

Finding a Work Placement

**Your essential guide to helping you find a
work placement for Apprenticeship
courses at Yeovil College**

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Introduction

This pack has been put together to assist you in starting a suitable work placement if you are interested in joining an Apprenticeship programme at Yeovil College.

Although you may have applied to us you must have a secured work placement before you commence your studies with us in September. Once you have a placement confirmed with an employer you must contact the Customer Liaison and Enrolment Team at Yeovil College as soon as possible. If you are unsuccessful in securing a work placement we may be able to offer you an alternative full time programme.

Remember that legally you must be in full time education until the end of the Year 11 regardless of whether you have reached 16 years of age. The official end of Year 11 is the last Friday in June although lessons and exams may have finished before then. You cannot start a placement in school hours until after this date.

We wish you luck in finding a placement and if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Yeovil College Training on 01935 845392.

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Choosing an Employer

The first decision you will need to make after deciding on the vocational area you want to study is which employers to contact. Employers in the area may have already taken on Apprentices before and are used to students contacting them, others may have not taken any Apprentices before and will need some information from the college prior to making any employment decisions.

Although you will be paid a wage as part of your Apprenticeship programme, you will have to allow for your travel expenses to come out of that wage, so it may be beneficial for you to contact local employers first which are near to where you live and that you can easily get to.

Start with the directory like Yellow Pages, or Thomson's Local, or do an internet search listing all the relevant employers you may wish to contact. Write them down in order of distance from your home and contact the most local ones first, leaving the more distant organisations until later.

Yeovil College and Connect South West may also have contact details of employers who are looking for trainees, as well as some websites for you to try.

Apprenticeship Vacancies On-Line

The National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service is a web based Apprentice recruitment site on www.apprenticeships.org.uk. These are national and local vacancies all linked to Training Providers.

CV Writing

When you apply for a placement in writing your aim is to persuade the employer to invite you in for an interview. The CV is a useful marketing tool as it gives an employer clear information about your qualifications and work experience at a glance.

Always Remember:

- It is important to set out the CV clearly.
- Information should be relevant and to the point.

Some employers ask you to respond to an advertisement with a CV and covering letter in place of an application form. A CV is also useful when making a speculative approach to an employer.

There are no strict rules about what should be covered but, as a general guide, your CV needs to include:

- Your name (in full)
- Your address including postcode
- Your telephone number including area code, as/or your mobile number.
- Your date of birth
- A personal profile: this helps the employer to form a clearer picture of you and your skills and strengths
- Education: list schools and colleges attended. List the most recent first
- Examinations: list all the exams you have taken and all the grades you have achieved or expect to achieve, with dates
- Work experience: include any weekend, evening or holiday placements, including helping out in a business owned by family and friends. Add work experience undertaken at school— whatever it was – as it demonstrates you are familiar with the work environment. This shows you know the importance of punctuality, following instructions, and behaving responsibly. Any voluntary work should also be listed.

- Personal details: these can include your interests and hobbies which you may be asked to discuss at interview, so do not feel tempted to exaggerate your skills and glamorise your hobbies!
- References: include an academic reference from schools or college and one character reference. You should not ask a member of your family to write you a reference. Ask those concerned first before you include their names.

Tips

- Have your CV typed or Word-processed if possible
- Use good quality plain A4 paper
- Keep your CV up-to-date
- Always keep a copy of your CV for your own reference

An example CV is on the following page.

Example CV

Stephanie Simpson
25 West Crescent
Anywhere
Somerset
ZX5 1AA
(00123) 111222

A hard working and highly motivated school leaver with a friendly and outgoing personality. Reliable and conscientious, able to work as part of a team and on own initiative, this has been demonstrated both through work experience at a local newsagents and a holiday job at a supermarket.

Education: 2001-2008 Oakhampton Community School

Examinations:

GCSE SUBJECT	GRADE	DATE
English Language	B	2006
Maths	C	2006
Double Science	C/C	2006
French	B	2006
History	B	2006
Art & Design	A*	2006

Work Experience:

July 2006	Retail Assistant, Safehands Responsibilities: Customer care Handling cash Stock rotation
January – June 2006	Saturday Job, Safehands Checkout Operator
June 2005	School work Experience, Newshound Newsagents

Responsibilities: Sorting Deliveries
Customer Service
Designing Window
Displays

Personal Details:

Date of Birth 01/01/90

Interests and hobbies

Swimming for Anywhere Swimming Club, listening to music, reading horror books, assistant editor of the school magazine, patrol leader in the Guides.

References:

Mr J Brown
Headteacher
Oakhampton Community School
Oak Road
Anywhere
ZX9 3EF

Mrs B Smith
Manager
Safehands
2 the Grove
Anywhere
ZX8 3JJ

Covering Letters

A *Covering* letter should be sent with any CV or application form in response to an advertised placement vacancy. Its purpose is to introduce you and should briefly explain why you think you are right for the placement.

A *speculative* letter is used to let an employer know you are looking for work. Some employers keep speculative letters and CVs on file in case a placement opening arises. Always enclose a copy of your CV when sending a speculative letter.

When contacting an employer by letter, try to find out to whom the letter should be addressed. A phone call to the company should establish this.

Remember that an employer's impression of your suitability for any vacancy will be based on your letter and CV. You are selling yourself, your skills and abilities. Well-written letters can draw attention to good points. Highlight key details about skills and experiences that are most relevant to the placement.

Ideally the letter should include:

- Your address and telephone number
- The date the letter was written
- The employer's name and address
- The placement for which you are applying
- Your age, your school/college
- Reasons for applying
- Mention of your interests. Be prepared to discuss these at interview
- Details of anything that is enclosed such as your CV
- The correct ending to your letter. If you have addressed the letter to a particular person, end the letter with "Yours sincerely". If using "Dear Sir/Madam" end with "Yours faithfully".
- Your signature

Tips

- It is okay to type accompanying letters unless you were asked to reply in your own handwriting
- Ensure that your handwriting is neat, clear and that there are no spelling mistakes.
- Ask someone to check your letter before sending it, to see if you have missed out any useful information.

Examples of covering letters are on the following pages

Example covering letter № 1

My Address
Anytown
Somerset
ZX8 9PE

15th June 2004

Mr R Taylor
Tailored to You
London Road
Anytown
Somerset
ZX9 9PT

Dear Mr Taylor

With reference to your advertisement for the post of Retail Assistant in the Somerset County News on 14th June, please find enclosed a copy of my Curriculum Vitae in support of my application for the post.

I am 17 and have just completed a Lifeskills programme and Anytown College of further Education. On this course I undertook work placements within the retail industry. I am now looking for a position where I can use the skills I have gained. These include customer care and stock control. I would be keen to work towards gaining a NVQ 2 qualification in retail.

My hobbies are reading science fiction books and playing football.

I believe I possess the necessary skills and experience you require. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application with you in more detail

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hibson

Example covering letter № 2

15 Red Terrance
Anytown
Somerset
ZX4 5PE

Mr Smith
Personnel Manager
Anytown Council
Corporation Mews
Anytown
Somerset
ZX9 2BE

(00123) 987654

15th June 2004

Dear Mr Smith

I am 16 years old, and will be leaving Bridge High School at the end of June the year. I am writing to enquire whether you are likely to be recruiting within your IT Department at that time?

Currently I am working towards gaining my GCSE's, including English, Maths and computer Studies and would welcome the opportunity to gain further ICT related qualifications whilst working.

In May I undertook a two week work experience at Clock Brothers where I worked on reception, dealing with customer enquires and booking appointments. I also undertook some clerical such as inputting data onto their customer database. I really enjoyed the opportunity to gain new skills and experience, and to work as part of a team.

Please find enclosed my CV for your reference and a stamped addressed envelope for your reply. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Kyle Jackman

Filling in Application Forms

For every placement advertised there are generally dozens, maybe hundreds of applications. Filling in an application form is therefore very important. From an application form an employer can tell that you:

- Take care in the presentation of your work,
- Can follow instructions ,
- Have the skills to match the placement,
- Possess qualifications and work experience

There are basic rules to follow when completing an application form:

- Always take a photocopy of the original blank form to practice on
- Before you set pen to paper read through the form carefully to ensure you have understood the instructions for completing it.
- Follow all instructions. For example “complete the form in black ink”
- Allow plenty of time to complete the form. If you rush you are likely to make mistakes.
- Make sure that you have all the details of your exam passes, work experience and other relevant information to hand before your start.
- Ensure your handwriting is easy to read.
- Keep the form in good condition. Coffee rings and smudge marks on the form do not create a good impression!
- Answer all the questions. If it does not apply , write “not applicable” or “N/A” in the space
- Ask someone to check your completed form for you
- Take a photocopy of the completed form so that you can refer to it when preparing for an interview

Tips

Always send a covering letter with your application form. This will give you the opportunity to highlight your particular “selling points”, to provide extra information in support of your application, and to convey your enthusiasm and motivation for the placement.

Keywords or Phrases

These words can be included into any interview or application form that you write. If you are not sure what they mean look them up in the dictionary before using them.

Adaptable	Conscientious	Tactful
Creative	Polite	Friendly
Considerate	Sociable	Organised
Dependable	Confident	Hardworking
Determined	Resourceful	Efficient
Willing	Responsible	Reliable
Helpful	Caring	Flexible
Motivated	Competent	Versatile
Capable	Enthusiastic	Committed
Participated in	Effective in	Experienced in

Examples of skills that can be transferred from one placement to another:

Computer literacy	Team work
Reliability	Good communication
Punctuality	Handling money
Customer care	Clean and tidy appearance
Initiative	Awareness of health and safety

Applying for placements using email and internet

More and more people are using email and the internet for placements and to seek out possible vacancies. Also an increasing number of employers are advertising placements online.

Using the internet in your placement search

You can use the internet to look for actual vacancies or to make speculative enquiries.

- Most businesses and organisations have their own websites. Use these to find out what they do, where they are and what placement they have. This information helps you to decide whether to apply and, if you get an interview, helps you prepare.
- Find a company website by typing its name into a search engine like www.google.co.uk. Try this for businesses you have in mind and for anywhere you hear about.
- General business directories like www.yell.com are great starting places. If you are looking for an accountancy placement in Bridgwater type 'accountants' and 'Bridgwater' in the relevant boxes to produce an instant list of businesses (some of which will have their own web links).

Using company websites

- Many Business websites have a placements section. This might be called 'careers', 'current vacancies', 'working for us', 'placements with our company' or something similar. Click on these sections to see what is available and whether it suits you.
- The site should tell you how to apply. This might involve ringing for an application form or applying by post in the traditional way. It's also likely you will be given the opportunity to apply online. Go to making online applications for more.
- If nothing suitable is advertised – or if there isn't a placements section – you could make a speculative application. This could be by post, phone or email. This website might include a special link for CV's, a general company email address or a specific address for

the human resources department. See applying for placements by email for more.

Making online applications

- You may be able to apply for certain vacancies online. This involves completing an application form and submitting it through a website. In this sense it's quite similar to making an internet booking or poster on a message board.
- Generally speaking it's quicker to apply online. The actual process may be quicker and you do not have to rely on receiving or sending things through the post.
- The application form may be modification of the normal one. You might be asked to send extra things – like a CV or covering letter – as an attachment. Make sure you know how to do this and carefully follow the instructions.
- When making online application you can save time by cutting and pasting from other documents. This is especially useful when you need to make a personal statement or give reasons in support of your application. Always make sure that what you are using is right for the application in question!
- Online application can be nerve wracking if you are not sure your application has been received. Some organisations (not all) send confirmations emails. If in doubt contact them to make sure. Should you be uncomfortable with applying online ask if you can apply by post instead.

Applying for placements by email

- Applying for placements by email is a good approach if you are making lots of speculative applications. It is a much quicker way than printing out letters and putting them in the post.
- Employers might ask you to use email to apply for advertised vacancies. When this happens make sure you follow the instructions and include all the things the employer wants.
- An email application is likely to include all – or some- of the usual things: a letter of application; a CV; details of referees. Do not sacrifice quality because of the ease of using email. It still needs to be done properly.

- For speculative enquiries it's up to you to decide your approach. Some experts advise you to write your letter of application as the body of your email (with your CV as an attachment). Alternatively you could write a few lines to express your interest and use attachments for your personal statement and CV.
- If you are doing bulk emails, and using the same or similar material each time, make sure you keep your files in order. Cutting and pasting can save time. Do not get lazy or complacent make sure you've amended the content to match your current application rather than the previous one!
- Etiquette is important. Many people write emails more informally than they do letters. Try to use the same style as you would in a letter.
- Use a simple, non jokey email address to avoid embarrassment or giving the wrong impression. "JASmith@..." Is a safer bet than "greeneyes@..." If necessary set up a special account for your placement hunting emails.
- Selecting the right email recipient is important. There might be a choice between a general account (info@...), a department or a named individual. It may pay to ring to check.
- Do not expect miracles if you are making a speculative application. Using email is time-efficient but not every employer will acknowledge your application or even spend time looking at it. Be realistic in your expectations and always be ready to amend or upgrade your email applications to create a better impression.

Applying for a Placement by Telephone

When applying for a placement by telephone, always prepare well in advance before making the phone call. If you create a bad impression with the employer during the call it will be very difficult to overcome this.

Before you telephone

- Write down the name and placement title of the person you want to speak to and the title of the placement you are enquiring about. Write down questions you have about the placement.
- Have the placement advertisement with you to check details, and to serve as a prompt
- Have a pen and paper to hand so you can write down any information you are given.
- If you have to use a public call box make sure you have enough change. If you use a phone card ensure there are enough credits left on it. If you are using a mobile make sure it s fully charged.
- Have your CV ready to refer to during the call.

Once on the phone

- Ask for the person you need to speak to.
- Speak clearly.
- Give your full name and say which placement you are interested in and where you saw the advert
- Be prepared to talk about yourself, why you are interested in the placement and why you feel that you would be sited to it.
- Write down any information you are given about the placement.
- If you arrange an interview write down the details and read them back to the employer to check if you have written them down correctly.
- If you do not know how to get there do not be afraid to ask for directions.
- If you do not hear what is said clearly, do not be embarrassed about asking the person to repeat what they said.
- If you get through to an answering machine, do not panic! If you do not feel prepared to leave messages then put the phone down without saying anything and call back once you have had the opportunity to prepare a message.

Interviews

You may find the employer you have contacted will decide to invite you for an interview. This stage is a chance for them to meet you in person and ask questions relating to the placement vacancy and what you have written on your CV. It is important that you prepare well for this stage.

Before the Interview

- Find out about the company and what the placement involves. Your local Connexions centre or public library may have information on the company which could help you. Alternatively, you could contact the organisation direct and ask if they produce any company information. You should also look at their website.
- Make sure that you know where the company is and how long it will take you to get there. Work out your journey and route in advance. If you have to take a bus make sure you know which one you have to catch and any connections you have to make.
- Ensure that your Progress File is up-to-date.
- Try to prepare some relevant questions to ask about the placement and company. This shows you have given it some thought and are interested.
- Prepare yourself for questions you are likely to be asked, such as “Why did you apply?”, or “What are you good at?”
- Give careful thought to what you are going to wear to the interview. The key is to look smart but also comfortable and confident in what you are wearing. Be discreet with make-up, jewellery, perfume or aftershave.
- Try to get a good night sleep before your interview.
- If you are unable to attend an interview because you are ill or changed your mind, you must telephone or write to the company to let them know.

On the day of the interview

- Take any letters from the company with you and make sure you know who to ask for and how to pronounce their name.
- Take your progress File and any additional information that supports your application, this could include any certificates you may have.

At the Interview

- It is important to make eye contact with interviewers during the interview, but do not stare.
- Listen carefully to the questions you are asked and do not rush your answers.
- If you do not understand a question, tell the interviewer. They may rephrase it, or explain in more details what they want.
- Do not waffle. Try to keep your answers clear and to the point.
- Be aware of your body posture. Watch out for clenched fists and crossed arms, a sign that you are on the defensive.
- Do not fidget.
- Make sure your mobile phone is switched off before you enter the building.
- If you are offered tea or coffee you could be distracted and spill it. It is okay to say “no thank you” to an offer of a drink.
- Do not smoke during the interview or chew gum.
- At the end of the interview make sure you thank the interviewers for their time.
- Ask how and when you will be told of the result of the interview.

After the Interview

- You are normally offered a placement by post or by phone. Think carefully whether or not you want to accept the placement. If you verbally accept an offer confirm it in writing.
- If you are not offered the placement, think about what the employer’s reasons are for not offering it to you. If you feel able to, try to get feedback from the employer so you can improve your performance at the next interview.
- Try not to be discouraged if you do not get the placement. Remember practise always helps and may allow you to avoid making similar mistakes next time.

Question Time!

Think about possible questions which may arise about you, the placement and the company.

Questions about You

- How did you get on at school/college?
- Why did you decide upon your choice of subjects/courses?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What are your hobbies?
- What are you good at?
- What are your ambitions?

Questions about the Placement

- Why do you want this placement?
- What skills can you offer the company?
- What do you know about the company?
- What do you think is involved in the placement?
- What makes you think you are suited to this placement?
- Would you be prepared to work shifts/weekends/overtime?
- What personal qualities make you suited to this occupation?
- What previous work experience have you had?
- Why do you want to work for this company?

Questions you can ask at the Interview

- Who will supervise my work?
- How will the standard of my work be assessed?
- Will I receive training and does it lead to a recognised qualification such as a NVQ (National Vocational Qualification)?
- Are there opportunities for promotion?
- What is the starting pay?
- What hours will I work?

Tips

You may be nervous but do not worry, relax. If you have followed these tips then you have prepared as well as you can.

Summary

We hope you have found this booklet useful. To summarise:

- Prepare early.
- Update your Progress File
- Produce an up-to-date curriculum vitae (CV)
- Prepare a draft speculative letter to send to prospective employers.
- Put together a list of employers to contact.
- Start applying for placements using a variety of methods: phone call, letter and CV.
- Register with the National Apprentice Service and check on a daily basis
- Keep an accurate record of where you applied, when and any response you received.
- Make noted after any interviews, including any questions you were asked.
- Getting a placement may take time, do no be put off- keep applying.

Good Luck!