

JOBS OF THE FUTURE

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INSIDE APPRENTICESHIPS

How to gain
real-world
experience
(AND GET PAID!)

"I'M GETTING PAID TO LEARN!"

You don't have to wait until you're a grown-up to start exploring careers—or earning money. BY GAIL O'CONNOR

Imagine you're 16 and deciding what courses you want to take in school. You have a choice: another class, or a job in a real workplace with perks like your own computer, cool coworkers, and a paycheck. Sound like a dream? It's real!

Apprenticeships are programs that combine job training with legit work experience. Youth apprenticeships in particular give teens a head start on a future career while still in high school. An apprenticeship is a way to learn—and earn at the same time—by getting job training, income, an industry-recognized credential (which shows employers you've mastered some serious skills), and even free college credits in some cases. "It's a great combination of real-world and traditional learning, and it gives students experience without locking them into any one path," says John Keckhaver, youth apprenticeship

coordinator in the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

Apprenticeships have been around a long time for skilled trade jobs like electrician, carpenter, and plumber. Now they're also pathways to careers in information technology (IT), cybersecurity, financial services, health care, engineering, and others. Youth apprenticeships build a foundation for workplace success and options after high school, such as college, full-time work, or a combination of both.

Of course, you may not know what you want to do when you grow up. (Totally fine—you're only in middle school!) What can you do now? Ask adults questions about their work, or do a "job shadow" spending a workday with someone. "Just enjoy learning and exploring, and notice what is interesting to you," says Keckhaver. Start by meeting the teen apprentices in this magazine!

"I FEEL AHEAD OF THE GAME"

Valerie Gallegos | age 16 | junior

Financial services apprentice

HOW DID YOU BECOME AN APPRENTICE?

I went to a career fair because I wanted a summer job. I met with Geotech, a company that makes environmental equipment. They partner with CareerWise Colorado, an apprentice program. They had me come in to learn more, and I started apprenticing in financial services.

IS IT DIFFERENT FROM AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is usually for a short period. My supervisors wanted me to understand that the apprenticeship program would be a longer-term



commitment and would help me gain skills and experience I'd keep building on while getting paid. I'm in a three-year program and currently in accounts payable, where I double-check payments and flag any mistakes. Next I'll train to work directly with vendors.

ARE YOU ABLE TO BALANCE SCHOOL AND YOUR APPRENTICESHIP?

Yes, because my apprenticeship hours are flexible. I'm a very involved student: I'm in student council, an honor student, and the captain for the varsity girls basketball team. From being around other adults, I've learned to use my phone calendar and reminders to keep on top of everything.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

After graduation I'd like to go to a four-year college and take accounting classes to expand on what I've learned in my apprenticeship. I'm so glad to have this experience on my résumé, get paid to do something I enjoy, and already be on a career path!

“I’M WIRING TRANSFORMERS AND I LOVE IT”

Morgan Zinn | age 18 | senior

Mechatronics apprentice

WHAT DREW YOU TO AN APPRENTICESHIP?

My school counselor knew I wasn’t a student who liked being in school for eight hours a day and suggested a youth apprenticeship program. I started with a youth apprenticeship in industrial maintenance at Kaysun, an injection molding company that makes complex plastic parts. I’ve moved up to registered apprentice there in mechatronics (a branch of engineering that focuses on electrical and mechanical systems).

WHAT’S SOMETHING YOU’RE PROUD OF?

I had just wired a transformer. I went to plug it in and found I had really weird, unsteady voltages. I thought my wiring was wrong, but the more I investigated, I found it was a faulty transformer. It was the first major troubleshooting I did by myself.



WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT BEING AN APPRENTICE?

I’ve found out, very young, what I want to do with my life. I never dread getting up for work, even at 4:30 a.m. I’m having experiences that I can’t learn in the classroom. I love my job because I’m never doing the same thing two days in a row.

“I GET TO DESIGN GAS LINES”

Airianna Morquecho | age 18 | senior

Design apprentice

WHAT DO YOU DO AS AN APPRENTICE?

I work at We Energies, a big electrical and natural gas company. I work with five other apprentices and we get a lot of training, starting with little projects then moving to bigger ones, like designing new gas lines to people’s homes. I also get to go on site visits. One really fun one was helping to update electrical lines in a neighborhood known as Candy Cane Lane, to make sure there was enough power for everyone’s holiday lights!

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU LEARNED?

I’ve learned things that I can use forever, like how to send a good email, how to introduce myself, public speaking, professionalism, and being on time to work. Those lessons have



carried over to my life at home too—I started to take my chores more seriously, which my mom is really happy about.

DID YOU HAVE ANY FEARS GOING INTO YOUR APPRENTICESHIP?

I worried about how it might affect my school life. But it turns out my grades have gotten higher! I’m more on time at school and with my deadlines because of how responsible I need to be for my job.

ANY PERKS?

Yes! I get to keep a hard hat, safety vest, safety glasses, steel-toed boots, and a bag.

WHAT’S NEXT FOR YOU?

I plan on attending a technical college while staying in the apprentice program, which is going to pay some of my tuition. Then I might transfer to a university. I’m the only girl apprentice here. I hope to convince more to check it out!

THE HOTTEST FIELDS RIGHT NOW

Today apprenticeships lead to many kinds of careers. Here are some of the fastest-growing fields that offer youth apprenticeships—maybe right near you!



Information Technology and Cybersecurity



Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)



Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace



Finance and Business



Health Sciences



A/V Technology, Graphic Design, and Telecommunications



Energy



Architecture and Construction



Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources



Hospitality, Lodging, and Tourism



Transportation

TURN YOUR INTERESTS INTO A CAREER!

What occupations might be a match for you? Check the box beside every statement that describes you. They connect to careers that could be right for you, so look out for pathways (like related volunteer work or youth apprenticeships) to those professions!

Developing computer software sounds fun to me!

Computer programmer, web developer, IT technician



Making a new medicine to cure a disease would be amazing.

Pharmaceutical scientist, biologist, chemist, toxicologist



My dream is to write a book or play someday.

Novelist, TV writer, playwright, literary agent



I enjoy helping people work through their personal issues and challenges.

Psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, family therapist



I love to build stuff, like birdhouses and boxes.

Carpenter, contractor, advanced manufacturing engineer



Creating special effects for movies or video games seems super cool.

CGI artist, animator, 3D modeler



I'd like to be able to diagnose patients' illnesses and help them get better.

Nurse practitioner, doctor, nurse, physician assistant



I like being the boss.

Entrepreneur, manager, supervisor



I love being around younger kids and teaching them new things.

Teacher, school counselor, health educator, childcare worker



I have a killer playlist—and I love music enough to make it a whole career.

Singer, composer, music teacher, music therapist, DJ

