

Eight Tips to Pursuing an Apprenticeship

1. Know what apprenticeship is and do your homework
 - Know what you are getting into and why.
 - If you are not already clear about it, get good, accurate information about apprenticeship – What is it? What is the range of options? What are the working conditions, wages, pre-requisite skills/experience, etc? Which trades are in greatest demand? How many entry level opportunities are there in these trades?
 - Look for trades in industries with large amounts of jobs, industries that are aging and will involve more retirements and vacancies, and smaller industries with fast growth rates.
 - Look for good websites.
 - Obtain information from industry and trades associations, unions, government program managers, post-secondary institutions.
2. Network and get advice
 - Use your relationships with parents, other relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc. to find out about the trades and apprenticeship, about job leads, etc.
 - Obtain advice on which trade to pursue, on finding an apprenticeship, etc.
 - Post-secondary institutions have trades departments and program advising centres that can help you find the right information and training options.
3. Be prepared before you approach employers
 - Develop an effective resume that clearly puts forward your strengths as they relate to the trade you are pursuing. There are many resources for help with resumes such as the internet, books and local workshops.
 - Emphasize real world experience, even if it is not in the trade you are pursuing.
 - Ensure you have thought through what you want to say and how you want to appear when you get a chance to talk to an employer.
4. Use the personal touch
 - As much as possible, go to the job site and approach the employer in person – especially in construction and industrial job sites.
 - Have a good resume in hand, be appropriately dressed for work, and exemplify a positive attitude and passion for the trade.
5. Persevere and follow through
 - As with any job search, don't give up easily. Stick with it.
 - Learn from feedback and information you obtain from approaching employers.
 - This perseverance shows through to the employer and will project a positive image in subsequent approaches.
6. Exemplify the basics: Attitude and basic skills
 - The #1 priority employers look for in entry level jobs is a good attitude. Also, other basic employability skills (e.g. interpersonal skills, computer skills, literacy and mathematics, etc.) and safety and other special credentials make a difference.
7. Upgrade your knowledge and skills if necessary
 - The trades are not for “dummies”. You need up to date math, communications and other academic knowledge.
 - High schools and post-secondary institutions have short, flexible (e.g. evening) academic upgrading courses you can complete before or during the start of your apprenticeship.
 - Consider short term training courses to obtain safety, health, customer services and other credentials.
 - If you do not directly enter an apprenticeship or other employment, you can improve your chances with a 4-10 month pre-employment entry level vocational program in an area related to the trade you are pursuing.
 - If you are still in high school, check out the Secondary School Apprenticeship Program.
 - There are also other high school programs through which you can obtain trades experience.
8. Be flexible and customize your approach
 - You won't necessarily find your ideal job. Be flexible in what you consider.
 - Be willing to start at the bottom of a career ladder to obtain practical experience.
 - Many employers hire new entry workers for labouring jobs to start and use this as a screening period, after which they offer an apprenticeship to those with the best attitudes and basics.
 - Customize your approach to the industry, trade, employer, site, etc.