
Your rights as an apprentice



unionlearn
from the TUC

What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships give you the chance to 'earn and learn' in a wide range of jobs and sectors. You will develop skills and gain experience and qualifications. Apprenticeships can take between one and four years to complete depending on the level of apprenticeship and the industry sector.

Also, apprenticeships improve your personal and social skills and give you an understanding of how a business works, which is especially useful if you are starting out on your career.

Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged 16 and over – whether you are just leaving school, have been working for years or are seeking to start a new career.

There are many different types of apprenticeships suitable for a variety of job roles including retail, engineering, veterinary nursing and accountancy.

There are currently four different levels of apprenticeship:

- Intermediate Level apprenticeships (Level 2)
 - Advanced Level apprenticeships (Level 3)
 - Higher apprenticeships (Level 4 and above)
 - Degree apprenticeships (Level 6 and 7)
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What do apprenticeships offer?

- work-based learning – learning and experience on-the-job leads to competency that proves that you are proficient in the skills required in your occupation, trade or profession

- underpinning knowledge and theory – this is typically off-the-job education or training related to your occupational pathway, delivered in classrooms or workshops at a college or training centre and it can include e-learning

- the opportunity to improve your skills if you haven't got your English and maths GCSEs

- an end-point assessment – some apprenticeships may also offer an additional qualification or diploma.



What are you entitled to?

- a written contract of employment

- a Statement of Commitment – an agreement between yourself, the employer and training provider

- a full induction in the workplace

- a fair wage (see 'How much do you get paid?' section)

- a safe working environment and protection from discrimination or bullying

- release from work to attend off-the-job training for 20% of the working time

- provision of an appropriate range of work experiences to enable you to complete your apprenticeship

- access to support, guidance and mentoring

- quality training

- regular assessments and review of progress.



What's in it for you?

- a chance to learn while you earn – to get real work experience
- an opportunity to get certification in an industry-recognised occupation
- access to progression routes to higher education
- the possibility of long-term employment with promotion prospects
- a chance to learn from experienced workers in the sector.

“ The thing I like about my apprenticeship is that what I learn at college I take to work the next day and I apply it and it just clicks. ”

IT apprentice

“ It's a great opportunity to build up skills you didn't think you had. ”

Business Administration apprentice



Your terms and conditions of employment

All apprentices have employed status and are covered by the terms and conditions contained in their contract of employment and any relevant employment legislation.

Your employment contract should cover areas such as:

- working time
- pay
- health and safety
- paid holidays
- protection from discrimination
- the right to join a trade union.



How much do you get paid?

The amount paid to employed apprentices, as for all employees, is negotiated with the employer. Pay rates vary between sectors, regions and between different employers. Your union can help in negotiating pay rates.

The minimum apprentice wage rate applies to apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over who are in their first year. All other apprentices are entitled to the national minimum wage for their age. All the rates are subject to an annual review. Check the minimum pay-rate at www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates.

However unions generally negotiate pay rates well above that.

“ I’ve been a member of my union for roughly two years and they have already been a big help and are very enthusiastic about apprentices furthering their education whilst at work. ”

Shipbuilding apprentice

Joining a trade union

Unions negotiate fair pay and equal treatment in the workplace. Unions also tackle discrimination based on age, race, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

Unions will help ensure your apprenticeship is high quality and that you are properly supported while you are doing it. Unions will negotiate with employers, making sure you get time off to study or train, and ensuring that you receive impartial information, advice and guidance, and are supported by a mentor. Your employer must give you the chance to join an appropriate union. To find out more about which union to join, go to www.tuc.org.uk/join-union

Some unions now have rates specifically for apprentice members. Many also have structures within the union to support apprentices in their workplace.

For more information on apprenticeships and union support go to www.unionlearn.org.uk/apprenticeships or email unionlearn@tuc.org.uk

For more information about your rights at work, or about joining a union go to www.tuc.org.uk/join-union

For more information about apprenticeship opportunities go to www.apprenticeships.gov.uk