



Melbourn Village College



Securing your work experience placement

Work experience is a great opportunity to try out different jobs and different types of workplaces to get an idea of what you might like to do when you finish education. Most employers are eager to help young people get a foot on the ladder, but some are unsure of what's involved.

We have information for employers which will help them plan for a placement and we try to keep the bureaucracy to a minimum.

Where to start?

Start by thinking about what your interests are and what you think you might be good at. For example, if you love sport, you might want to see what it's like to work in a gym or with a sports physiotherapist. If you know you want to be helping people, you might want to try out a caring profession like healthcare or working with the elderly.

It's a good idea to brainstorm lots of ideas first. You can do this with friends or family. Get everything down on paper to start.

Check out who does what you're interested in

If you're not sure how your interests match up with different jobs, some of the websites below can be really helpful (see links at the end). They've got lots of profiles on different jobs. These will help you define what it is you're keen to explore.

Who's around?

Once you know you're interested in a particular type of work, you need to see who does this in your area. You can search on the internet to find local opportunities. It's always worth checking to see if they have a website so you can learn more about the company before approaching them. The website might provide details of who to contact about work experience or provide the name of the HR Manager if they have one. That's a good person to target.

Also, talk to your classmates, family and friends and ask around. That's called networking and it's a really good way of finding out what's out there. Someone may be able to introduce you to someone who can provide a placement.

Don't assume that the big companies in Cambridge won't have you. Many are willing to offer work placements if you send a polite, well-written letter.

Next steps:

Once you have identified a few ideas, done your research and have a contact, draft a letter, or email that explains who you are, what you're interested in and why you're asking for work experience.

Tell them the dates you're available. Hopefully they will respond, but if you don't hear anything after two weeks, you can follow up with a phone call to check that your letter was received and see if they are able to offer you a placement.

If they do, complete the work experience placement form by adding your name, asking the employer to complete their part and sign, get your parents to sign the form showing that they are aware and agree with your placement, sign the form yourself and then return it to Mrs Brown in the Math's office. The school can start the process of confirming and checking the placement. They may want to interview you, so let the school know about that, too.

Don't be discouraged if they say no. Just keep trying new possibilities and keep the school posted on your progress.

Tips:

Lots of employers tell us they really dislike it when parents ring up and try to arrange placements for their children. While sometimes it's difficult for students to use the phone during the working day, employers would much prefer to hear from students themselves.

If you are curious about a business but not sure you feel comfortable approaching them, why not go and have a look. You can always ask in person. At this point, if you wish, you can hand them a letter about yourself and why you are interested in working with them. If they cannot answer, ask for the name of the person that you should write to. Be sure to look smart if you're going to approach them directly.

Make sure you proofread your letter - or get someone else to. Showing that you're conscientious about spelling and punctuation is a good indication that you'll be conscientious when you're on a placement.

Timing:

You need to get agreement, complete the work experience placement form, and return your form to Mrs. Brown at school.

Resources:

Check on the school website under the Careers section, for the live links.

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/jobfamily/Pages/default.aspx>

From the Job Families page, you either type a job name into the box or search through the 'families'. This website should give lots of information and links to other websites.

<https://icould.com/> - good for thinking about future jobs with jobs linked to school subjects.

<https://www.firstcareers.co.uk/> - offers further careers and details on "how to become a...".

<https://www.springpod.com/> - offers further job/career advice and opportunities for virtual work experience programmes, some of which are run by top employers such as Nestle, NHS, banking and many other industries.