

Finding and Accessing Work Experience or Part Time Work as a teenager.

More than just a week off school

Any experience of work, paid or unpaid, is well worth the investment of your time and energy. Your school may organise a work experience week, but ideally, this will be part of many other experiences of work you access before you leave education. Anything you try, any environment you experience and any people you meet will all help you work out what might be right for your future.



The boring bit first

Before we go any further you need to be clear about the law and what you are allowed to do and at what age. Here are some links to the info you need:

All the rules are here <https://www.gov.uk/child-employment>

In brief, you can work part time from 13. The local council requires your employer to have a child employment permit, details here - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/keeping-children-safe/apply-for-a-child-employment-permit/> Look carefully at the link explaining how many hours you are legally allowed to work, when you're allowed to work and what you're allowed to do.

Work experience organised through your school does not need a work permit as the school confirms the employer's insurance cover and suitability.

What counts as 'Work Experience' ?

Activities and encounters that give you an experience of one, or some elements of the world of work. A lot more counts than you might think. For example:

- 😊 Spending time in a business and helping with anything that's going on – admin work, cleaning, tidying, customer service, data entry, making coffee, stacking shelves, social media.
- 😊 Helping with chores or maintenance at home
- 😊 Cooking and baking
- 😊 Childminding, even if it's for family
- 😊 Gardening and lawn mowing
- 😊 Spreadsheets and mail merge for Christmas cards
- 😊 Your own 'professional' social media account
- 😊 A developed hobby (make-up artistry, event delivery, craft, card making, flower arranging, DIY, DJing, music, sound and lighting, electronics/smart home devices)
- 😊 Volunteering
- 😊 Teaching others (sport, craft, art, digital skills)
- 😊 Shopping or companionship for others
- 😊 Part time work. Paper round, hospitality



Always remember to make a note of what you do and if you can, how you felt about it or the skills you learned.

How can you get Work Experience?

If your school operates a work experience programme, **get involved**. The same with volunteering programmes, initiatives like Young Enterprise, competitions, school productions, Sports Leader programmes, choir, orchestra, helping with or teaching younger students, school events, charity initiatives, collaborations, projects of your own. **Have a go and get involved** as much as you can.



Out of school, look around your 'network' first – this means family, friends of the family, places you visit regularly and are known personally, neighbours, clubs and groups you are involved in. Talk about your interest in gaining different experiences with these people, offer to help, ask them to ask their network if there are any opportunities. Spread the request wider and make it known what your parameters are (as broad as possible), your availability, where you are able to access and any particular skills you already have.

Remember the saying, "If you don't ask, you don't get." **Don't be afraid to ask**. If you show an interest, people respond and might to show you round where they work or even offer you an opportunity to shadow people there for a few days...or more. **Just go for it**.

At home, **offer to help** and get involved. Let's be honest, there are things we'd all rather not have to do but good principle is to try everything once. Follow instructions, take advice and give it a go. Some things you will hate and others you might like to do again or learn more about. You might even be lucky to find a task that has financial reward attached. It's all building your self-knowledge and your skill set (experience).

So you want to get paid as well!

Gaining a part time job follows exactly the same processes as accessing work experience, or can even come about as a result of work experience. The only difference is that you make it clear you are seeking employment rather than just work experience. You can always offer to give them a free trial shift, but make sure this is for a mutually agreed period or you could end up working long term with no payment.

Depending on where you live, go into shops or cafes you like and ask if they have an opportunity. Remember that your appearance matters if you are going in person. Dress presentably and be generally clean and tidy. Wear a smile too. Phone them up if you can't go physically. Be prepared for lots of rejection. You'll get a "yes" if you keep trying.



Look for vacancy ads. These might be notices in the window, ads in local publications, word of mouth, but most often on social media. Remember, business owners may use platforms you are not using regularly. Check Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and others as they emerge. Search 'part time jobs' or 'vacancies' and state the town or area in your search. Find local Facebook groups and post on there yourself to say you are looking for part time work. Make sure your own online presence is tidied up before you start posting though as you will be judged. It's even worth posting a

few things to build your profile – pictures of what you’ve baked, a lawn you mowed, a book you read to your young cousin.

Always prepare what you are going to say before you approach anyone in person or on the phone.

What to say

Keep this flexible, but have a few phrases in stock:

- 😊 “Hello, I’m looking for some part time work, are you the right person to ask?”
- 😊 “Hi, I saw your notice in the window about part time staff and wondered how I could apply for that”
- 😊 “I’m interested in the possibility of weekend work here, how do I find out if there are any opportunities?” (some bigger companies only take online applications).
- 😊 “Good morning, I’m calling to see if there are any weekend job vacancies at (name of establishment). Is there someone available I could talk to about that?”

If no-one is available then, don’t give up. Ask when would be a better time to visit/call. Ask for the name of the person you should talk to. Ask if the person you are talking to thinks there’s the likelihood of an opportunity.

Always leave with an instruction for yourself and repeat back to the person you are talking to what you will do and when. Go prepared with some printed details of how they can get in touch with you that you can leave with them. Have something on there that reminds them who you are so it doesn’t get filed in the bin as a random bit of paper – even a handwritten note against you printed contact details could work. You can have a CV prepared but this is not often required at your age for part time jobs. If you’ve given your phone number, make sure your phone is on during working hours and if it rings, answer it politely and professionally. The same goes for emails – make sure you check your inbox regularly. Don’t be afraid to follow up your visit or phone call if you hear nothing. **Be persistent. Be keen.**

Offer to do a free trial to see if you fit in if it’s appropriate and safe.

Think about the time you call or visit. If it’s a café, don’t approach them during a busy lunch time. Research first – it always helps to know a bit about any establishment before you go in or phone. Use the business name and sometimes, you can even find the manager’s name – ask for them in person. Go with someone appropriate that you can trust if you are nervous.

Some useful links (but don’t forget social media):

<https://uk.indeed.com/> search for Saturday jobs or part time work in your area

<https://www.summerfieldwork.com/>

<https://www.yessuffolk.co.uk/>

<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/write-first-cv-tips-students-school-leavers/> Is useful if you need a CV

