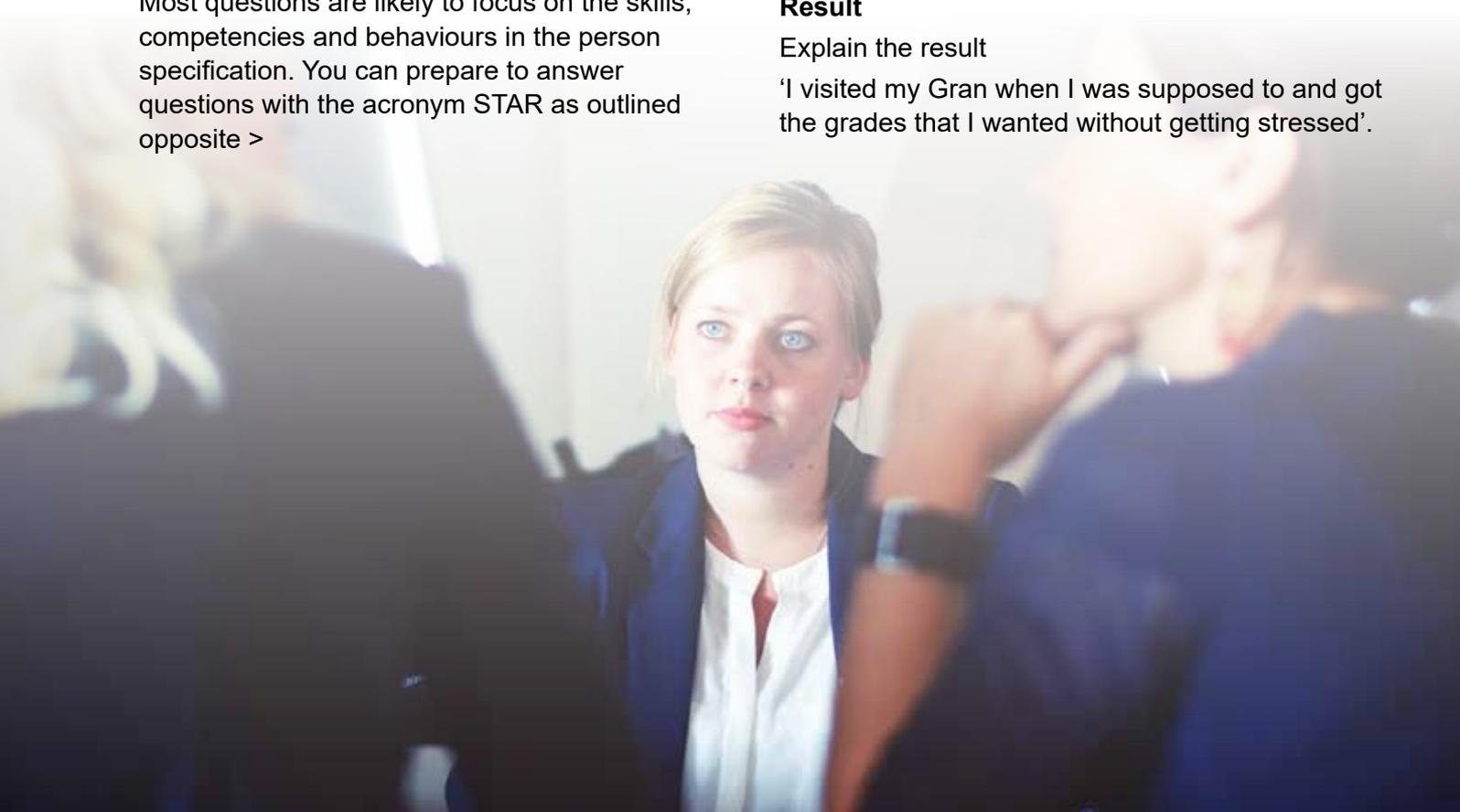
Describe the action you took

'I made a revision timetable to make sure that I could cover all my subjects on the evenings I didn't visit my Gran – and leave some time to relax.'

Result

Explain the result

'I visited my Gran when I was supposed to and got the grades that I wanted without getting stressed'.



Here are some other questions an interview panel may ask.

Why do you want this job?

Your answer should link your skills and interests to the role and company.

Tell us about yourself

This is an opportunity to showcase your skills and interests and to illustrate this with an insight into your personality. For instance, if you have hobbies or have achieved things in your spare time which relate to the role, you can share these now.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

You can use the STAR model opposite to demonstrate your strengths.

Think about weaknesses as areas you can improve upon – sometimes taking a strength to an extreme can be a weakness. For example, you may always be willing to help people, so you might need to be careful not to overstretch yourself.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

You may not have thought this far ahead! However your answer should demonstrate a commitment to the job and company and a desire to progress in your career.

Do you have any questions for us?

Prepare some ideas in advance so that this goes smoothly.

You might want to ask:

- When will I hear back from the interview panel?
- What is the best thing about working here?

Do not ask about pay at this point. If you are offered the job you should then check what you will be paid.

What should I wear?

First impressions count – so it is important to be well-presented for interview.

Make sure your clothes are neat and tidy and that shoes are clean. A formal look is safest. Two-piece suits with a shirt and tie, or blouse are a simple option. Jeans, leggings and trainers are not suitable. Underwear should not be visible.

Make sure your hair and nails are clean and that your breath is fresh.

Performing well on the day

Being well-prepared as outlined above will reduce stress and help you to perform well.

If you are travelling allow some extra time for any travel problems and aim to arrive 10 minutes earlier than your interview time.

Take some time to steady any nerves before entering the building. Then, look people in the eye, speak clearly and politely. This will show the panel that you are well-prepared and confident.

What if I am unsuccessful?

If you have been unsuccessful at an interview or assessment centre it is a good idea to request feedback on your performance.

Written feedback usually outlines the areas of the person specification that you did not meet. This can help you prepare stronger answers in these areas for any future interviews.

If you are offered a feedback conversation, do take the opportunity. Whilst it can be hard to listen to someone pointing out where you fell short, you can pick up useful points to prepare for further interviews. Even if you disagree with the feedback, it is important to accept it as it reflects the impression you made at interview. Accepting feedback graciously will also leave a good impression with the company.

Don't worry if you are unsuccessful at an interview – usually only one candidate can get the job. You can use this experience to help you prepare for your next opportunity. Revisit the advice and links throughout this document to help you get to where you want to be.

Starting your new job

You can make a good impression by being punctual, reliable and willing to learn. Ideally your employer will have prepared an induction to help you to understand the company and your job.

Your new employer should provide a written statement of your employment terms. This should state your:

- job title
- hours of work (unless you have a zero-hours contract)
- wages or salary
- pension provision
- holiday allowance
- sick pay
- notice period

You may need to successfully complete a probationary period before being confirmed as a permanent employee. Some provisions such as sick pay and notice period may change following completion of your probation.

If you do not receive written employment terms within two months then you should ask for these.

Hours of work

Most full-time jobs require you to work 35-40 hours per week. If your employer operates a flexi-time or overtime system then make sure you understand how this works.

If you are under 18 you cannot work more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week. You should also have a rest break of 30 minutes if you work more than 4 ½ hours.

Pay, tax, national insurance and benefits

Your pay should be at least the legally required national minimum wage for your age. You can check this at - www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates

You will have agreed the amount of your 'gross' pay with your employer. Tax, national insurance and pension contributions are then deducted. Your 'net' pay is the remaining amount which goes into your bank account.

Benefits

If you receive Job Seekers Allowance or Universal Credit you must inform the Department for Work and Pensions about your new job. You can do this by logging into your Universal Credit account or visiting your local Job Centre Plus. If you don't do this you will need to repay any overpayment and may be fined or convicted of fraud.

Holidays

If you are over school leaving age you are legally entitled to 5.6 weeks paid holiday per year. Bank holidays may be included in this. Your employer should calculate your leave allowance according to your working pattern (e.g. full-time, part-time or shifts). Workers on zero hours contracts are also entitled to holiday pay.

We hope you enjoy taking your next steps after leaving school.

Please remember to use this booklet to help you look for work, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews.

We wish you all the best as you plan your route towards a fulfilling career.





For any feedback on this publication
please email: support@somerset-ebp.co.uk

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