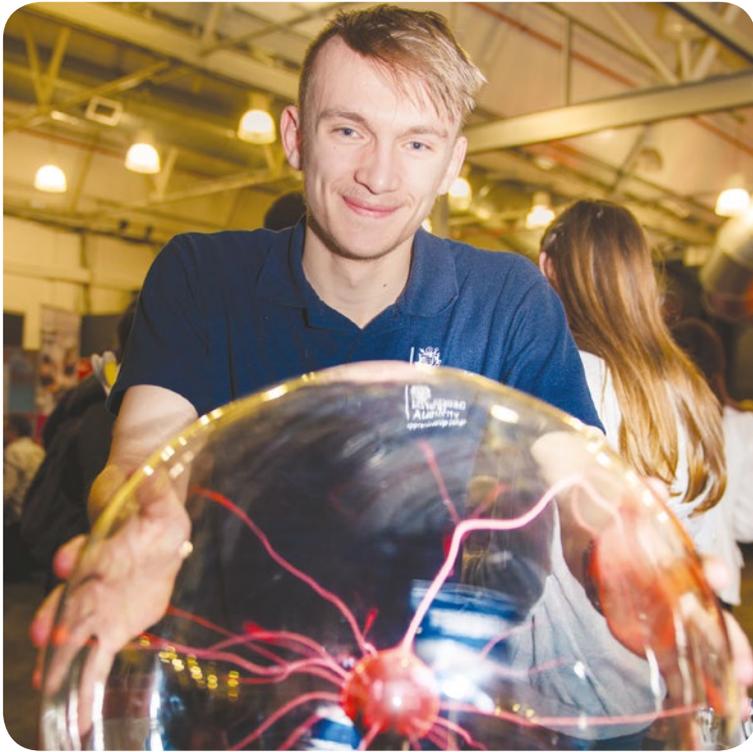


Work Experience Placements

A HOW TO guide for learners



What is a work experience placement?

A work experience placement is a period of time spent in a working environment. It is an opportunity to learn about a particular job or area of work by experiencing it for yourself. It should be a high quality and meaningful experience. Work experience can be a potential route to employment when vacancies arise.

A work experience placement may be arranged through your school or place of learning to help you prepare for entering the world of work. You may have organised one yourself if you are looking to gain new skills, or change direction in your career.

This guide is designed to help you to get the most from your work experience placement.

“ I learned so much! Everyone was very friendly and willing to answer all my questions. ”

Year 11 student, The Cherwell School

How will work experience benefit me... in my career choices?

Make informed career choices – try out an area of work that you are interested in to see if you enjoy it. It can also help you to find out what you don't enjoy!

Find out about jobs and industry sectors you hadn't considered or weren't aware of before.

Get an idea of what it's like to work in your chosen work environment and what would be expected of you.

Stand out from the crowd – work experience shows potential employers your ambition and gives them a chance to get to know you.

Understand the relevance of your current learning and how it relates to the workplace and getting a job, which can help motivate you to achieve your learning goals.

How will work experience benefit me... in my personal development?

Identify your strengths and weaknesses and the skills you already have.

Learn new skills and improve others - such as team working and problem solving - and get examples to demonstrate them on your CV and in an interview.

Develop your social skills – meeting and talking to new and different people, from workplace colleagues to your potential boss!

Develop independence e.g. through travelling to work on public transport.

Gain in confidence and feel proud of what you have achieved.



Choosing a placement

Things to consider when choosing a placement:

Interests	Location	Aims	Challenge
What are your interests and what careers are they linked to?	Where can you travel to?	What would you like to achieve and what sort of placement could help you to do that?	Step out of your comfort zone and try something that stretches and challenges you.

What are your soft skills? Are you good at...



TOP TIP:

If you can't find a placement related to your job ambitions (or you don't know what they are yet), don't worry! All work experience is valuable. The skills you gain are more important than where you went.

“ I learned a wide range of skills, such as leadership, organisation, initiative, resilience and mainly communication. ”

Year 10 student, Bartholomew School

What would you like to gain from your work experience placement?



Applying for a work experience placement

- Did you know that Oxfordshire is a world leader in the space, artificial intelligence and life sciences sectors? To learn more about new and developing sectors and businesses in the county, go to OxLEP's website and read our Labour Market Information (LMI): www.oxfordshirelep.com/skills
- Research industry sectors that interest you e.g. IT, finance, publishing, retail, social care, engineering, hair & beauty, sport & leisure.
- Search online for local employers working in your area/s of interest: Ask family and friends for suggestions and contacts too. Employers could vary from small/medium sized companies that you haven't heard of, to well-known companies or organisations.
- Research employers' websites to find out what they do. What in particular interests you about them?
- Create a CV and cover letter * outlining why you want to want to go to that particular organisation. Ensure each cover letter is personalised.

If you're a school student	If you're an older learner
<p>* Your school may advise you of the process e.g. whether you need to send a CV.</p> <p>Make sure you contact employers yourself, rather than a parent or guardian doing it for you.</p> <p>Ask your school careers adviser for support with preparing for an interview.</p> <p>For help and guidance, go to Barclays Life Skills: https://barclayslifeskills.com</p>	<p>Create a LinkedIn profile outlining your experience: www.linkedin.com and ask some of the people you have worked with to endorse your skills.</p> <p>For help and guidance, go to the National Careers Service: https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk</p>

Interviews

An interested employer might ask you for a telephone or face-to-face interview. Make a good first impression. Be professional and polite. Impress them with your research of their business and be passionate and enthusiastic about the possibility of working for them!

Practice answering some commonly asked questions, such as:

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why are you interested in doing a work experience placement with us?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What's the accomplishment you feel proudest about?
- Do you have any questions about the job or this company?



Before you start

Make sure you:

- Know where your placement is based and how you will get there. It can be helpful to practice your route in advance so you're confident about your journey and how long it will take you. Leave a bit of extra time to allow for any unexpected delays.
- Inform your employer if you have any health issues or additional needs which may affect your work experience e.g. allergies or asthma.



TOP TIPS for being prepared

- Research the organisation via their website so that you can prepare questions and decide what is important for you to experience and learn.
- Try to gain an understanding of the department you will be working in and the role you will be doing.
- Find out if there are any particular skills you will need and if any training is required to help you gain them.
- You can learn a huge amount from talking to and shadowing others. Be realistic about the type and amount of work you will be able to do - it's likely that you won't be given a lot of responsibility to do things yourself.

Questions to ask your employer in advance

- What should I wear?
- Do I need to bring anything?
- What hours will I be working?
- What time should I arrive? What time will I finish work?
- Where should I come e.g. reception or a particular entrance?
- Who should I ask for when I get there?
- Who should I contact if I get delayed or I'm unwell?
- What time will my breaks be?
- Do I need to bring a packed lunch?
- What will I be doing?
- Who should I speak to if I have any concerns?
- Is there a social media policy? Can I post about my experiences?



“ It's about coming into the workplace and understanding what's required on a day to day basis, such as timekeeping, communication, working as a group and being committed. ”

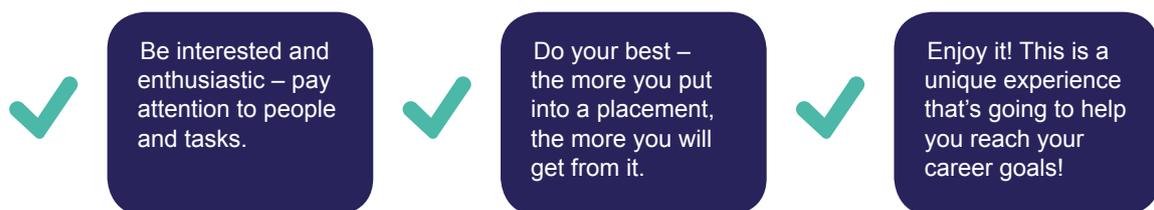
Jeff Allen, Jewson

Your first day

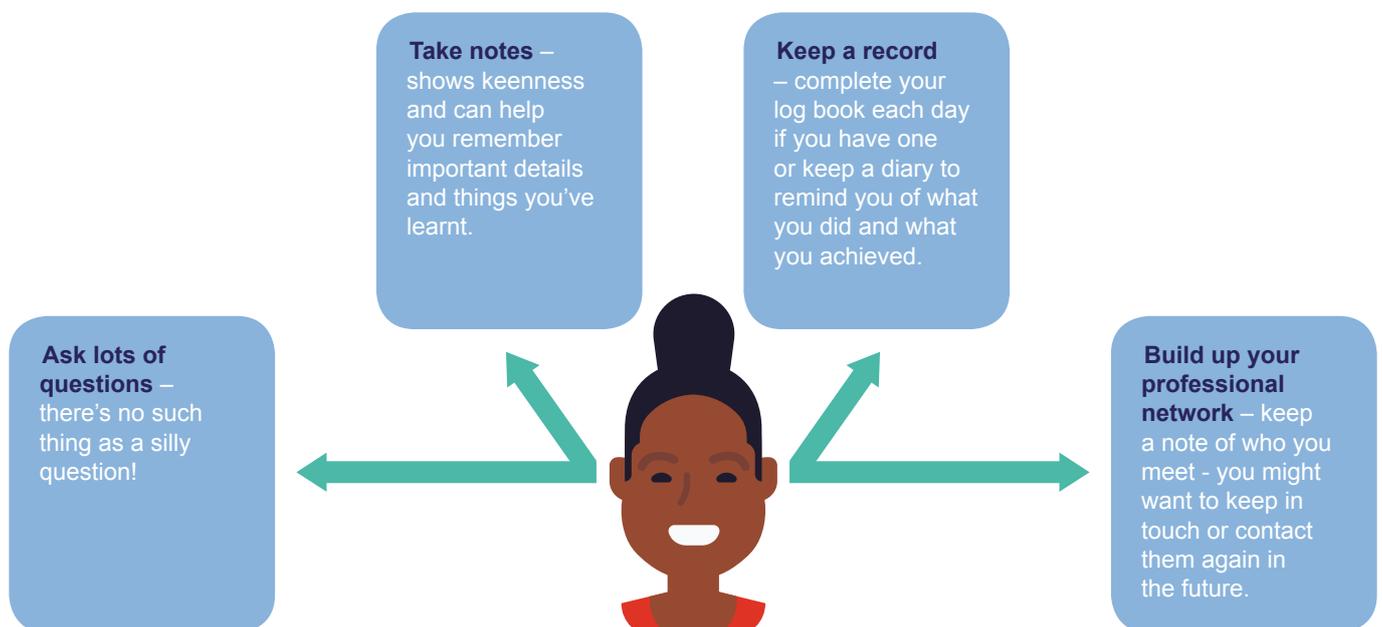
Make a good first impression!				
<p>Arrive early so you're not flustered.</p> 	<p>Dress appropriately for the workplace.</p> 	<p>Bring emergency contact details and any medical information.</p> 	<p>Smile, be polite and greet people warmly.</p> 	<p>Put your phone away and don't keep checking it!</p> 
<p>Be respectful to other people.</p> 	<p>Ask for a guided tour.</p> 	<p>Find out who your contact/supervisor/mentor is.</p> 	<p>Don't be afraid to ask questions if you want to know more or need clarification.</p> 	<p>Agree some objectives and goals with your employer.</p> 

You should have an initial meeting, or induction, where your employer will tell you about the organisation, important processes and procedures, such as health and safety and introduce you to the people you will be working with.

During your placement



Learn from the experience



Ask your colleagues

Ask the people you are working with about their jobs to help you understand the range of opportunities at the organisation. Here are some example questions to help you:



Be part of the team!

Both you and your employer will get more from the placement if you push yourself and get stuck in!

- Get involved – ask if you can try a task you think you could do, or help a colleague with their work. Don't be scared of making mistakes - they will help you learn!
- Ask colleagues for feedback regularly on how you're doing with tasks and what you could do to improve.
- Make suggestions – don't be afraid to share your comments and ideas - you bring a valuable new outlook and fresh perspective.
- Get to know your colleagues – chatting to the people around you and taking part in team activities can help you to feel more confident and comfortable.

Remember – you have a lot to offer your employer. Show them what you're capable of!

At the end of your work experience placement



After your placement

Say thank you	Record	Reflect	Make a plan
Contact your employer and the people you met if appropriate to thank them for their time and support during your placement.	Make sure you have recorded the experiences and skills you have gained. Make a list of key skills and write examples next to them e.g. using initiative, team work, meeting deadlines.	Reflect on what you learnt about each job role, organisation and work environment you encountered and how your experiences have influenced your view of them.	Decide what you want to do next, whether that's finding out more about a particular aspect of a career or exploring something completely different. Why not write an action plan?

“ The team at Pegasus finds the contributions made by our work experience students invaluable. We ensure students work as a team and contribute their insight and ideas to improve the opportunities we offer and the ways we work with the 350 young people who come through our doors each week. ”

Polly Cole, Pegasus

With thanks to



Further information

For answers to some frequently asked questions about work experience placements and useful resources, please see our website www.oxfordshirelep.com/skills

OxLEP and work experience

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) plays a central role in determining local economic priorities, undertakes activities that drive economic growth, creates jobs and increases workforce skills within the local area.

Ensuring a suitably qualified and skilled workforce is key to achieving sustainable growth. We aim to strengthen and optimise links between employers and educators, enabling young people to become work ready, building awareness of the skills needed in local businesses and how to obtain them.

Meaningful work experience is crucial. Our work experience service provides opportunities for young people to experience and gain insight into real workplaces. We work with over 30 schools and over 5000 young people; usually in Years 10-12 (aged 15-18 years).

www.oxfordshirelep.com/skills

Find us on: