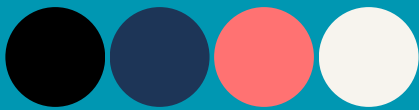


APPRENTICE READY

Your Recruitment Toolkit



CO-DESIGNED WITH THE NORTH EAST, FOR THE NORTH EAST

This Apprenticeship Recruitment Toolkit has been developed through a collaborative co-design approach, bringing together the expertise and insights of the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, Talentheads, and a range of businesses, education providers and organisations from across the North East. By working closely with employers and key stakeholders, we have created a practical resource that reflects the real experiences, expectations and opportunities within the region's apprenticeship landscape, ensuring it is relevant, informed and shaped by those who understand it best.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who contributed their time, expertise and insights throughout the development process. The support and collaboration have been invaluable in creating a toolkit that will help inspire and support you - the next generation of apprentices across the North East.



Kim McGuinness
North East
Mayor

TALENTHEADS



NORTHUMBRIAN
WATER *living water*

OLIVER WYMAN
A MARSH BUSINESS



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WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

An apprenticeship is a real job where you earn a salary while learning and developing skills in a specific career.

You spend most of your time working with an employer and the rest of your time completing training and studying towards a recognised qualification.

It's a way to gain experience, learn on the job, and build a career at the same time.



WORK

EARN

LEARN

“ —

My life has changed since starting my apprenticeship. I am earning while learning and getting the experience I need to reach my long term goals.

— ”

WHY CHOOSE AN APPRENTICESHIP?

If you're thinking about your next step after school or college, an apprenticeship is a great way to start your career while continuing to learn. It's a real alternative to full-time classroom study and puts you straight into the world of work.



1. Get Paid While You Train

With an apprenticeship, you earn a salary from day one. That means you can start making your own money while learning new skills and building your future.

2. Learn by Doing

Instead of just studying in a classroom, you'll spend most of your time working in a real job. You'll learn practical skills that employers actually use and get hands-on experience in your chosen industry.

3. Gain a Recognised Qualification

You'll work towards a qualification that's recognised across the UK. This means you're building something valuable for your future, not just gaining experience.

4. Real Career Opportunities

Many apprentices go on to get full-time jobs with their employer after finishing. You can also progress to higher-level apprenticeships, university-level qualifications, or move into different roles as you gain experience.

5. Build Skills for Life

As well as job-specific skills, you'll develop things like confidence, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving - all of which are useful in any career you choose later on.

6. Support Every Step of the Way

You won't be doing it alone. You'll have support from your employer, a training provider, and mentors who help you succeed and grow throughout your apprenticeship.

WHERE ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES?

USE THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT WEBSITE

The main place to start is the national apprenticeship service. You can search by postcode, location, job type, or keyword and filter results specifically for the North East (e.g. Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham, Teesside).

1

[Find an apprenticeship \(GOV.UK\)](https://findanapprenticeship.gov.uk) is the main national search tool where employers advertise live vacancies across England.

You can:

Search for jobs near
your home postcode

Save and apply for
vacancies

Set up alerts for new
opportunities

CHECK LOCAL APPRENTICESHIP PROVIDERS

2

In the North East, many training providers and employers advertise roles directly through their own websites. These can include colleges, councils, and specialist apprenticeship organisations.

Examples include providers that work closely with local employers in sectors like engineering, health, construction, and digital.

LOOK AT EMPLOYER WEBSITES

Large employers often post apprenticeships on their own careers pages before they appear elsewhere. In the North East, this includes companies in:

3

Life sciences, pharmaceuticals
and process industries

Creative industries
and content

Tech, digital
and AI

Transport

Offshore wind and
energy transition

Advanced manufacturing
including electric vehicles

Defence, security
and space

Care

Food

Retail

Energy

Construction

Agriculture

Education

If you have a company in mind, check their “Careers” section regularly.

QUICK
TIPS

USE APPRENTICESHIP JOB BOARDS

Alongside GOV.UK, you can also use:

4

- [UCAS apprenticeship listings](#)
- National apprenticeship websites like “[Not Going to Uni](#)”
- [Amazing Apprenticeships](#)
- Job sites such as [Indeed](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

These can help you spot additional opportunities that may not always appear on the main government site.

TOP TIP:

Before applying, take time to research the training provider linked to the apprenticeship. Training providers may be based in a different location to the employer, so it is important to understand any travel requirements and plan accordingly. Some training is delivered online, while other programmes may require attendance in person, so make sure you check the details carefully before accepting an offer.

QUICK
TIPS

GET SUPPORT FROM SCHOOL, CAREERS ADVISERS OR POST 16 PROVIDERS

5

Schools, colleges, and local careers advisers (such as the [National Careers Service](#)) can help you:

- Find local opportunities
- Improve your CV and applications
- Understand which apprenticeships suit your interests

Be proactive - new apprenticeships can appear at different times of the year, so checking regularly (weekly or even daily during key recruitment periods, such as national apprenticeship week) gives you the best chance of finding the right opportunity for you

QUICK
TIPS

APPRENTICESHIP ~~MYTH~~ BUSTERS

If you are applying for an apprenticeship, it's easy to come across advice, opinions, or assumptions that aren't actually true.

Here are some myths to help you understand what recruitment is really like so you can feel more confident during your application, interviews, and assessments.

MYTH: *"Employers only look at my CV"*



REALITY: Your CV is just one part of the process.

Employers also look at:

- How you communicate in interviews and in your applications
- Your motivation for the apprenticeship
- Your potential to learn and develop

Tip: Show your personality and interest, not just qualifications.

MYTH: *"I need lots of experience to get an apprenticeship"*



REALITY: Apprenticeships are designed for people who are starting out.

What matters most to employers:

- Enthusiasm to learn
- Reliability and attitude
- Basic skills and potential, not long work history

Tip: School projects, volunteering, part-time jobs, and personal experience all count as experience.

MYTH: *"If I don't answer perfectly in an interview, I won't get the role"*



REALITY: Interviews are not about perfection.

Employers want to see:

- How you think and respond
- Honesty when you don't know something
- Willingness to learn and improve

Tip: It's okay to take a moment to think before answering.

MYTH: *"The best grades always get the job"*



REALITY: Good grades help, but they are not the only factor.

Employers also consider:

- Communication skills
- Problem-solving ability
- Teamwork and behaviour

Tip: Prepare examples of how you've used these skills in real life.

MYTH: *"Employers decide instantly based on first impressions"*



REALITY: Decisions are made using multiple parts of the recruitment process.

This may include:

- Application form or CV
- Interview performance
- Online tests or assessments
- Assessment Centres with different exercises and tasks

Tip: One moment does not define your whole application. Remember, you are deciding on them too!

MYTH: *"If I don't hear back quickly, I've been rejected"*



REALITY: Recruitment can take time.

Delays may be due to:

- High number of applications
- Multiple stages in the process
- Scheduling interviews or assessments

Tip: Always check emails (and your junk mail!) and keep an eye on application portals and apps.

MYTH: *"The process ends once I submit my application"*



REALITY: Submitting your application is just the first step.

You may still need to:

- Complete online assessments
- Attend interviews or assessment centres
- Provide additional information

Tip: Stay prepared and responsive throughout the process.

WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE REALLY LOOKING FOR...

When applying for an apprenticeship, employers are not just looking at grades or experience. They are looking for your potential to grow and succeed in the role.

Checklist of what employers want to see:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Motivation and genuine interest in the apprenticeship and industry |  Problem-solving ability and logical thinking |
|  Reliability (good attendance, punctuality, and commitment) |  Teamwork and ability to work with others |
|  Willingness to learn and develop new skills |  Basic understanding of the role or industry |
|  Clear communication skills (written and spoken) |  Positive attitude, resilience, and ability to handle feedback |

The apprenticeship recruitment process is designed to find potential, not perfection. Being yourself, preparing well, and understanding what employers are really looking for will help you put forward your best application.

TOP TIPS FROM EMPLOYERS

1. EVEN CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS (CEOS) START SOMEWHERE

Every professional career begins with a first step, and apprenticeships are often that step. Many CEOs, managers, and skilled professionals started in entry-level roles where they were learning on the job.

What they want to see is not perfection, but:

- Willingness to learn
- Reliability and effort
- A positive attitude when things are unfamiliar

You don't need to already "know everything" - you need to show you can learn.

2. WORK IS DIFFERENT TO COLLEGE

College and school often focus on completing set tasks with flexibility and guidance. Work is different.

In the workplace, employers expect:

- Punctuality every day, not just when convenient
- Consistency in effort, even on routine tasks
- Initiative - asking "What can I do next?" rather than waiting to be told
- Professional communication (clear, polite, and appropriate)

Understanding this shift early helps you stand out immediately.

3. KEEP THE PHONE AWAY

One of the simplest but most common issues employers notice is phone use.

During interviews, assessments, or workplace experience:

- **Keep your phone out of sight**
- **Do not check messages or notifications**
- **Focus fully on the task or conversation**

It signals respect, attention, and professionalism - qualities employers value highly in apprentices (and indeed all roles!)

4. INTERVIEW BODY LANGUAGE

How you behave in an interview often matters as much as what you say.

STRONG BODY LANGUAGE INCLUDES:

- **Good posture (sitting upright, not slouched)**
- **Eye contact (natural, not staring)**
- **A firm but polite handshake (if appropriate)**
- **Nodding to show understanding**
- **Smiling appropriately to show engagement**



AVOID:

- **Looking at the floor or around the room**
- **Fidgeting or slouching**
- **Folding arms defensively**

5. SOCIAL MEDIA CHECK – WHAT EMPLOYERS SEE

Most employers will check social media profiles before making a decision. Even if you are not directly connected to them, public content can still be visible.

They may look at:

- **Public posts, comments, and images**
- **Your tone of communication**
- **How you present yourself online**
- **Any content involving inappropriate language, negativity, or risky behaviour**

Even older posts can matter. It is worth reviewing your accounts and asking:

- ***Would I be comfortable with a potential employer seeing this?***
- ***Does this reflect how I want to be perceived professionally?***



COVER LETTERS & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A cover letter is a short written statement, which may also be known as a supporting document within the application process, that you send with your CV when applying for an apprenticeship. It explains who you are, why you are interested in the role, and why you would be a good fit for the opportunity.

Employers use cover letters to understand your motivation and communication skills, not just your qualifications.

What to include in a cover letter:

- Introduction: Who you are and what apprenticeship you are applying for
- Why you want the role: Show genuine interest in the company and job
- Why you are suitable: Highlight skills, strengths, and examples from school, hobbies, or experience
- Closing statement: A polite ending thanking them and expressing interest in an interview

How to write a strong cover letter:

- Keep it clear and concise (usually one page)
- Use simple, professional language
- Personalise it for each application (avoid copying the same letter)
- Give real examples rather than just saying you have skills
- Check spelling and grammar carefully before sending

QUICK
TIPS

Personal portfolios:

A personal portfolio can help you stand out from other applicants by showcasing your skills, achievements and interests in more detail. It gives employers a better understanding of who you are and what you can do beyond your application form or CV. Including examples of your work, projects, volunteering, hobbies or achievements can demonstrate your potential, enthusiasm and commitment to your chosen career path.



WHAT ABOUT YOUR CV?



Keep your CV clean,
modern, minimal

Use **bold** section
headings

Have plenty of white space

One page ideally
(maximum two)

After each section ask yourself:

"Would this impress me if I was an employer?"

"Could I be more specific?"

"What example proves what I am saying?"

Weak:

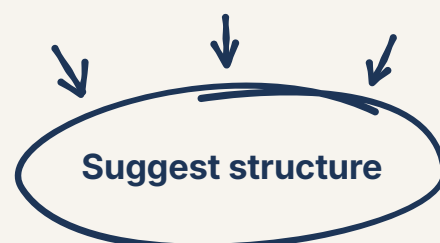
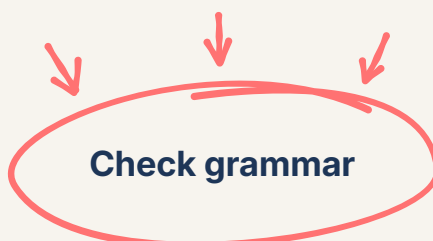
"Good at teamwork"

Strong:

"Developed teamwork skills as part of a football team, working together to achieve shared goals and improve performance."

USING AI TO CREATE YOUR CV

You can use AI to:



AI tools you could use:



grammarly



Chat GPT



Claude

But remember: AI platforms aren't always accurate, so it's important to fact-check information using credible sources and use these tools responsibly.

And most importantly: **make sure your writing still sounds like you!**

**Now remember... You DO have skills.
You just need to recognise them and explain them.**



INTERVIEWS: KNOWING YOURSELF

What is a Strength?

A strength is something you are:

Naturally
good at

Comfortable
doing

Confident
using

Able to show
through real
examples

Examples include:

Teamwork

Listening

Problem solving

Positive attitude

Planning

Speaking

Creativity

Adapting

Willingness to learn

Leadership

Think about it like this...

A strength is not just what you **SAY**



It's what you can **PROVE**

Common Mistakes

Lots of people say:

"I'm a hard
worker"



"I'm good at
teamwork"

...but they don't explain it further!

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS WANT INSTEAD?

They're looking for:

Real examples

Clear situations

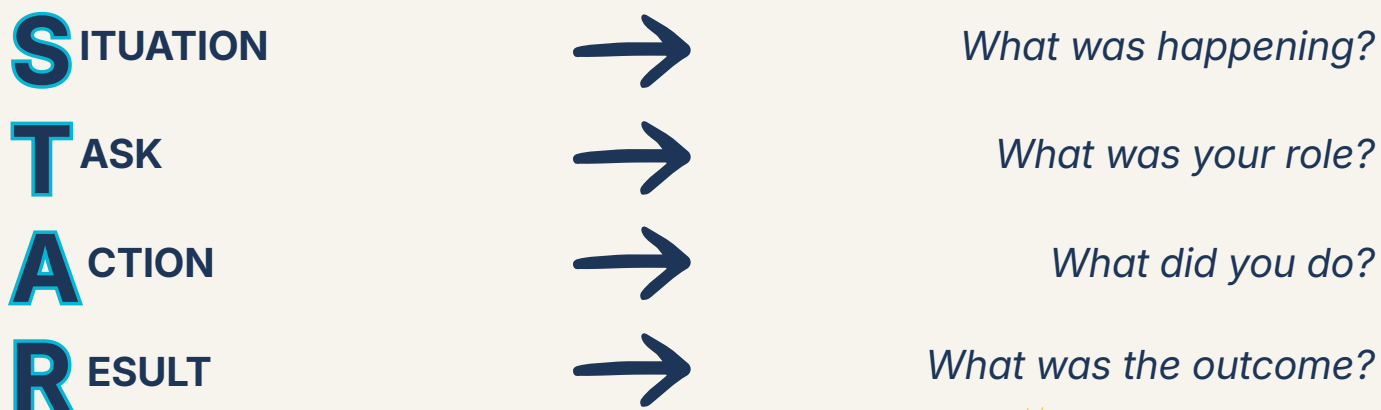
Evidence of
your behaviour

Always give an example.

BONUS:

Use the **STAR** Method technique when structuring your answers.

**QUICK
TIPS**



REMEMBER:

Everyone has strengths.

The difference is knowing how to best explain them.

**QUICK
TIPS**

Turn Weaknesses Into Strengths

Why do employers ask about weaknesses?

They are **NOT** trying to catch you out.

Instead, they want to see:



Self-awareness



Honesty



Willingness to improve



Growth mindset



- "What is your biggest weakness?"
- "What would you say is an area you need to improve on?"
- "What skill are you currently developing?"

Common Mistakes:

"I don't have any weaknesses"

Choosing a weakness that's critical to the job

Not showing improvement

Giving a vague answer like: "I don't really know"

What does a good answer look like?

A strong answer has 3 parts:

1

The Weakness:

Be honest about a genuine weakness, while keeping it professional and appropriate for the role.

2

What You Are Doing About It:

Show that you recognise this as an area for development and describe the steps you're taking to improve.

3

The Improvement:

End it on a positive note. Explain the changes you've made and the positive results you've started to see.

Weakness → Action → Improvement

Example: "One area I've been developing is my confidence with public speaking. I sometimes find presenting to larger groups challenging, as nerves can affect how clearly I communicate my ideas."

To improve this, I've made a conscious effort to take part in more presentations and spend extra time preparing beforehand. This has helped me become more confident and composed when speaking in front of others, and I've noticed a real improvement in how effectively I communicate my ideas."

REMEMBER:

Employers don't expect you to be perfect. They expect you to be improving.

QUICK
TIPS

Transferable Skills

You don't learn a transferable skill from just one place. You build them through all of your different experiences. This includes:

School

College

Sports

Hobbies

Post 16 Providers

Life experiences

Part-time jobs

In simple terms:

Transferable skills = skills you take with you wherever you go

Common Mistake:



"I've never had a job, so I have no skills"

The Reality

Skills aren't only learnt in the workplace

Apprenticeships are built on potential

Employers expect you to show them

All of your experiences have taught you new skills



HOW TO PREPARE FOR ASSESSMENTS

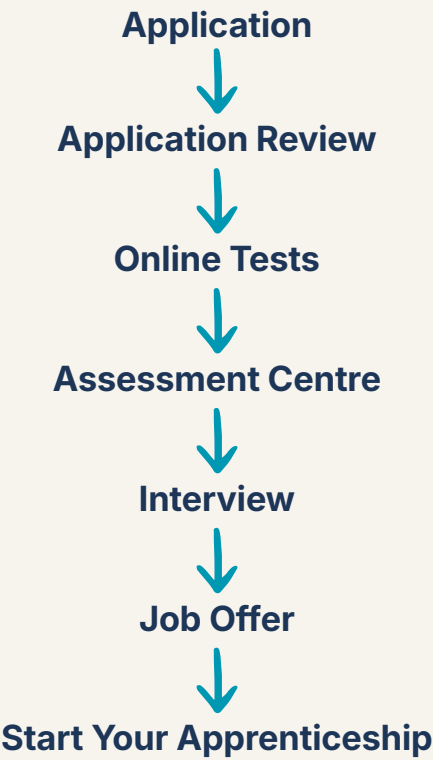
Apprenticeship recruitment often includes **more than just a single interview**. Employers use different methods to understand your skills, attitude, and potential. Knowing what to expect helps you feel calm and confident.

HOW EMPLOYERS ASSESS

Recruitment activity:		What employers are looking for:
Application Form	➔	Attention to detail, motivation and communication
Group Exercise	➔	Teamwork, listening and influencing
Presentation	➔	Confidence and communication
Role Play	➔	Judgement, empathy and professionalism
Psychometric Test	➔	Reasoning ability and potential
Interview	➔	Motivation, transferable skills and attitude

UNDERSTANDING THE RECRUITMENT JOURNEY

Every employer has a slightly different recruitment process, but many apprenticeship applications follow a similar journey.



1

FORMAL 1-TO-1 INTERVIEW

What it is:

A traditional interview with one manager or recruiter asking questions.

What they look for:

1. Communication skills
2. Motivation
3. Transferable skills
4. Understanding of the role

HOW TO PREPARE:

- Practise common questions (e.g. "Tell me about yourself")
- Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result)
- Give real examples from school, college, Post 16 provider or life



**QUICK
TIPS**

Speak clearly and don't rush your answers - it's okay to think first.

2

PANEL INTERVIEW

What it is:

More than one interviewer (e.g. manager, HR, team member).

What they look for:

1. Communication skills
2. Motivation
3. Transferable skills
4. Understanding of the role

HOW TO PREPARE:

- Make eye contact with everyone, not just one person
- Stay calm and take your time answering
- Treat it like a conversation, not a test



**QUICK
TIPS**

Don't let the number of people intimidate you, they are all there to get to know you and learn more about you.

If you're unsure where to direct your eye contact, focus mainly on the person asking the question, while naturally glancing around the rest of the panel to stay inclusive and engaged.

3 ASSESSMENT CENTRES

Some employers may use assessment activities as part of the apprenticeship recruitment process. This helps them see how you approach tasks and whether you are a suitable fit for the role.

What it is:

A group session with tasks, activities, and sometimes interviews.

What they look for:

1. Teamwork
2. Communication
3. Leadership potential
4. How you behave, not just what you say

HOW TO PREPARE:

- Be respectful and listen to others
- Contribute ideas, but don't dominate
- Stay positive even if tasks are challenging

THINGS YOU MAY DO:

Group exercises

Problem-solving tasks

Psychometric Testing

Short presentations

Role plays

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Some employers use an assessment centre as part of their apprenticeship recruitment process. Rather than meeting you in one interview, employers give you the opportunity to complete a range of activities designed to show your skills, behaviours and potential.

REMEMBER

Assessment centres are not about being perfect. They are designed to help employers understand how you work with other people, solve problems and communicate in different situations. Everyone attending is likely to be nervous, so try to stay calm, be yourself and enjoy the experience.



A TYPICAL ASSESSMENT CENTRE

Every employer is different, but your day might look something like this:

09:00 - Registration and welcome

09:30 - Employer introduction

10:00 - Group exercise

11:00 - Break

11:15 - Presentation or role play

12:00 - Psychometric tests

1:00 - Interview

2:00 - Questions and finish

REMEMBER:

Not every employer will use every activity. Some assessment centres may last only a couple of hours, while others may take most of the day.

QUICK
TIPS

ASSESSORS WANT TO SEE:



Listening carefully to others



Problem-solving



Sharing ideas respectfully



Willingness to learn



Working as part of a team



Respect for different opinions



Positive communication



Confidence to contribute

QUICK
TIPS

Helping your team succeed is often more important than trying to stand out on your own.

INTRODUCTION TO GROUP TASKS:

Group tasks allow candidates to demonstrate how they communicate, collaborate and solve problems as part of a team. They provide assessors with an opportunity to observe how candidates contribute ideas, listen to others and work towards a shared outcome.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID:

Talking over other people



Staying completely silent



Trying to lead every activity



Giving up if something feels difficult



Focusing on being "right"



INSTEAD:

Listen first and then contribute



Share your ideas when you have something useful to add



Encourage everyone to take part



Stay positive and keep trying



Employers are usually interested in how you think, not just your final answer



Remember people's names if you can.

Simple comments like: *"That's a good idea, Sam."* show teamwork and active listening.



**QUICK
TIPS**

GROUP EXERCISE EXAMPLE:

Imagine your team has been given **£10,000** to improve your local community.

YOUR TASK:

- Discuss the options as a group
- Decide which three projects should receive funding
- Be prepared to explain the reasons for your decisions
- You do not need to spend the full £10,000, but you should consider how your choices provide the greatest benefit to the community

CHOOSE FROM:

New sports equipment

Community garden

Outdoor gym

Youth wellbeing project

New bus shelter

Technology for local schools

TIME AVAILABLE:

- 20 minute discussion
- 3 minutes feedback

At the end of the exercise, one member of your team should present your decisions and explain:

- Which three projects you selected
- Why they were chosen
- How they will benefit the community

ASSESSORS MAY OBSERVE:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| • Collaboration and teamwork | • Active listening |
| • Respect for different viewpoints | • Ability to influence others constructively |
| • Problem-solving and decision-making | • Leadership and facilitation |
| • Time management | • Ability to reach consensus |

REMEMBER:

There is no perfect answer.

The discussion is often more important than the decision.



**QUICK
TIPS**



ONLINE / VIDEO INTERVIEW

What it is:

Interview done via video call or recorded answers.

What they look for:

1. Professionalism on camera
2. Clear communication
3. Preparation



**QUICK
TIPS**

HOW TO PREPARE:

- Dress smartly (even at home)
- Check your camera, lighting, and sound
- Look at the camera, not the screen

Practise speaking out loud before recording, it helps confidence massively.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- You may be given a set amount of time to prepare before each question
- You may only have one opportunity to record your answer, depending on the platform being used
- Questions may cover your experience, interests, strengths and how you would approach different situations
- You may not be able to see the interviewer while answering, so speaking naturally and confidently is important



**QUICK
TIPS**

REMEMBER:

- Take your time. A short pause before answering is completely fine.
- Don't aim for perfect answers. We want to hear your genuine thoughts and personality
- Use real examples from school, college, work, hobbies, volunteering or everyday life
- Practise, but don't memorise. Your answers should feel natural rather than rehearsed
- If you make a mistake, keep going. One small stumble won't define your interview

5 INFORMAL INTERVIEW / CHAT

What it is:

A relaxed conversation, sometimes in a workplace setting.

What they look for:

1. Personality
2. Interest in the role
3. Cultural fit



QUICK TIPS

Even though it feels casual, you are still being assessed.

HOW TO PREPARE:

- Be friendly and engaged
- Ask questions about the job
- Show enthusiasm

No matter the interview type, you must remember:

- **Employers are not trying to "catch you out"**
- **They want to see your potential, not perfection**
- **Transferable skills matter just as much as experience**
- **Preparation = confidence**

6 WORK TRIALS

Some employers may use work trials or assessment activities as part of the apprenticeship recruitment process. This helps them see how you approach tasks and whether you are a good fit for the role.

What is it?

A short period where you complete real or simulated tasks related to the job.

What they look for:

- See how you handle real workplace tasks
- Understand your attitude and work ethic
- Check how you work as part of a team
- Assess your communication and problem-solving skills

You might be asked to:

- Complete practical tasks linked to the job
- Work with other applicants in a real life group activity
- Take part in a short skills assessment on the job
- Answer questions about how you would handle situations at work



HOW TO PREPARE:

- Be on time and dress appropriately for the role
- Listen carefully to instructions
- Ask questions if you are unsure
- Work well with others and show teamwork
- Stay positive, even if tasks feel challenging
- Ensure phone ringer is silent and notifications are switched off during the work trial

REMEMBER:

Employers are not expecting perfection - they are looking for potential. Show enthusiasm, a willingness to learn, and a positive attitude.

7 PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING

What is it?

Structured assessments used by employers to understand how you think, behave, and solve problems.

What they look for:

Employers use psychometric tests to:

- Identify potential beyond grades or CV experience
- Compare candidates fairly using standardised measures
- Predict how someone might perform in training and the workplace
- Assess suitability for specific roles or working environments
- Reduce unconscious bias in recruitment decisions

WHY?

Psychometric tests are particularly useful where an individual may have limited work experience. Many employers also use psychometric tests during recruitment. These are designed to understand how you think, solve problems and make decisions.

TYPES OF PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS:



Numerical reasoning



Verbal reasoning



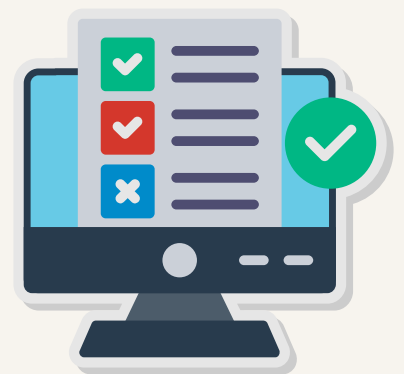
Situational judgement tests (SJTs)



Aptitude (or ability) tests



Personality questionnaires



QUICK TIPS

- Keep calm and manage your time carefully
- Don't spend too long on any one question
- If unsure, make your best reasoned choice and move on
- Use elimination techniques where appropriate
- Ensure you are in a quiet environment with a stable internet connection
- Avoid overthinking questions or trying to second guess what assessors want. Give genuine, consistent responses



Psychometric tests are not designed to trick you. They are used to give employers a fairer and more consistent picture of your strengths and working style. With practice and preparation, most candidates become more comfortable with them over time.



Remember... Employers are choosing someone they can train and grow with the company, not someone who already knows everything.



Numerical Reasoning

Example question:

A warehouse packs 240 parcels each day. 60% are dispatched before midday. How many parcels are dispatched before midday?

A. 96

B. 120

C. 144



D. 180

Working out: $60\% \times 240 = 144$

Verbal Reasoning

Read the statement:

"All apprentices attend weekly training sessions."

Now answer the question:

Tom is an apprentice.

Tom attends weekly training sessions.

True



False

Cannot say

REMEMBER:

Always base your answer only on the information provided.

Situational Judgement

Imagine this situation:

You are helping a customer when another customer becomes upset because they have been waiting.

A. Ignore them

B. Tell them to wait

C. Politely acknowledge them and seek support from a colleague if needed



D. Walk away

These questions help employers understand how you approach situations in the workplace.

Personality Questionnaires

Personality questionnaires are different from other psychometric tests.

There are no right or wrong answers.

Employers use them to understand:



Your preferred way of working



How you communicate



How you approach different situations

The best advice is simple...

Be honest.

Trying to guess the "correct" answer can give an inaccurate picture of who you are.

Here are some realistic examples of personality questionnaire items:



EXAMPLE ONE: AGREEMENT SCALE

"I enjoy taking the lead when working in a team."

Select one:

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Neither Agree no Disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly Disagree

☐

EXAMPLE TWO: WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR

"I prefer to plan tasks in advance rather than deal with issues as they arise."

Select one:

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Neither Agree no Disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly Disagree

☐



EXAMPLE THREE: INTERPERSONAL STYLE

"I am comfortable giving constructive feedback to others"

Select one:

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Neither Agree no Disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly Disagree

☐

EXAMPLE FOUR: FORCED CHOICE

Which statement is most like you?

A. I enjoy analysing data and solving complex problems.

B. I enjoy building relationships and working with people

When completing a personality questionnaire:

- Read each statement carefully before answering
- Answer based on how you would naturally behave, not what you think sounds best.
- Try not to overthink your responses
- Some questions may seem similar or be worded differently, this is intentional
- There is no need to prepare specific answers in advance, the most important thing is to be honest and consistent

REMEMBER:

Every stage of the recruitment process gives you another opportunity to show your potential. One activity does not define your application. Prepare well, stay positive and be yourself.



QUICK
TIPS

INTERVIEW EXAMPLE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



1. "Tell me about yourself"

Answer structure: Present → Experience → Skills → Future

Present: "I'm **currently** a motivated learner who is keen to start an apprenticeship so I can develop real workplace skills while gaining a qualification."

Experience: "In school/college I've built strengths in communication, teamwork and time management through group projects and meeting deadlines."

Skills: "I also have experience using problem-solving skills in situations where I've had to stay organised and focused under pressure."

Future: "I'm now looking for an apprenticeship where I can apply these skills in a real working environment, learn from professionals, and build a long-term career in this industry."

2. "Why do you want this apprenticeship?"

"I'm interested in this apprenticeship because it allows me to learn while gaining hands-on experience in a real working environment. I enjoy developing practical skills and I learn best by doing. This role will help me build on my existing transferable skills such as communication, teamwork and reliability, while also giving me the opportunity to develop new industry-specific skills. I'm motivated to work hard, improve quickly, and contribute positively to a team."

3. "What are your strengths?"

"My key strengths are communication, teamwork and reliability. I communicate clearly when working with others, which helps avoid misunderstandings and keeps tasks on track. I work well in a team because I listen to others' ideas and contribute where I can. I'm also reliable, meaning I complete tasks on time and take responsibility for my work. These strengths have helped me succeed in school/college and in group activities, and I'm confident they will help me in the workplace."

INTERVIEW EXAMPLE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



4. "Give an example of teamwork"

"During a group project in school/college, we had to complete a presentation within a deadline. I worked closely with my team to divide tasks based on each person's strengths. I took responsibility for organising the information and ensuring everything was completed on time. When one team member struggled, I helped them understand their section so we could stay on track. As a result, we completed the project successfully and achieved a good grade. This showed me the importance of communication and supporting others in a team."

5. "Tell me about a time you solved a problem"

"In a school/college task, we faced an issue where we were running out of time to complete a project. I suggested breaking the remaining work into smaller tasks and prioritising the most important sections first. I also helped others focus on what needed to be done urgently. This helped us complete the project on time. It showed me that staying calm, thinking logically and being organised can help solve problems effectively."

6. "How do you manage your time?"

"I manage my time by planning ahead and prioritising tasks. For example, in school/college I would use a to-do list or planner to organise deadlines and break larger tasks into smaller steps. This helps me stay focused and avoid last-minute stress. I also make sure I complete important tasks first, which helps me meet deadlines consistently."

7. "What are your weaknesses?"

"One area I've been working on is confidence when speaking in larger groups. To improve this, I've been actively contributing more in class discussions and group work. Over time, I've become more comfortable sharing my ideas. I'm continuing to develop this skill because I understand communication is important in the workplace."

INTERVIEW EXAMPLE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



8. "How do you handle pressure?"

"When I'm under pressure, I stay calm and focus on prioritising tasks. I break work into smaller steps so it feels more manageable. For example, during exam periods or deadlines, I create a plan to make sure everything is completed on time. This approach helps me stay organised and avoid feeling overwhelmed."

9. "Why should we choose you?"

"You should choose me because I'm a hardworking and motivated individual who is eager to learn and develop. I already have strong transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, time management and problem-solving. I'm reliable, willing to take on challenges, and I'm committed to improving myself. I'm also keen to contribute positively to your team while developing into a skilled professional through this apprenticeship."

10. "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?"

"In five years, I see myself having successfully completed my apprenticeship and progressed within the company or industry. I aim to have developed strong technical and professional skills and to take on more responsibility in my role. My goal is to build a long-term career where I can continue learning and contributing effectively to a team."

Interviewers don't just want "perfect answers" - they want to see:

- Willingness to learn
- Reliability
- Team attitude
- Real examples (school, sport, volunteering, part-time work)



REMEMBER:

If the interviewer asks you a question that you're unsure on, ask them to either:

- Repeat or rephrase the question
- Give yourself time to thoroughly understand the question
- Feel free to ask what the interviewer is looking to gain from the question

AFTER THE INTERVIEW: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Firstly, finishing an interview or assessment centre is a huge achievement. **Well done!** No matter the outcome, you have already **gained valuable experience** that will help you in **future applications**.

While waiting for feedback or a decision, it is important to stay **positive, organised, and proactive**.

As part of the recruitment process, you may be asked to provide references to confirm your experience, education or suitability for the role. This will usually happen after you've accepted an offer, as part of your pre-employment checks. Your referee could be a previous employer, school, college or another relevant person.

It's a good idea to have your referee's permission and contact details ready in advance.



QUICK
TIPS

What to do while waiting for feedback:

1

Check your emails regularly, including junk/spam folders

2

Keep track of deadlines or next steps

3

Continue applying for other opportunities where appropriate

4

Reflect on what went well in your interview

5

Think about what you could improve next time

Remember: Recruitment processes can take time, and delays do not always mean bad news.

OWNING YOUR RECRUITMENT JOURNEY!

Your apprenticeship journey **belongs to you**. Employers expect candidates to ask **questions**, **seek support**, and **communicate professionally**.

Don't be afraid to:

Ask for feedback after interviews or assessments

Ask questions about the role, training, or workplace

Clarify anything you are unsure about

Speak up if you need support or adjustments during the process

Asking questions shows confidence, maturity, and interest in the opportunity.

Questions you might want to ask an employer:

- What would a typical day look like?
- What training and support will I receive?
- What skills are most important for success in this role?
- What are the next steps in the recruitment process?
- What progression opportunities are available after the apprenticeship?

Your apprenticeship is the start of your professional journey.
Every challenge, question, and experience will help you grow.
Stay curious, stay committed, and take pride in how far you have already come.

QUICK
TIPS

YOU HAVE EARNED THIS OPPORTUNITY - NOW MAKE THE MOST OF IT!

CONGRATULATIONS – YOU’VE SECURED YOUR APPRENTICESHIP!



Be Prepared

- Plan your journey and aim to arrive on time
- Bring any documents or equipment requested by your employer or training provider
- Keep important dates, training sessions, and deadlines organised

Ask Questions

- If you are unsure, always ask
- No question is “silly” when you are learning
- Asking questions shows confidence and professionalism

Stay Positive and Open to Learning

- You will not be expected to know everything straight away
- Mistakes are part of learning and development
- Be open to feedback and act on it

Build Professional Habits Early

- Communicate clearly and respectfully
- Check emails and messages regularly
- Be reliable, punctual, and organised

Take Ownership of Your Apprenticeship

- Set small goals for your development
- Reflect on what you are learning each week
- Ask for feedback and use it to improve

Look After Yourself

- Balance work, training, and personal wellbeing
- Speak up if you need support or adjustments
- Celebrate your progress, no matter how small

WHERE YOU CAN GET SUPPORT

Interview Clothing Support

Smart Works North East –
interview clothing & coaching

Borrow smart clothing
where possible

Ask your school/college/post
16 provider about clothing
support schemes



Travel & Transport

Before interviews or your first day:



Plan your route early

Check bus/train times

**Look for apprentice or
student travel discounts**

Useful websites:

[Nexus](#)



[Northern Railway](#)



[National Rail](#)



[Arriva](#)



[Go North East](#)



Wellbeing & Confidence Support

The recruitment process can feel stressful at times, but you can speak to:

TUTORS



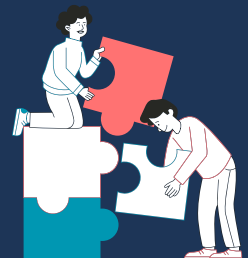
**CAREERS
ADVISORS**



**FAMILY/
SUPPORT
NETWORKS**



**YOUTH
SUPPORT
SERVICES**



Online Support can be found at [Young Minds](#) and [Mind UK](#)

NO PERMISSION NEEDED

You do not need to do this alone!



QUICK
TIPS

Successful apprentices:

Ask for help

Stay organised

Learn from feedback

Keep trying

You don't need permission to:

ASK QUESTIONS:

1

Your questions matter. The application process is not just an opportunity for an employer to get to know you, it is also your chance to learn about them. If you want to know how apprentices are supported, what development opportunities are available, or what it's really like to work there, ask. Finding the right fit works both ways.

HAVE OTHER COMMITMENTS:

2

Remember, you are allowed to have other commitments. If you have a holiday booked or an interview clashes with an exam, communicate this to the employer as early as possible. Exams should always take priority, and most employers will be happy to arrange an alternative interview date. Clear and timely communication shows professionalism and helps avoid unnecessary stress.

HAVE DOUBTS:

3

Doubting yourself is part of being human. Don't let the fear of not being "good enough" hold you back from opportunities that could help you learn, grow and succeed. Everyone faces self doubt, but those who keep going despite it are often the ones who discover what they are truly capable of.

TAKE A PEN AND PAPER

4

Feel free to take a notepad and pen into your interview to make notes throughout. You can also prepare a few key bullet points in advance to help prompt your answers and keep you focused during the conversation.

INFORM OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENTS

5

If you require any adjustments or additional support during the recruitment process, let the employer or interviewer know in advance. This will help them make appropriate arrangements and ensure you feel comfortable, supported and able to perform at your best.

Confidence is not something you have before you start. It is something you build by taking opportunities, trying new things and learning along the way.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How long does the apprenticeship recruitment process take?

A: It varies depending on the employer, but it can take a few weeks to a couple of months. This is because there are often several stages.

Q: Do I need previous work experience to apply?

A: No. Apprenticeships are designed for beginners. Schools, volunteering, hobbies, and personal projects all count as experience.

Q: What happens if I don't pass an assessment or interview?

A: You may not progress in that application, but you can usually apply for other apprenticeships in the future. It's also a good learning experience.

Q: Can I apply again if I'm unsuccessful?

A: Yes. Many employers allow you to reapply in future recruitment cycles.

Q: What should I wear to an interview or assessment centre?

A: Smart, tidy clothing is best. You don't need a suit unless specifically asked, but you should look presentable and professional.

Q: How should I prepare for the recruitment process?

A: Research the company, practice interview questions, understand the role, and think of examples that show your skills and strengths.

Q: Will I get feedback if I am not successful?

A: Some employers provide feedback, but not all do. If feedback is given, use it to improve future applications. You are more than welcome to follow up your feedback – most employers think extremely positively if you do.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Applicant / Candidate: A person who has applied for a job or apprenticeship.

Application: The form or process you complete to apply for an apprenticeship.

Application Portal: An online system where you submit and track your applications.

Apprenticeship: A paid job where you learn skills, gain experience, and study towards a qualification at the same time.

Assessment Centre: A stage in recruitment where candidates complete tasks, group activities, or tests to show their skills.

CEO (Chief Executive Officer): The senior leader responsible for setting a company's direction, making key decisions, and driving its overall success.

Competency: A skill or ability that shows how well you can perform a task or behaviour.

Cover Letter: A short letter explaining why you want the role and why you are suitable.

CV (Curriculum Vitae): A document that summarises your skills, education, and experience.

Employer: The company or organisation offering the apprenticeship.

Feedback: Comments or advice given to help you improve your performance.

HR (Human Resources): The function responsible for supporting employees, recruitment, development and workplace policies.

Interview: A conversation where an employer asks questions to learn more about you.

Mentor: A mentor is an experienced and trusted person who provides guidance, support and advice to help someone develop their skills, confidence and achieve their goals.

Offer: When an employer formally gives you the apprenticeship role.

Onboarding: The process of helping a new apprentice settle into their role and workplace.

Rejection: When your application is not successful at a stage in the process.

Shortlisting: The process where employers select the strongest applicants to move to the next stage.

Transferable Skills: Skills you have learned in one situation (e.g. school or hobbies) that can be used in a job.

Vacancy: A job or apprenticeship that is available.

