

A Guide to Finding Placements / Work Experience

Work experience helps students learn about the industries they're interested in, and gives them meaty things to write about in future applications. For some sectors - education, for example - admissions and recruiting staff will 100% expect to see relevant work experience when students apply. This short guide will help students find and be successful on work experience.

Finding placements

Thinking of ideas for work experience can be a challenge, and if students don't live in an urban area, it can feel like there are very limited options. Rather than trying to find the 'perfect' opportunity, look for a placement that ticks as many boxes as possible.

Instead of focusing on one specific job role, consider the wider career industry. For example, it may not be possible to shadow an anaesthetist, but students could explore other roles in the healthcare industry like working in a dental practice, nursing home, or GP clinic. These will all give relevant experience that they can still learn from and reflect on in their applications. Using the Careers Library on Unifrog can help you with finding different careers within a particular industry.

Students could also think about the transferable skills that are relevant across industries to help them find a placement. For example, it's unlikely that students will be able to find work experience as an air steward, but they could reach out to customer services departments as the staff will use very similar skills in their day to day jobs. Or they can think about experiences that are relevant to the school subject that is most related to the job or industry they'd like to go into.

For example:

- History and Classics: museums, archive offices, National Trust sites, and archaeological digs
- Art and Design: galleries, workshops, branding departments, and architectural firms
- Drama and Performing Arts: talent agencies, local theatres, local events spaces, and drama departments in schools
- English and Modern Languages: foreign language classes, translating companies, local newspapers and radio stations, broadcasting companies, libraries, publishing houses, advertising agencies, blogs, and local councils
- Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, and Engineering: water works, research and development departments at a local factory, energy/oil/gas companies, local pharmacies, local airports or aerodromes, local astronomy observation centres, automobile and aviation manufacturers, and science museums
- Medical Sciences and Human Biology: pharmaceutical companies, dental practices, nursing homes, local hospitals, GP or walk in clinics, opticians, chiropractors, and podiatrists
- Computer Sciences: app development companies, IT security companies, programming companies, tech start-ups, and school IT departments
- Maths: finance departments, accounting firms, insurance firms, tax firms, HR departments, and banks
- All subjects: primary schools, local blogs and magazines, local societies or study groups, supermarkets, department stores, libraries, and local councils



Finding contacts and how to message them

When organising work experience, it is important that students are realistic. Unfortunately, they are unlikely to be allowed access into the head office of a national organisation with no prior experience. Look for local businesses or people with whom they already have a connection - like the parent/carer of a fellow student, a family member, a friend, etc.

If they don't have any contacts, or aren't sure where to start, students can speak to Ms Reynolds or another member of staff at school; they may be able to suggest organisations where students from Park Academy have previously worked and made such a good impression that they're keen to have another student.

Once students have decided where they want to work and have a contact, students actually need to contact them. They shouldn't rely on their parent/carer or the school to contact them for their behalf! Students need to show that they can be confident and professional, even if they are nervous!

Students should write either a formal email or letter - even if they know the person they are contacting - and have someone else read it before it is sent to check it for errors. Students should include the following information:

- The days or dates of the work experience – *It is important that plenty of notice is given; students can't ask for their experience to start tomorrow!*
- Why they would like to complete their work experience at this organisation- *what do they want to learn? What do they want to experience? Some research would help here - maybe they have great customer reviews or are among the top ranked businesses locally? Maybe they have created a new way of doing something and you want to learn how managed this?*
- What the student can offer them – *Impress the organisation with their skills and how their time with them will benefit them, even if that is admin support or helping out busy employees with their workload*

Students should use their Park Academy email address if they have chosen to write an email over a letter.

Letters and emails need to be followed up if students haven't heard anything after a fortnight. Sometimes several phone calls are needed, but persistence does pay off! When chasing a response, it is important that students remain polite at all times.

If one place doesn't work out, that's not a problem. There are lots more businesses and organisations to contact!