

How to find work experience

Work experience provides valuable insight into working life and can help you prepare for future employment. Year 12 students complete a one or two week work experience placement that is allocated by your school or college. Knowing how to find work experience can give you a significant chance to secure a placement that is rewarding. In this article, we explain how to find work experience year 12 students can use for university entrance or a starting career.

How to find work experience year 12 students can really use

If you want to know how to find work experience, year 12 students can secure an interesting and productive placement by following the steps outlined below. Work experience is a valuable investment of your time that can equip you with experience and references that can be attractive for university applications or for your first job. Here are the steps to take to find your ideal year 12 work experience placement:

1. Decide what industry or field you would like to experience

It's much easier to find the right work experience if you focus on sectors that you're genuinely interested in. Consider the type of jobs you want to try. Create a shortlist of ideal placements that you can then research further. Then pursue those opportunities by phone, email or an online application.

2. Set goals for your work experience

Having goals for your work experience helps keep you motivated while you are in an unfamiliar environment with new people and challenges. Make a note of a few simple objectives you want to achieve by the end of your placement. Some work experience goals could include:

- gaining experience of work in a specific profession, like law or engineering
- being in a particular type of work environment (such as an office or shop)
- observing or trying a particular skill (such as cooking, machining or painting)
- getting a reference for university or work
- learning to interact with customers, clients or patients

3. Search for work experience for A-Level students as early as possible

Since year 12 work experience is being undertaken by students across the country, it's important to be proactive to secure a placement that fits your needs. If you want to pursue a career in a competitive field like medicine or banking, you may face competition for placements. Standing out to employers requires preparation and a diligent search that you can start months, or even a year, ahead.

4. Do your research

To ensure that your choice of work experience is right for you, research what the roles you're interested in entail. The [National Careers Service](#) is a great online source of information on a wide range of careers. Job descriptions and [job searches](#) can be helpful too. Research also prepares you for your work placement, so you know what to expect on your first day.

5. Look for suitable work experience opportunities via school or college

Your school or college may even arrange work experience opportunities for you to take part in. Someone may informally arrange these, or they may be part of a specific programme. The careers counsellors in your school are a great source of advice and can direct you to work placements that may be available locally.

6. Contact HR departments to enquire about opportunities

Sixth-formers who know the type of work experience they want to do can contact HR departments within relevant companies to ask if they would accept a student on work experience. Many businesses are familiar with having young people take part in job shadowing and may accommodate your request if asked. Ensure that you have a cover letter and CV ready to forward to interested employers.

7. Visit local shops or offices

Finding a local work placement may be as easy as walking into a local business and introducing yourself to the team. Staff are usually helpful and can provide information on how you can formally apply for a work placement. Dress smartly and arrive with your CV in hand to give a good impression when you visit businesses and organisations in person.

8. Ask friends and family

Remember to look early to secure your first or second choice of placement. If any delays or complications arise, you might arrange a last-minute placement by asking around friends and family for someone you can shadow at work. You can formalise the arrangement by completing any necessary paperwork required by your school or college.

9. Use social media to build relationships

Many companies have responsive social media accounts and respond to brief enquiries about the availability of work placements. Keep any communications short, asking for a named contact or email address of a person who can help you within the organisation. You can then forward your personal information to a named contact which may help progress your application.

10. Create a CV to forward to businesses and organisations

Finding work experience is often the first time students write a CV. Business owners and employers appreciate learning more about you through reading your CV. A well-presented single page summary of your education, experience and interests is more than adequate for leaving a positive impression.

Related: [**Writing a CV with no experience**](#)

11. Write a winning cover letter

A cover letter is your opportunity to explain to a decision-maker why you want to undertake work experience at their organisation or firm. If possible, send your cover letter and CV to a named person you can follow up with. Use your cover letter to show your research and understanding of their business and what you hope to learn from them.

Related: [How to write a work experience cover letter \(with example\)](#)

Benefits of work experience for year 12 students

Work experience is a key milestone for sixth-form and college students. By investing time and effort into finding and completing your work placement, you gain valuable experience and a great sense of achievement. Here are some benefits of year 12 work experience:

It's useful for your UCAS personal statement

If you want to pursue a specific profession like medicine, law or teaching, completing work experience can provide you with interesting anecdotes and experiences to reflect on in your personal statement when you write it in year 13. You could discuss aspects of the work experience you found challenging or inspiring. University interviewers may also be keen to ask you about your year 12 work experience.

Work experience provides a great sense of maturity and responsibility

For many students, work experience is their first experience of full-time work. Placement providers expect you to be punctual, proactive and organised. Employers and employees may be more eager to engage with you and make you feel a part of the team. It's not only good for those that want to work with you, but the skills you gain can also help you build better relationships with family, friends and teachers.

You can make valuable contacts in the industry you want to work in

Work experience can create further career opportunities like internships, apprenticeships or even job offers. Employers are always looking for people who could be a great addition to their team and may want to keep in touch with you once your placement ends. Follow up with your work placement team to thank them for having you and leave a great impression.