

Apprenticeships

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a job in training. It allows you to gain a qualification, new skills, and valuable experience—all whilst earning a wage.

It used to be the case that apprenticeships were generally in trades like Construction and Engineering, but now there's a huge range to choose from—from Floristry to Law.

There is a range of different levels of apprenticeship to reflect the stage of education that the apprentice has reached.

In England, there are four levels of getting at:

1. Intermediate (Level 2 – equivalent to five GCSE passes)
2. Advanced (Level 3 – equivalent to two A level passes)
3. Higher (Levels 4, 5, 6, and 7 – equivalent to a foundation degree)
4. Degree (Levels 6 and 7 – equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree)

Who can apply?

Anybody who is over the age of 16 can apply (there is no upper age limit), as long as they're living in the UK and are not in full-time education. However, each apprenticeship has its own specific entry requirements, depending on the field of study and the level of the programme.

For example, some Intermediate apprenticeships only need the applicant to show they're willing and able to complete the programme. A Higher apprenticeship, however, may ask for GCSEs and Level 3 qualifications, such as A levels.

How long do they take to complete?

Apprenticeships can take between one and five years to complete, depending on the level, the sector, and whether you do it full time or part time.

For example, an Intermediate Level 2 Apprenticeship usually takes around 12 to 18 months and an Advanced Level 3 Apprenticeship around 24 months.

How much do they pay?

You're entitled to an apprenticeship rate (currently £7.55 per hour) if you're either:

- aged under 16 to 18, OR
- aged 19 or over and in the first year of your apprenticeship.

Example: An apprentice aged 22 in the first year of their apprenticeship is entitled to a minimum hourly rate of £7.55.

You're entitled to the national minimum wage (which depends on your age) if you are:

- aged 19 or over, AND
- have completed the first year of your Apprenticeship

Example: An apprentice aged 21 who has completed the first year of their apprenticeship is entitled to a minimum hourly rate of £12.21.

You'll be paid for your normal working hours and any training that's part of your apprenticeship. You'll also be entitled to at least 20 paid holiday days per year, plus bank holidays.

Apprenticeship frameworks and standards: the main differences

A [government page](#) explaining the difference between standards and frameworks.

How to search for an apprenticeship:

- Through the [government apprenticeship search tool](#)
- Through the [Unifrog search tool](#)
- Register with college Apprenticeship departments such as SHCG, HSDC, City of Portsmouth, Chichester and Sparsholt colleges.
- Contact companies' apprenticeship departments directly.