

APPRENTICE RECRUITMENT

Physical Education & Active Kids have been working with apprentices for over a decade and we understand and recognise that getting the right person for your apprenticeship can be quite challenging.

We have produced this quick guide for employers to assist them in ensuring that their recruitment is effective. Often employers look solely for the applicant who best fits their team or who may be considered right for the role but it is equally essential to measure whether the applicant is 'right' for the programme of study.

We would suggest creating a list of essential and desirable qualities that incorporate whether each applicant is suitable for the programme of study that you have selected. For example, a GCSE is a level 2 qualification, once you decide to recruit an apprentice for a L3/L4 course it is more likely that they will succeed if they are suitably qualified at L2. Many sixth forms/colleges require minimum grades at GCSE to allow a learner to take an A-Level course. You need to think about what tasks that apprentice will need to undertake within that role and what are the basic level of skills you require that person to have in order that they can be trained into that role. For example would a college allow a learner onto an accountancy course who had failed their maths GCSE?

PEAK will happily arrange a discussion with you to assist you in developing a list of essential and desirable criteria for your recruitment. We have provided an example below:

Essential Criteria	Desirable Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application is well written with no/few spelling/grammatical mistakes.• Application is detailed.• Applicant can travel to work location(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English and Maths at Grade 4 (or C) or higher.• Applicant has some experience in the field in which they are applying (e.g. voluntary grassroots coaching experience)• Driving license and own car.

You may also be planning to employ the apprentice on the basic rate of pay for an apprentice (for the first 12 months of their apprenticeship). Whereas this may have budgetary implications, it is also essential to consider the rate of pay that you will be offering as part of your recruitment process. For example:

- An employer wishes to recruit an apprentice at the basic rate of pay on a 30 hour per week contract (currently worth £192pw to the employee).
- One applicant is a person who is currently on a job earning £24k per annum.
- A second applicant is a parent who is on universal credit.

In this example it is worth considering which of the two applicants is more likely to be satisfied earning minimum wage for a year. A question relating to the applicant's finances is an essential part of the recruitment. It does not help your organisation if the apprentice you hire decides to leave after 4 months as

they cannot afford their lifestyle on the wage that has been offered. At interview we would recommend asking about the applicant's lifestyle. Questions relating to living costs are really important, e.g.

- Do you live at home with parents/partner or are you living independently?
- What regular monthly outgoings do you currently have, e.g. bills/loans etc.

Do not be afraid to draw up a list that would preclude applicants from progressing to first stage interview. Set your standards early, especially if your apprenticeship post is sought after and attracts a high number of applicants. Some modern recruitment sites make applying for a job too simple. Applicants compose a covering letter and CV and at the click of a button can send it as an application to a large number of employers. Look for the applicants who have made the effort to write their application specifically for your post.

For example, over the years we have encountered:

- An applicant who applied for a TA role in a school with a covering letter stating how they aspired to being a vet and how they loved working with animals.
- A CV that comprised of 27 words.
- Covering letters that incorporated 'text-speak' and utilised acronym language (e.g. BTW, ANT)
- A large number of applications which, under the previous qualifications section, simply state "GCSEs" without listing subjects taken or grades.

For this reason we recommend drawing up a list of criteria that may preclude an applicant from progressing. If you are only offering minimum apprenticeship wage for the first year you may wish to incorporate finance into this preclusion list, we have provided an example below:

Criteria which should/could preclude appointment:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicant is currently in a role which pays a full wage.• Applicant has a work history which demonstrates that they are not resilient (lots of short term roles).• Gaps in education/work.• Non-right to work in UK.

It is essential that employers recognise that they are not solely looking for somebody who they feel either would fit into their team or who may be right for role but ALSO look for the criteria that means that the successful candidate is also suited to learning and undertaking your chosen apprenticeship.

Example Interview Questions:

1. Why did you apply for this apprenticeship?

We need to understand your motivations for the profession or to learn how much you know about the industry. You can explain how the apprenticeship can help you work toward your career goals and what you've done to prepare yourself for the work. Showing your preparation can help the employer learn more about how you strategize toward long-term goals.

Example: "This apprenticeship can help me gain the experience I need to move forward in the industry. The experience I've gained so far through courses and my previous positions has prepared me for the basics in the field. I'd also like to work for your company long-term, and I read on your website that you often offer full-time jobs for people who complete apprenticeships with you."

2. What skills can you contribute to this apprenticeship?

Potential employers may ask about your relevant skills to learn about your background in the industry. This question gives you the opportunity to discuss your work history and any experiences that may help showcase valuable skills. Discussing your skills in your answer can help show your potential employer that you're valuable to the company.

Example: "Before applying for this apprenticeship, I worked part time for a newspaper at my local community college. During that time, I learned how to interview people to gather information for articles. This experience helped me gain excellent communication and customer service skills, which I believe will be great additions to this apprenticeship."

3. How would you rate your time-management skills?

Potential employers may want to understand your time-management skills to see how you may handle apprenticeship responsibilities. Because apprenticeships often involve working and learning simultaneously, apprentices may need to manage both a full-time job and courses related to their work. You can use this question to share examples from your past positions where you exhibited good time-management skills.

Example: "In my previous position working on the college newspaper, I had to manage both my classes and article responsibilities. During my last year of college, this became very demanding, and I had to use time-management skills to fulfill both responsibilities. Sometimes, I had to cancel plans during the weekend to work ahead on a project because I knew article responsibilities would be time-consuming that week."

4. What are your biggest strengths and weaknesses?

Recruiters may ask this question to help them understand areas where you can improve. This question can also help recruiters understand what skills you consider strengths. Relating your existing skills with the apprenticeship you're applying for can help a recruiter see how you can be useful in the position. When answering, explain both your strengths and weaknesses and describe the areas you can improve through the apprenticeship.

Example: *"I think one of my weaknesses is not asking for help when I need it. I like to try to solve problems on my own, but I know there are times when a coworker or supervisor could offer a new or faster process. I think this apprenticeship can help me learn how to rely on and learn from others. As for my strengths, I think I'm very good at talking to customers. My time working for the newspaper and interviewing a variety of people has helped me communicate with others efficiently."*

5. What are your future goals?

Employers may ask this question because they want to learn more about how you plan to use the opportunities the apprenticeship could give you. Explaining your plans for the future can show them your ability to plan and strategize toward goals.

Example: *"Once I gain my apprenticeship, I plan on working in this industry full time. While I enjoyed my previous positions in other industries, I plan on using my skills to progress in this industry instead of returning to the others. After working in this industry for a few years and gaining sufficient skills, I'd also like to accept apprentices and help others reach their career goals."*

6. Describe a situation where you've overcome a challenge in your work.

Because apprentices can encounter a variety of obstacles throughout their tenure, overcoming challenges can be a valuable skill. Describing a challenge you've overcome in your work can show your recruiter that you're both resourceful and intuitive when encountering problems. You can also use this question to describe your attitude at work, which can help your recruiter learn more about your work ethic.

Example: *"During my job working as a [staff writer](#) for my college newspaper, I often had to work late to meet deadlines. I encountered a situation where I had to complete an article and a large project assignment on the same day. By scheduling work times and breaks throughout my day, I completed both assignments without compromising either's quality."*

7. Tell us about your hobbies.

A recruiter may want to learn about your hobbies to better understand you on a personal level. Hobbies can help you form diverse skills, making them important for applications and interviews. Consider taking this opportunity to showcase any hobbies you have that relate to the apprenticeship.

Example: *"My dad used to work on cars as a hobby, and I'd often help him during the weekends. It became a way for us to bond together, and it eventually became a personal hobby for me on weekends. I've now worked on cars and motorcycles of various ages. I try to seek models I've never seen before, and if I can find a car I've never heard of, it makes working on it much more fun for me. This hobby ultimately led me to pursue automotive engineering as a career."*

8. What do you know about the daily activities of this apprenticeship?

Recruiters may want to know your previous experience with the industry, including your knowledge of daily duties and expectations. Consider using this opportunity to showcase your knowledge about the apprenticeship you're applying for and how well you understand your expectations. You can also describe the opportunities you've taken to learn more about the industry, such as courses or internships.

Example: *"In some of my previous positions, I worked in an automotive shop. I learned about the responsibilities of the apprentices who also worked there. I learned the basics of some of the terminology they used, as well as how often orders came in and what a busy day was like. Once I started college, I took as many automotive-focused courses as possible. I also tried to work on any engineering projects on automotive topics."*

9. How would you describe your ability to work with a team?

Employers may want to learn about your teamwork skills to understand how well you'd work with their current team. Because it's the employer's responsibility to maintain order within a department, they may look for employees who work well with their team. In your answer, you can discuss your past experiences working in a team environment, including how you worked with others to solve a problem.

Example: *"In my last few positions, I worked with both coworkers and customers throughout my day. While I prefer to work alone rather than with a group of people, team settings can be helpful when finding solutions to problems. I've been in situations before where working with a team helped me solve a problem I would've had difficulty solving on my own."*