



A Student's Guide



successful futures 
NYBEP education and business in partnership

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How do I choose my own work experience placement?

So, how do you decide what work placement is for you? You don't necessarily have to choose something that you want to do as a job when you leave school, but if you do have a career goal in mind then why not try it out? Or, there may be advantages to considering something new.

The overall aim is for you to experience life in an adult workplace and develop transferrable work skills.

Be positive – work experience, whatever the placement, is an opportunity to learn new things and find things out about yourself.

Why not start by writing down a list of as many possibilities that come to mind – use the following questions to help you do this:

- What do I want to do when I leave school?
- What am I good at? What are my interests and hobbies?
- What new skills would I like to learn?
- What jobs have I seen people doing that I think look interesting?

Now look at your list and try to reduce it to 3 or 4 possibilities. The following questions may help you with this:

- Is this a realistic work placement for my age group?
- What sort of work am I likely to be doing?
- Will there be a variety of tasks to do or could I become bored?
- Would I experience skills and tasks related to a profession I am interested in?
- Could this be an opportunity to try something completely new?
- Finally, put your list of ideas on order of preference. Maybe talk to your parents/carers and teacher about your ideas.

How can I find my own work experience placement?

There are many **advantages** of finding your own placement; you can choose exactly what you want to do, and where you want to work, you can also test out any career ideas and make useful contacts for future employment.

Firstly, you need to use your **'network' of contacts**: friends, family, teachers, neighbours etc. Speak to them about the type of placement you are looking for and see if they can help directly (for example by speaking to their employer). If not, ask if they can think of anyone else in their network of friends and colleagues who might be able to help.

Otherwise, why not search for a company yourself.....

- Use your local knowledge of businesses in the area. For a small firm (like a local hair salon) you might want to call in in person during a quiet period of the day and ask directly if they would be interested in taking you on for work experience. For larger firms, such as a solicitors or bank, it would be more appropriate to send an email or letter.
- Another way of going about finding a placement is to use local business directories, such as www.yell.com and www.thompsonlocal.com these detail local firms, by category, with their addresses, telephone numbers and websites.
- Alternatively, try typing the type of placement you are looking for into a search engine i.e. "finance companies in York".
- Send a well written email to the company enquiring about the possibility of work experience.

How do I make contact with a company?

There are several ways you could contact a company:

- In person
- By phone
- By email

In a large company you are best to contact the **Human Resources Department**. In a smaller company you will normally need to write to the **Manager**.

Email can be the most effective way to contact a company, as it is very convenient for the company to reply to you. You will probably need to look at the company's website to get an email address. Even better, if you can, is to try to find out the name of the appropriate person so you can send your email enquiry directly to them.

If it is a local shop that you are interested in working in then it might be a good idea to **go along in person** when the shop isn't very busy and enquire about a placement.

It is best to contact several companies as often you may not receive a reply or they may take weeks to say 'no'. Don't get disheartened by this, it is nothing personal, they are usually just very busy! However, because of this it is important to approach several companies so that you have a number of options open to you.

Suggested outline for an email to ask an employer for a placement.

If you are sending an email and don't have an individual's name or email address at the company, mark your email at the beginning or in the subject line "FAO Human Resources Department" or "FAO the Manager".

Remember – this is the first contact you will have with an employer and therefore you want to create a good impression so check that the following are correct:

- Presentation and layout.
- Spelling.
- Company name and address.
- That you have the right dates for your work experience.

- Make sure you have a sensible email address as a silly one may put an employer off.
- If you include your telephone number don't have a silly answer phone message in case they call and listen to it.

Guide to writing your email.

SUBJECT: Work Experience

Dear Sir/Madam (or the person's name if you know it)

1st paragraph

I am a year xx student at XXXXX, and I am years old. I am pleased to have the opportunity to go on work experience for one week from XXXXX 2025 and I wondered if it would be possible for me to work in your company/organisation (use the correct term).

2nd paragraph

Briefly say why you want to spend a week with the company or organisation and what you hope to gain from the experience.

Ideas: you are a well know national/local company... I would like to gain an insight into... It is my ambition to pursue a careers in ...

3rd paragraph

Give details of the subjects you are studying – say what subjects you particularly enjoy and why. Give details of any activities or areas of responsibility you take part in at school.

Ideas: sport, clubs, voluntary work, ambassador etc.

Finish

Finish the email by signing off "Yours faithfully" (Or "Yours sincerely" if you know the name of the person you are writing to).

Preparing for an interview/introductory phone call.

Part of the process of getting work experience is to present yourself at an interview or calling the placement to introduce yourself.

Attending an interview and/or calling the placement gives you an opportunity to check out the placement and make sure it is right for you – and also for the employer to decide whether or not to offer you the work placement.

Good preparation is essential if you are going to have a successful interview whether it be in person or over the telephone.

Before the interview

- Do your research to find out what the company does.
- If you are attending an interview ensure your parent/carer are aware beforehand as they may wish to accompany you on the journey. Plan the route and arrive in plenty of time – 5-10 minutes early than your appointment time.
- If you are attending an interview, wear appropriate clothes and look smart.
- Know the name of the person you have come to see or to ask for on the telephone.
- Think of some questions to ask them (i.e. about the kind of work you will be doing or what to wear).

During the interview

- If you are attending an interview, give a firm handshake.
- Try to look and sound positive, interested and confident.
- If you are attending an interview, try to make eye contact with the interviewer rather than looking out of the window.
- If you don't understand a question don't be afraid to say so. Simply ask 'Would you repeat the question please, I didn't hear it/understand it properly'.

At the end

- Thank the interviewer for his/her time.
- If you are attending an interview, shake their hand just before you leave.

What sort of questions might you expect?

These are only to give you an idea of the kind of questions you might be asked. If you want to feel prepared, think about how you would answer the following:

- Tell me about yourself and what you enjoy outside of school?
- What are your favourite subjects at school and why?
- Why did you choose this work placement?
- What ambitions do you have for the future?
- This placement may involve low level tasks, how would you feel about that?
- If I were to ask your best friend to tell me about you, what would they say?
- What computer experience have you got? What software are you familiar with?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Have you got any questions you would like to ask me?

Finally, some top tips to make the most of your work placement:

1. Keep busy and show enthusiasm
2. Be helpful and cheerful
3. Do ask questions if you are UNSURE
4. Take responsibility
5. Be punctual and dress appropriately
6. Use your initiative
7. Believe in yourself
8. Make the most of the opportunity and enjoy it