What is work experience?

Work experience gives you the chance to find out what work is really like and prepare for working life. It also helps you start to career plan and look at options for your future.

How can work experience help me in the future?

It can:

- help you prepare for working life
- make you more independent
- help prepare you for college/training or employment
- help you identify any additional support you may need
- improve your social skills, including communication and listening skills
- improve your emotional well-being and confidence
- give you experience of the world of work – helping you gain references for your CV (Curriculum Vitae)
- provide evidence of your skills and knowledge for College/Training applications, Higher Education applications and information for application forms and interviews.
Why use these booklets?

There are three work experience booklets that aim to help you get the most out of your experience.

1. **Getting ready** Preparing yourself for a placement
2. **My diary** Recording what you have learnt
3. **Setting goals** Helping you look at your experiences and set goals for the future

Everyone doing work experience will feel a little nervous. These booklets will help you:

- prepare, plan and reflect on what you learn while on work experience
- set your own personal goals and targets
- recognise and develop your skills for work
- adopt appropriate behaviour in the workplace
- plan for your future
- record evidence of the knowledge and skills you have learnt.
What types of work experience programmes are available?

There are many ways in which to experience the world of work and a range of different work-related experiences to help you gain the most knowledge and skills for your future. Some options are:

- one to two weeks work experience with an employer
- one day a week supported work experience for an arranged period of time
- employer Work Awareness Days – “Master Classes” with employers to get an understanding about what the job is about eg animal care or sport, leisure and tourism
- mentoring and enterprise days
- mock interviews with employers – helping you to find out what interviews are like and help you to prepare for them
- employer mentoring.

How do I choose what work experience programme would suit me?

Your school or college will make you aware of the options that are available to you, and your Work Experience Co-ordinator will explain the process to you. If you feel you would like to take part in other or additional experiences, such as master classes or mock interviews, please ask your teacher/lecturer for more information or contact your Careers Adviser or nearest Careers Centre. The number is at the back of this booklet.
Work experience – who does what

You

- Identify a career to taste with an employer
- Research what skills are required to do that type of work
- Attend school talks and Careers Wales events
- Help to find a placement by contacting employers and informing school if they have found a placement
- Research on the National Wales Employer Database for a suitable placement
- Research on Careers Wales website www.careerswales.com and complete interview games
- Confirm your attendance with the employer prior to the placement
- Prepare for work experience with the ‘Getting ready’ booklet
- Use the booklets on placement and evaluate and set goals for the future
- Thank the employer after your placement
Work experience – who does what

School

- Assist you in finding a placement
- Ask you to look for your own placement
- Inform you of placements that may suit you
- If you have found a placement yourself, issue you with a Self Arranged Work Experience form which your employer and parent/guardian needs to sign
- Liaise with employers and let them know if you have any additional requirements
- Provide each pupil with a vetting form with information on the placement (given to school by Careers Wales)
- Issue Health and Safety booklets and work experience booklets to you in your preferred format (braille, large print, audio)
- Prepare pupils for their placement with work experience and health and safety talks
- Complete a work experience de-briefing with you after your placement
Support you to consider suitable careers

Inform the school of any additional needs you may have

Contact the school if they are aware of a suitable placement for you

Help you to find a suitable placement and contact the school

Read through the work experience booklet or listening to the audio version with you

Encourage you to fill in your work experience ‘My diary’ section daily when on work experience

Help you to complete any evaluation forms after your placement
Give you the opportunity for work experience

Make sure it is a worthwhile experience for you

Provide you with a “young persons” Risk Assessment related to the placement, identifying any hazards and helping to minimise them

Liaise with you and the school regarding any additional needs you may have

Complete an assessment of how your work experience has gone after your placement
Work experience – who does what

Careers Wales

- Assist you to participate in any Careers Wales events and help you to career plan for a suitable placement
- Process your Self Arranged work experience forms
- Provide the school with a list of employers who are willing to take pupils on placement for those pupils unable to find a placement
- Provide the school with a vetting form on each placement
- Find new work experience opportunities
- Complete employer Health and Safety checks
- Provide the school with Health and Safety booklets and work experience diaries for pupils
- Give information and advice on work experience through the Careers Wales website www.careerswales.com
- Provide careers advice and guidance through Careers Advisers and Careers Wales centres
What placement can I do?

Firstly, start to think, “What do I want to do?”. The whole experience should be something you would like to do. You need to start thinking of a career that you may like to do in the future that you would like to try out. Think of things you are interested in, not what your friends are doing or what people are telling you to do.

You could do this by:

• meeting with your school/college Careers Adviser and discussing options
• researching in the careers library at school
• speaking to teachers about subjects you are good at and enjoy
• visiting the Careers Wales web site: www.careerswales.com
  On the Careers Wales web site, you can action plan for your future, play work experience interview games and also record your experiences when you are actually on work experience
• discussing your ideas with family and friends
• being realistic about the placement – being a rock star may seem like a good idea, but are you going to get a placement and what will you learn?

You also need to think of what career options are available in your area and how would you get to a placement out of your area.
Consider what support you might need on your placement. Would you need help with mobility or with any health issues? Would you need a Support Assistant with you for the entire placement or perhaps some of the time?

How do I arrange a placement?

Your school will help you to find a placement and will ask you to start looking for an employer to complete your placement with. You will be issued with a letter from the school asking you to approach employers and return a form by a certain date.

A national database of employers who are willing to take pupils on placements will be made available on Careers Wales’ website, www.careerswales.com. (This will help you to look at what placements are available if you are unable to find a placement yourself). All work experience placements from that time will be handled through the database. Any young person wishing to access work experience will have to use the database to find an opportunity.

You will need to provide the employer with the following information:

- a copy of a ‘Self Arranged Work Experience’ form, which you can get from your school (Careers Wales give these forms to the school). This form is required to confirm your self arranged placement and confirm with the school, the employer and your parents/guardians where you are going on placement. Remember, your parent/guardian and employer will need to sign the form
• date of work experience
• the name of the your school/college.

How can I find out more about work experience?

• read on through the booklet or use your CD Rom disks
• visit www.careerswales.com
• visit your careers library
• visit your local Careers Office – a list of offices is located in www.careerswales.com
• speak to your school Careers Adviser or teachers
• talk to friends and family
• find out where students went last year and what their experiences were like.

What if I can’t find a placement?

Your Work Experience Co-ordinator and school will have a list of employers from Careers Wales, who are willing to take young people onto a work experience placement or take part in other work awareness days.
Types of work sectors which are available include:

- Agriculture
- Animal care
- Art, craft and design
- Catering
- Childcare
- Conservation
- Construction
- Education
- Emergency services
- Engineering
- Finance
- Garages
- Hair and beauty
- History
- Horticulture
- IT
- Law and politics
- Manufacturing
- Media
- Medical, health and social care
- Office work
- Performing arts
- Retail
- Science and research
- Sport
- Travel and tourism
- Transport and distribution
What some students said

“I enjoyed my placement and it has confirmed that I want to train further in this career”

“I worked hard and had fun. I have been offered a part time job”

“I learnt a lot about the company and I would really like to work there in the future”

“On my first day I was nervous but all the staff made me feel welcome and part of their team”

“It was great to work for a busy company. It felt so different to school”

What are skills?

Skills are things that you learn all the time. As they are practised your skills will improve. For example, you may learn how to talk to a range of people on the telephone, and therefore learn a wide range of communication skills. You may be a good listener and continue to improve your listening skills.

You will get the opportunity to use some of the skills you have learnt from your school subjects.
Transferable skills

Transferable skills are learnt in one situation, but they can be used in a variety of situations in the future. For example, you may learn how to answer the phone correctly when on work experience and use this skill to answer the phone when you get a job.
**Key skills**

Certain skills are considered to be so important for working life that they are called **key skills**. The key skills listed below can be transferred to many jobs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transferable skill</th>
<th>How you could use it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working with others</strong></td>
<td>Team working. Working with others to get a job done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to follow instructions</strong></td>
<td>Listening to instructions and doing something correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety awareness</strong></td>
<td>Keeping to the rules and following safety instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Talking on the telephone, listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improving learning and performance</strong></td>
<td>Planning on how to do a task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding customer needs</strong></td>
<td>Helping a customer with their queries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferable skill</td>
<td>How you could use it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Dealing with problems at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to learn</td>
<td>Learning something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing initiative</td>
<td>Investigating new ways to complete a task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of numbers</td>
<td>Handling money and giving correct change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job specific skills</td>
<td>Learning a specific job at work eg to use a till</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>Word processing and using the internet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember: you can learn from any work experience placement as you will be learning the skills you need for your future.
Skills checklist – What type of person are you now?

Get to know yourself!

Have you ever thought about the skills you may have? Or what strengths you may have?

Sometimes a friend or family member may say you are good at something and you think, “I don’t think so”.

The list opposite shows a wide range of skills and either tick, mark or ring which ones you feel you have. Try and be honest with yourself.
**My personal qualities**

List which personal qualities you feel you have from the following list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Honest</th>
<th>Reliable</th>
<th>Trustworthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good listener</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>Good imagination</td>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Self motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Approachable</td>
<td>Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Good planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys a challenge</td>
<td>Good leader</td>
<td>Good memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talkative</td>
<td>Supportive to others</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Empathetic</td>
<td>Full of energy</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Building confidence

Going out to work with an employer can sometimes be a nerve-racking experience. It can take a person a long time to become confident with themselves or with others.

It can help to think about the things you are good at. Don’t put yourself down. We all find it hard to look at our good points – but we all have them.

List five things you like about yourself

1. _______________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________

I like the way I...
I think that I am good at...
I always...
I like my...
I am very good at...

2. _______________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________

4. _________________________________________________________

5. _________________________________________________________

How easy was it to do this? Easy ☐

Not easy ☐

What was your reaction when doing this?

________________________________________________________________________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU ABOUT YOUR SKILLS?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working in a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing your time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding people’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising your work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to learn quickly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very confident</th>
<th>Quite confident</th>
<th>Not confident</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Very confident</td>
<td>Quite confident</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing new ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Solving problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility in unfamiliar places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility in familiar places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic IT skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using adapted software</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with numbers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working on your own</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Self talk

We all ‘talk’ to ourselves every day. Sometimes, we can have about 50,000 thoughts in one day!

Be aware of your self talk:

- Make your self talk positive. Be kind to yourself. If you realise that you are being negative about yourself or other people, quickly replace those negative thoughts with positive ones;

- Try to think of your future rather than the things that have gone wrong in the past;

- When thinking of your future, think of things you want to have happen in your life, not what you hope doesn’t happen to you;

- When goal setting, always be positive about what you want;

- Consider using your self talk to help set goals for your future;

- Remember, when you talk to yourself, you are the same as everyone else.
Your behaviour on placement

Before you go on work experience or any work awareness day, you need to consider your behaviour whilst on placement.

How you behave at work is normally different to how you may behave with friends and family. You have to appear professional at all times. There may be people you don’t get on with but you have to work with them – you don’t have to socialise with them outside of the work environment.

What you need to consider is that you are an ambassador of the school and if your behaviour is poor on placement, it may affect your future as the employer needs to feedback to the school on your progress. It may also affect future pupils’ placements as the employer may tell the school he does not want to provide the opportunity of a placement in the future. If you have a good work experience placement many pupils ask the employer to give them a reference for college, work or training. So remember, it is important to give a good impression and behave appropriately.
Appropriate or not appropriate?

The following is a list of things that may or may not be appropriate at work. Please tick whether you think you can or cannot do something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Sometimes appropriate</th>
<th>Not appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shouting loudly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joking – messing around</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hitting someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keeping quiet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Sometimes appropriate</td>
<td>Not appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laughing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asking questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using your mobile phone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Sometimes appropriate</td>
<td>Not appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arguing with your work colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eating not on break times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answering managers/staff back</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being miserable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being happy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smiling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Sometimes appropriate</td>
<td>Not appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being cheeky</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being polite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being friendly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being considerate to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not doing the work you are asked to do</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
You’re the boss!

You have decided that you are going to set up your own business. You now need to decide what business it is and what you are going to call it.

Name of company ................................

Type of business .................................

Now decide what kind of person you would want to work for you. List the skills and qualities that you require from your staff, if they are to be a good employee.

1. ________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________
What an employer wants from you!

- Good timekeeper. Being on time in the morning, back in time from lunch and leaving work at the right time
- Reliable
- Trustworthy
- Flexible
- Being independent
- Using your own mind
- Speaking to the boss if you can’t do a job
- Not having too many days off sick
- Hard working – doing the job and not slacking
- Good attitude
- Working as part of a team
- Being keen
- Smart appearance. Dressed, clean and tidy
- Willing to help with anything
- Giving 100 per cent to any job
- Genuine
- Interested and enthusiastic
- Able to work with others
- Confident
- Good at calculating money and figures
- Trustworthy
- Good communicator
- Consistent in work
- Motivated
- Using own initiative
- Happy
- Friendly
- Polite
- Well mannered
- Considerate
- Able to learn new things quickly
- Patient when showing others how to do a job.
My work experience plan

Start to set goals for your placement

My work experience placement/work awareness programme is at:

................................................
................................................
................................................

My personal targets for work experience are:

................................................
................................................
................................................
................................................
................................................
I want to develop the following skills on my placement:

................................................
................................................
................................................
................................................

The evidence I will collect to show I have reached my targets:

................................................
................................................
................................................
................................................
................................................
................................................
Making contact with your employer

You will need to speak to your employer when you are requesting a placement and also before you start a placement to introduce yourself. This can normally be carried out on the telephone.

Careers Wales provide the school with a vetting form which provides information on the placement, times of breaks, dress code and description of the work you will be asked to carry out.

Requesting a placement

When you need to call the employer, have some information ready such as:

- employer’s telephone number
- employer’s name
- information on the company
- work experience dates
- why you are interested in a placement with the company
- any questions you may have eg starting and finishing times
- information about the subjects you study at school.
Confirming a placement

When you need to call the employer to confirm your placement you will need to expand on the information you have already gathered, such as:

- confirm time of attendance on your first day
- ask who to report to on your first day
- confirm hours of work
- information breaks including lunch break
- lunch arrangements (whether they have a canteen or you need to bring your own food)
- confirm what clothes you need to wear, including footwear.

Interview tips

Some employers may ask you to attend an interview. Here are some tips to help you to prepare:

- Prepare answers to questions the employer may ask. For example:
  
  “Why are you interested in coming to this company on work experience?”

  “What do you want to do after you have left school/college?”
“What subjects do you like at school?”

“What do you do in your spare time?”

- Answer all questions politely, clearly and use “please” and “thank you”.

- Don’t rush your answers. If you are unsure of a question, ask them to repeat it again or re-phrase the question.

- Don’t fidget. This can be hard if you are nervous.

- Try not to put your hands to your mouth as this will block the volume of your voice, making it harder for the employer to understand you.

- First impressions count. Make sure you have dressed appropriately.

- Be prepared to shake hands with the interviewer.

- Don’t worry about being nervous – everyone is! The interviewer will make you feel at ease and comfortable.

- Be confident. You can do it!

- Smile and be yourself.

If an interview is not required, don’t worry. Some employers do not interview young people for work experience placements, but if they do then think of it as experience for future interviews for college, training or employment.
Health and safety

It is important that you follow health and safety rules on your work placement. Your employer will provide you with an induction on your first day, which will cover aspects of your job and what you are expected to do.

Every employer will expect you to:

- act responsibly
- follow health and safety rules and instructions
- be tidy in work
- not endanger yourself or others eg using equipment and messing around
- only using equipment or doing things you have been told to do or use.

Every workplace will have:

- a first aid box and in some workplaces, an allocated first aid person
- an accident book and someone responsible for health and safety
- a fire evacuation procedure
- protective clothing and equipment when necessary.
Preparation for your first day

Before you start your work experience placement make sure you are ready. The more preparation you do, the less nervous you will be. Remember, if you show you have prepared for the experience, the employer will know that you are enthusiastic and interested in learning.

You could ensure you are prepared by:

- getting to bed early the night before to have a good night’s rest
- having a good breakfast to start the day
- having a bath or shower to relax yourself
- making sure you know the name of the company and how to get there
- checking your transport arrangements so you are not late
- taking some information with you about the company, including the Manager’s name
- taking some information with you about the subjects you study at school and why you are interested in this type of work
- dressing appropriately for the work as stated by the employer (eg clerical: trousers and shirt or Chef: Chef’s whites)
- take your second work experience booklet – “My diary” with you to record any thoughts about the day and complete the tasks set.
You are now ready for your work experience placement and are feeling more confident as you have prepared yourself. Move onto your next booklet, My diary.

Further support

If you would like more information on how to become involved in providing work experience or any work awareness programme for a blind or partially sighted young person, you can contact:

Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale 0800 100 900
Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys 0800 100 900
Careers Wales West 0800 100 900
Careers Wales Gwent 0800 028 9212
Careers Wales 0800 183 0283
Careers Wales North East 0800 919 520
Careers Wales North West 0800 389 9603
www.careerswales.com

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