

GET AHEAD

A GUIDE FOR NEWLY RECRUITED APPRENTICES



PART OF OUR
GETAHEAD
SERIES

 Refreshed
for 2024



WELCOME

So you're becoming an apprentice...

Congratulations, future trailblazer! Whether you're taking your first strides into the workplace or adding another layer to your skill set, you're now part of a supportive community that's as excited about your growth as you are.

Here at the Association of Apprentices (AoA), we're your partners in progress. We want to empower you with the tools, knowledge, and support you need from the day you accept your apprenticeship place, through to completion and beyond.

So, take a moment to appreciate how far you've come, and get ready for the incredible journey ahead.

Based on feedback from apprentices and employers, we know getting off to a great start requires expert guidance. AoA has curated this handy guide as part of its 'Get Ahead' series for apprentices and their line-managers. AoA members can access these resources on our platform.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you luck in your apprenticeship, and I hope to see you at one of our many networking events.

> **Emily Rock, CEO** **Association of Apprentices**



**YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A MEMBER OF
THE ASSOCIATION TO USE THIS GUIDE**

But why miss out?

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Get Ahead Guide

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apprentice ADVICE

getting ready to START



Whether you're eagerly anticipating your first day or you've already begun your journey, we've got your back! On this page, you'll find a treasure trove of insights from your fellow apprentices. These aren't just quotes; they're roadmaps, lifelines, and lightbulb moments shared by those who've walked in your shoes.

'Have a positive attitude, as enthusiasm is priceless!'

'Be determined. It will sometimes be hard and you will *'Try not to leave things until have to make sacrifices but it will be worth the prize at the end.'* the last minute.'

'Ask questions, no question or comment is a silly one. The chances are people are either thinking the same as you and want to know the answers, even if you are just clarifying the information. Remember you are there to learn!'

'Build a network of people you can ask for support.' Use the valuable resources on AoA Learn for developing your soft skills.'

'Participate; do the courses, answer the quizzes, join the seminars, attend in-person events.'

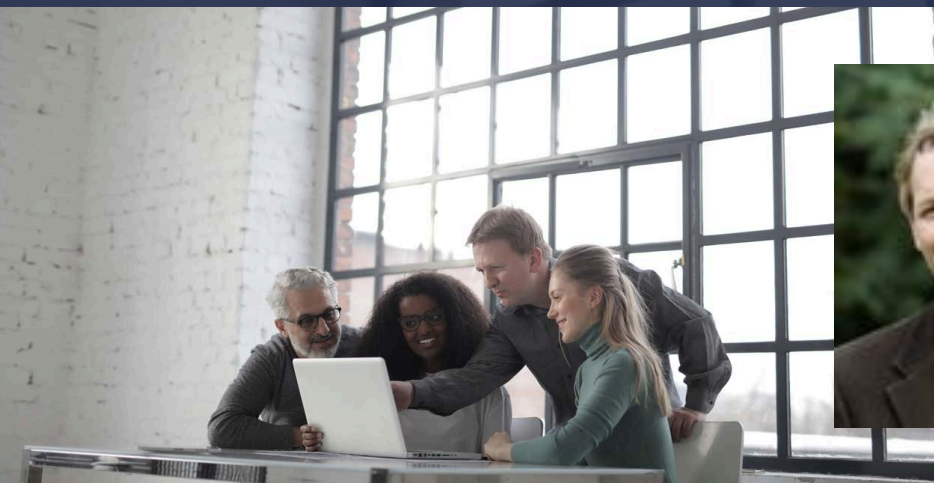
'Keep a reflective diary and store lots of examples of things you have done in your Apprenticeship so you can easily refer to them later. Don't try to look back over 6 months of work to pull examples out.'

'Take and make opportunities. Always say yes if you can but remember to prioritise opportunities, you can't do it all!'

'Remember learning is life long and apprenticeships don't automatically mean you will be in that career for life. Apprenticeships give you broad level of knowledge with a lot of transferrable skills.'

'Break tasks down into smaller chunks.'

prepare for SUCCESS



BY SIMON GRAHAM,
FORMER AOA APPRENTICE
COUNCIL MEMBER AND
L7 EXECUTIVE MBA
APPRENTICE WITH
DE COURCY ALEXANDER

One of the main concerns around starting a new job is the unknown. Whether you are coming straight out of education, or a longstanding role within another organisation, it can be nerve-wracking. Hopefully, knowing a little more about what to expect will help to put you at ease. As you prepare to start your apprenticeship there are a couple of things that will help you feel more organised and confident going into your new role:

- **Preparation is key**

In the weeks leading up to your new role make sure you prepare by carrying out research. As your start date approaches, prepare any equipment you may need to take on the first day, make sure there isn't anything extra that you need to buy, and if there is, do it a few days before to avoid stress. You can never be too prepared, so even if you think you might not need something, take it just in case. Take a look at the company's website or social media to understand the work culture. And remember to have your LinkedIn and AoA Connect accounts set up for some early networking.

- **Research, research, and more research**

Make sure you have researched your new company before you begin. Look up simple facts such as who the directors are, how long the company has been running, their mission statement etc. This will help with your background knowledge of the company and can also be used as a conversation starter. It may be helpful to research and contact other apprentices who currently work at the company. This will get you ahead of the game, as you can ask them what happened when they started and use this advice to help you feel more prepared.

THE DAY BEFORE YOU START

FIVE THINGS TO DO

WELCOME TO YOUR ASSOCIATION

PREPARE

Pack your bag or arrange your work-from-home (WFH) space In the morning you want to do as little as possible and you don't want to think you've forgotten anything. Plan your journey, arrange stationery, chargers, water bottle, and any equipment you have been asked to bring or use.

ADORN

Adorn Get your outfit ready and laid out. Remember, your first impression is part of your personal branding. You don't need to try too hard, but keep it neat and tidy!

REMEMBER

Remember Apprenticeships can be competitive but you have been chosen due to your skillset. In the rush to prepare for your first day, you may forget to remember what you have achieved so far; be proud of yourself.

QUESTION

Write down any questions you have When you start your day you may forget the initial questions you have, so make a note when they come to mind and you can ask a colleague.

REST

Have a good night's sleep Going to bed early will make you feel refreshed and ready to start your day as the best version of yourself.

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

YOUR FIRST DAY



Arriving at your workplace (or your WFH space!)

If you have arrived at your workplace, it's more than likely that someone will be waiting to collect you from the entrance to show you around and sort out any access passes required. This is a great opportunity to get to know a staff-member and ask any practical questions. If you are WFH ensure your laptop/teams/zoom is set up ready for your first virtual meeting.



Meeting your colleagues

Meeting colleagues is important as they are the people you will be interacting with every working day. So don't be shy! Making connections and maintaining a good working relationship with colleagues is a foundation of a healthy workplace environment. It is likely that you will meet your line manager, and if you are starting with a cohort, some of your apprentice peers. You might even meet them online via AoA Connect beforehand!



Your first meetings

Your first day can be an information overload. If you are in an organisation with lots of new apprentices, you will most likely go through this stage together (networking opportunity!). If there are only a few of you, you may do this in smaller groups or even 1-2-1. You might run through company values, what they do, your department focus and relevant information. This can be overwhelming, try to take as much in as you can and find the right opportunity to ask any questions that come to mind.



Your first tasks

It is more than likely that your first tasks will include creating logins (make sure you store these somewhere safe) and familiarising yourself with any recurring meetings and tasks. This part of the day is a great opportunity to get used to the company's tools and platforms. This will allow you to be all set and ready for your first full day.

Your first day at a new job is truly a remarkable achievement! Take pride in your accomplishment; you've earned this position for good reason.

Remember that day one is all about **acclimatising to your new environment**. Embrace the opportunity to absorb the atmosphere and familiarise yourself with your surroundings.

top tips for

REMOTE WORKING

Understand your schedule

01

Check with your line manager to know which days you need to be in the office and which days you are working from home.

Be kind to yourself

02

Remember that adapting to remote work takes time. Be patient with yourself as you navigate this experience, even if this is not your first time.

Create a Dedicated Workspace at Home

03

If you can, set aside a specific area for work to maintain a professional environment, making sure equipment (like laptop/screen) is set up correctly to avoid strain on your body.

Otherwise, try to put equipment away at the end of your work day to create a boundary between your work/personal time.

Master remote technology

04

Familiarise yourself with your company's communication and collaboration tools (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom) before your first day and ensure your backdrop is neat and tidy.

Prioritise self-care and work-life balance

05

Get ready at the same time as you would if you were commuting to get into a "work" mindset. Make sure to take regular breaks and establish clear distinctions between work and personal time. And, log off at the end of your workday to avoid burnout and maintain your wellbeing in a remote environment.

navigating first-day NERVES

Here are 6 practical tips to help you navigate your first day with confidence.

BY IQRA METLO, FINANCE
APPRENTICE AT bp



The first day at any new job can bring feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and anticipation. However, with the right mindset and strategies, you can effectively manage those first-day nerves and set the tone for a successful apprenticeship.



1. Positive Self-Talk

Your mindset plays a significant role in managing nerves. Replace the negative thoughts with positive ones by reminding yourself of your capabilities, the skills you bring to the table, and the opportunity to learn and grow in your new role. I like to do this during my morning commute, as it has done wonders with shifting my mindset from self-doubt to excitement about the day ahead.



2. Focus on Your Strengths

Identify your strengths and past accomplishments and think about how they can contribute to your success in your new role. Remind yourself that you were selected for this apprenticeship for a reason to boost your confidence.



3. Be Open and Approachable

Approachability goes a long way in making connections with your new colleagues. Introduce yourself and engage in small talk. Building good rapport early on can help you feel more comfortable in your new workplace. I encourage you to reach out to people within your organisation for coffee catch-ups. This is a great way to quickly feel part of the team and establish positive connections.



4. Active Listening

During meetings, training sessions or introductions, practice active listening. I made a conscious effort to maintain eye contact with the presenter, take notes and ask follow-up questions. This approach helps you absorb information but also demonstrates your commitment to learning and understanding your role.



5. Set Realistic Expectations

Understand that you won't master everything on the first day. Set achievable goals for what you'd like to accomplish during your apprenticeship and break them down into smaller steps. Celebrating each milestone, no matter how small, has kept me motivated and focused throughout my apprenticeship.



6. Deep Breathing and Relaxation Techniques

When I felt my nerves creeping in, I excused myself to the restroom for a moment to practise deep breathing. This practice has helped me countless times when I start to feel overwhelmed and need to clear my head.

Good luck and I wish you all the best in your apprenticeship journeys! If you have any questions or need some more advice, feel free to reach out to me on Instagram at [@iqragoescorporate](https://www.instagram.com/iqragoescorporate)



the importance of understanding **YOURSELF**

BY [JESSICA DUFF](#), DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS
DEGREE APPRENTICE AT NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY

To make the most of this experience, self-awareness is crucial to understand your strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. This can be your secret weapon for optimising your apprenticeship journey. Here's why understanding yourself is essential:

- **Efficient Learning** - Knowing how you learn best allows you to quickly assimilate new information. Time is of the essence in any apprenticeship programme, and your learning style can help you make the most of it.
- **Enhanced Communication** - Knowing your strengths and weaknesses helps you communicate more effectively with your mentors and peers.
- **Career Planning** - An understanding of your strengths can inform your career trajectory. These insights guide you toward roles that maximise your natural talents.
- **Personal Growth** - Self-awareness fosters emotional intelligence, which helps you professionally and enriches your personal life.

Identify your strengths using different techniques such as:

- **Self-Assessment Tools** - Personality tests like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or StrengthsFinder can offer valuable insights.
- **Peer Reviews** - Don't hesitate to ask instructors, supervisors, or even fellow apprentices for feedback.
- **Analysing Past Experiences** - Think about instances where you excelled or faced challenges. What skills or qualities helped you succeed or hindered your progress?
- **Consulting Experts** - Career counsellors or mentors can help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, offering an objective analysis.

Once you have identified these strengths, you can tailor your journey accordingly by:

- **Customising Your Study Method** - If you're a visual learner, create visual aids to help you understand complex subjects. Auditory learners might benefit from podcasts or discussions.
- **Communicating** - Let your supervisors and instructors know your preferred learning style. They may accommodate you in ways you hadn't considered.
- **Being Versatile** - It's great to know your preferred learning style and be open to adapting. The workplace will often require you to learn in a variety of ways.

Knowing yourself - your strengths and learning style - gives you the tools to navigate this path successfully. It's an investment that will pay dividends throughout your career.

Jessica is an Event Ambassador for AoA and co-hosted an Apprentice Meet Up in Newcastle. To find out more about AoA's free networking and development events, click here: [AoA Events](#)

Understand your strengths with a quiz on AoA Learn:
[STRENGTHS - SELF ASSESSMENT](#)

navigating the path: prioritising your MENTAL HEALTH

Amidst the rush to learn new skills and make a mark in the professional world, it's essential not to overlook the importance of maintaining your mental health and overall well-being. Here, we explore valuable steps that can be taken to safeguard your mental health during your apprenticeship, from a young professional who's been there.

1. Set Realistic Expectations

As you step into your apprenticeship, it's vital to establish realistic expectations for yourself. Recognise that you're in a learning phase. Unrealistic demands and the constant pursuit of perfection can quickly take a toll on your mental health. Embrace a growth mindset, where each challenge becomes an opportunity for learning and improvement.

2. Time Management

Create a structured routine that accommodates both professional commitments and personal relaxation. Set boundaries and allocate time for hobbies, exercise, and spending time with loved ones. Adequate rest and leisure contribute significantly to maintaining a healthy mental state.

3. Open Communication

Don't hesitate to communicate your needs and concerns with your supervisor or mentor. Speaking up doesn't indicate weakness, it demonstrates your commitment to your well-being and your willingness to collaborate towards a solution.

4. Build a Support Network

Foster relationships with your colleagues and fellow apprentices. Sharing experiences, challenges, and triumphs can create a sense of camaraderie. Having someone who understands your journey can provide emotional support and alleviate feelings of isolation.

5. Mindfulness and Self-Care

In the hustle and bustle of a busy apprenticeship, don't forget to allocate time for mindfulness and self-care. Engage in activities that relax your mind.

By Ethan Woolsgrove,
Level 6 Digital Marketing
Apprenticeship at
Accolade Wines



6. Learn to Manage Stress

Stress is inevitable, but how you manage it makes all the difference. Identify stressors and adopt healthy coping mechanisms. Breathing exercises, journaling, or engaging in creative outlets can channel stress into productive energy.

7. Celebrate Small Wins

Remember to celebrate your small victories. All milestones are worth acknowledging. These provide a sense of accomplishment and motivation to keep pushing forward.

8. Set Personal Goals

Set personal goals that promote your well-being. These could include learning a new hobby, volunteering, or pursuing a personal project. Having aspirations beyond your apprenticeship can enrich your life and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

9. Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Physical and mental well-being are interconnected. Engage in regular physical activity, prioritise a balanced diet, and ensure you're getting adequate sleep.

10. Seek Professional Help When Needed

If you find your mental health deteriorating despite your efforts, don't hesitate to seek professional help. Therapists or counsellors can provide you with coping strategies and tools to manage your mental health effectively. Seeking assistance is a step towards taking control of your well-being and building a strong foundation for your future.



the importance of being **RESILIENT**

BY ANDREW BOLT, SOFTWARE ENGINEER &
COMPLETED DEGREE APPRENTICE

The importance of being resilient is not something that you may necessarily appreciate at the start of an apprenticeship. Resilience is an obstinate optimism in the face of adversity – resilient people may fall down nine times, but they get up ten.

Part of gaining resilience in an apprenticeship is to realise that they are non-linear. This lesson was essential in underscoring my own resilience: I had gained a sense of imposter syndrome because my own progression had taken much longer. As a result, I questioned my self-worth and whether I was the right fit for the industry in which I work. Being more resilient has allowed me to improve my confidence. It has also helped me to become resourceful, given the occasional need to circumvent certain problems.

I have discovered the following lessons about resilience:

✓ EXPECT UNCERTAINTY

It is said that autistic people like me are nervous about change. However, in my case, change is not so bad if it can be contextualised. Uncertainty, not knowing how and why things change, is more difficult. I gained a lot of resilience from understanding that uncertainty is constant, even if its exact form is undefined.

✓ CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK

You are not alone in your apprenticeship. Reach out to people to get advice and to vent. Socialise with people outside of work, and aim to make new friends at your university or training provider as a school leaver. Find a third place. Reach out to the Association of Apprentices for advice on apprenticeship-specific issues.

✓ BREAK DOWN YOUR GOALS

Identify your goals at the highest level (i.e. ignoring any details about how to get there). Then, go through the goal and break it down into sub-goals. Repeat this process until you have recursively divided the goal into achievable and atomic steps. This provides a foundation for your resilience. Remember to celebrate the completion of anything towards your goals!

✓ BUTTERFLY EFFECT

The tiniest ripple of a butterfly's wings in the past can create a knock on effect later on. Extend this thinking to the present: small changes in the present are massive for the future. Even if you complete something small now, it will be impactful in the future – stick to your goals!

time management TIPS

BY APPRENTICES FOR APPRENTICES



Write a to-do list

A to-do list serves as a reminder of the tasks that you need to prioritise. Tackle the most important tasks first. You should post the list in a prominent place with easy access such as on your wall by your computer or on a calendar.

Focus on long-term goals

Set your sights on where you want to be and what you hope to accomplish by establishing specific, measurable, and realistic goals. Prioritising and scheduling time to complete your immediate and short-term goals will lead you to the successful accomplishment of your long-term goals.

Block out your calendar for focus/study time

One effective way to ensure you have dedicated time for focused work and studying is by blocking out your calendar. By setting specific time slots for these activities, you create a structured framework that helps you stay on track and avoid distractions.

Don't be afraid to say 'no'

Saying no is sometimes difficult to do. However, if you need to study for an exam or finish an assignment, you have to learn how to say no. Decline politely and be clear with your reason. Negotiate a time when you are free to comply with the request or to socialise with your friends.

Keep on top of your email inbox

Chances are you will be provided with your own work email address. It is important to have specific time in the day to review emails and reply rather than check them all the time (think of it like opening the post!) and to keep track of what emails you have replied to. Keeping on top of your emails means that you will be more time efficient when responding to email queries and means that you will avoid having to have a mass inbox clear out in the future (this can take a few hours).

Avoid procrastination

Establish a routine and stick to it. Eliminate distractions, such as turning off notifications or using website blockers. Use time management techniques, like the Pomodoro Technique, to stay focused.



advice from a

DEGREE APPRENTICE

Hi! My name is Kym Lewis; I'm a 34 year old mum of two and I am a Chartered Manager Degree Apprentice with Manchester Metropolitan University. I'm also the Partnerships Manager for the Association of Apprentices.

It has been a whirlwind experience so far, they told my cohort at the start that it would fly by and they weren't wrong. Whatever your field there are hundreds of opportunities to make meaningful steps towards your career progression, here are a few tips I can share for your journey:

Stay calm

As a new apprentice you aren't expected to know everything right from the start, there is a learning curve with every job and this is no exception. Don't be too hard on yourself and ask a tonne of questions from people around you, remembering to be positive and show enthusiasm.

Network

There will likely be other apprentices at your place of work so get to know them so you can support each other, this has been invaluable for me and I've met friends for life. Then get involved with networking outside your employer, face-to-face events with AoA are an amazing opportunity to meet new people and start building your professional network. They are free and count towards your off-the-job hours too.

Read the assessment plan

It's exciting to get stuck into the academic work and feel like that takes up all the time, but don't forget your portfolio and any evidence you need to gather to meet the apprenticeship standard. That evidence takes time to get so as soon as you have something, file it, build your reflections and keep them safe for your end assessments. Panicking at the end is the worst!

Keep your line manager or mentor informed

Hopefully your line manager has a really good understanding of what you are undertaking, but if they don't, make sure you tell them everything that is expected of your apprenticeship so they can support you with time and resources. Make sure to check in with them regularly for feedback too.

Off-the-job hours

We all have a set amount of hours to spend on professional development as part of an apprenticeship so make it easy on yourself and log in to AoA Learn. It's all there for you; access modules with certificates for evidence and online events with industry professionals. And don't forget to log the time you spend doing it!

Have fun! The joy of an apprenticeship is getting out there, learning from so many different people and taking in new experiences but don't forget to have fun too. Take a break when you need one!



Navigating challenges and success as a mature apprentice

THE BALANCING ACT

By [Stephen Dempsey](#), Chartered Management Degree Apprentice at Amazon.

Being a mature apprentice can be challenging, but with the right mindset and approach, you can successfully balance work, home life and learning. Some tips and tricks I found beneficial are:

1. **Prioritise and Plan:** Make a schedule to allocate dedicated time for work, learning and importantly home life. Identify your priorities and set realistic goals for each day or week. This will help you stay organised and ensure you give ample attention to work, your apprenticeship and family time.

2. **Communication is Key:** Maintain open lines of communication with your employer, colleagues, mentors and apprenticeship programme provider. Share your challenges, progress, and any scheduling conflicts that may arise. Clear communication helps manage expectations and find potential solutions.

3. **Seek Support and Guidance:** Don't hesitate to reach out to your mentor, supervisor, or fellow apprentices for support and guidance. They can provide insights, advice, and help you navigate through any challenges you may face. AoA's support network of other apprentices is vital, and I found this extremely useful.

4. **Take Advantage of Flexible Learning Options:** Many apprenticeship programmes offer flexible learning options such as online modules or evening classes. Utilise these opportunities to learn at your own pace and fit your studying into your work schedule.

5. **Work-Life Balance:** Make time for yourself and your loved ones. Take breaks, engage in activities that relax and recharge you outside work and studying. It's important to maintain a healthy work-life balance to avoid burnout. If you feel tired or not into what you are doing STOP.

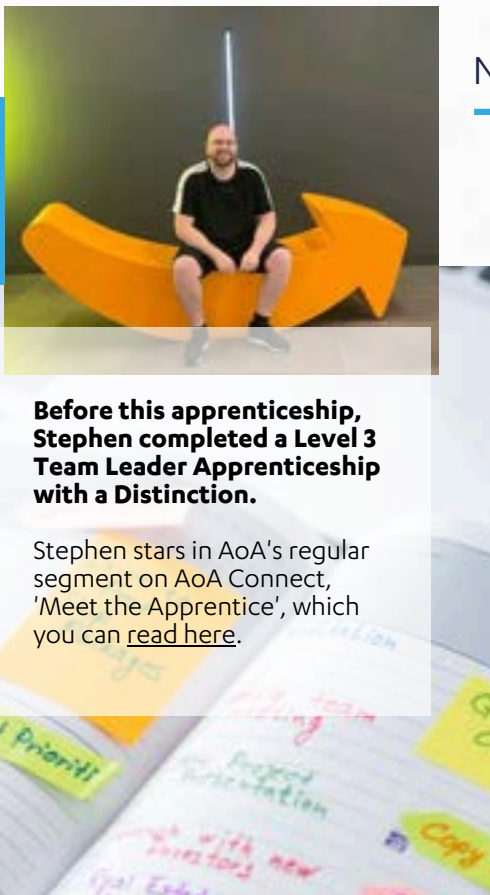
6. **Maximise Learning Opportunities:** Look for opportunities to apply what you learn in your apprenticeship directly to your work. This will reinforce your learning and make it more practical and relevant.

7. **Stay Motivated and Persistent:** Remember your goals and why you chose to pursue an apprenticeship. Stay focused, motivated, and persevere through challenges. Celebrate your accomplishments along the way to maintain your enthusiasm.

8. **Self-Care:** Taking care of your physical and mental well-being is essential. Get enough sleep, eat healthily, exercise regularly, and practice stress-relieving techniques like meditation or mindfulness.

9. **Stay Organised and Track Progress:** Keep a record of your tasks, deadlines, and progress. This will help you stay on top of your responsibilities and monitor your growth throughout your apprenticeship.

It may take some adjustment, but by implementing these tips and tricks, you can create a healthy balance between work and learning as a mature apprentice. Remember, consistency, determination, and effective time management are key to your success. Good luck!



Before this apprenticeship, Stephen completed a Level 3 Team Leader Apprenticeship with a Distinction.

Stephen starts in AoA's regular segment on AoA Connect, 'Meet the Apprentice', which you can [read here](#).

later life APPRENTICESHIPS

By Simon Phipp CHA,
Chartered
Management Degree
Apprentice and AoA
Apprentice Council
member



WELCOME TO YOUR ASSOCIATION

Many people think that apprentices arrive straight from school or college going into their first job, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, ready to start their careers. While that can be true, it is not the norm. Most apprentices that I know at work are mid-way through their careers. Talking to my friends at the Association of Apprentices and the National Society of Apprentices, many of them are already partway through their careers.

There are broadly two ways into an apprenticeship later in life: retraining and career progression.

To an extent, retraining brings some of the same challenges as an apprenticeship as a first job, as the new career will be unfamiliar to the apprentice. However, they have the advantage that they can bring the skills and techniques that they learned in their previous career to their apprenticeship, which gives them an advantage over first-job apprentices.

Career-progression apprentices are normally in a job and decide to learn new skills and techniques, leading to a qualification to further their careers. They may need a qualification to get a promotion or just want a better foundation to their current job. As someone with a job they won't be paid less for doing an apprenticeship, so they have an advantage over both first-job and retraining apprentices. However, they have to balance their apprenticeship with the demands of their current job.

A retraining or career-progression apprentice brings several key things to their role. They often have real life work experience, know how to manage their time, and navigate through organisational bureaucracy. They have soft skills and know how to succeed. They may even have built-in support networks in friends and colleagues.

All these are things that first-job apprentices need to learn, so they immediately have an advantage. However, not everything is as rosy as it appears. Retraining or career-progression apprentices may be time-poor, as later in life they might have families with children, higher job demands due to their positions, and yet still have to balance being an apprentice with the other demands in their lives.

However, I have found that being an apprentice has been the most rewarding thing in my career so far. In my first apprenticeship, I learned so much about management and everything I learned I could apply to my job. The synergies between job and learning meant that I could apply so much of my experience to my apprenticeship. In my current apprenticeship, I am learning a lot of new skills and techniques but am finding less that is directly applicable to me right now, but hopefully it will be applicable for my role in the future. I gained a promotion largely due to the work that I did on my apprenticeship.

More importantly, I get to spend time with other apprentices and can see how they have benefitted from doing an apprenticeship, allowing me to learn from them.

Before his current apprenticeship, Simon completed a Level 5 Operations Departmental Manager. Having successfully line-managed a team of apprentices to completion, Simon displays a wealth of knowledge from both sides.

As well as being on AoA's Apprentice Council, Simon is on the Leadership Team at the National Society of Apprentices and is a student representative at Roehampton University for QA. Simon stars in AoA's regular segment on AoA Connect, 'Meet the Apprentice', which you can [read here](#).

**FREE RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON AOA LEARN:
[PREPARING FOR APPRENTICESHIPS](#)**

progressing from one apprenticeship TO THE NEXT

'I still refer back to my notes from the previous apprenticeship and they help me draw connections across the learning.'



By Jasmine King, former Level 4 Senior Housing Manager Apprentice and Level 6 Chartered Management Degree Apprentice and Customer Success Officer for Flagship Group.

Some people find that one apprenticeship is right for them, but others look to progress to a higher-level apprenticeship. There is no 'correct' decision on whether you should, however, this part of the Get Ahead Guide will provide useful information and support tips for those doing it... and those considering it.

The first step is deciding if the next level apprenticeship is right for you at this time in your career. To help you decide, consider how you're feeling both professionally at work, and personally in your own life. Use your support networks around you. We all know apprenticeships are simultaneously challenging and rewarding and this decision will take time. Think about what made you choose an apprenticeship in the first place, as all these points may still be valid and will support your decision!

Once the next level apprenticeship is confirmed, take time to reflect on your previous apprenticeship and note down what worked well for you, and which elements you found more challenging. Consider how you can manage your time to learn from the previous apprenticeship, such as dedicating more time to the parts you found challenging and tackling them in advance. For me, this was my 'off-the-job log', I really struggled to keep this updated during my Level 4 apprenticeship, and made this a priority to keep updated during my Level 6. Everything you did to prepare for your first apprenticeship is still valid in the next level.

The next thing is to organise your study resources to be prepared for learning new content. This involves making sure you have organised all your folders from the previous apprenticeship, as these will still be a vital tool for the next apprenticeship. I still refer back to my notes from the previous apprenticeship and they help me draw connections across the learning. Similarly, make sure your digital folders and documents are up to date, including email folders, to easily distinguish between the apprenticeships.

A key part of the next apprenticeship is taking time to appreciate how this may differ from your previous level apprenticeship, and speak to the people around you, both personally and professionally. In the workplace, this involves your managers, colleagues, and support network, and see if they can support you in your apprenticeship through new opportunities to apply your learning. This will assist you in meeting your apprenticeship standards and gathering evidence for your portfolio. It is also important to speak to the people around you in your personal life, and let them know of this positive step so they can support you through the apprenticeship journey.

And finally, remember that your apprenticeship should be a combination of excitement, challenges and new opportunities! It may not be smooth sailing all the way through, but neither is life, and you can look back at the end of your apprenticeships and realise how far you have come. Apprenticeships are an amazing opportunity for anyone in their career, and I am grateful they have enabled me to get to my current position! If you are still unsure about progressing to the next level apprenticeship, head over to AoA Connect and ask our community of engaged and passionate apprentices for advice!



what to expect from your EMPLOYER & TRAINING PROVIDER

The main parties involved in an apprenticeship are: your employer, your training provider, and most importantly, you. You work for your employer and your training provider may be a college/university or independent training provider.

Your employer and training provider have set requirements that must be met for your role to be considered an apprenticeship. However, beyond these requirements there are other expectations that apprentices may have before undertaking an apprenticeship.

What to expect from your employer: Legal requirements

• Pay and employment rights

All apprentices must be paid at least the minimum wage. Apprentices also have the same employment rights as any other employee, including the right to sick pay, holiday entitlement, and access to employee benefit schemes. Your employer will also cover the full cost of all your training.

• Access to training or study during your working week

Apprentices must spend a consistent baseline figure of six hours per week completing off-the-job training. Your employer will agree on a suitable training schedule with you and your training provider.

• A genuine job with a relevant role

There must be a genuine job available with a contract of employment long enough for an apprentice to complete their apprenticeship. The role must help the apprentice gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need to achieve the apprenticeship. Before you start, you will need to sign an apprenticeship agreement and a commitment statement.

What to expect from your employer: Other expectations

• Support and mentoring

Apprentices will require support in the workplace. A workplace mentor can support an apprentice, passing on their knowledge and answering questions as they arise in day-to-day tasks and activities.

• Amazing onboarding

Employers should take time to help you settle into your new role. During your first few days, expect to learn more about your role and your work schedule, meet your new team mates, and start your training. Your employer should give you all the information you need about the company, health and safety, the company policies, your apprenticeship and their expectations of you.

• Real tasks and responsibilities

As an apprentice you should be given real tasks and responsibilities in relation to your apprenticeship and job role. Your employer should trust you to try new tasks and support you to gain the skills required to complete the tasks to a high standard.

• An Interest in your development

Your employer should take interest and understand your apprenticeship programme and its content. This will help you get the most out of your apprenticeship, drive your development and ensure you are competent.

What to expect from your training provider:

• Your course and support team

You may not start training as soon as you start your employment - sometimes it'll depend on the next start date for your training. When you do start, expect to find out more about what you'll learn, your schedule and important information.

You will be introduced to your course leader and anyone who may play a role in supporting you throughout your apprenticeship, such as the mental health support team, and the disability and dyslexia support team (other terms could be coach or tutor).

• Progress reviews and target setting

You'll likely set a schedule to complete progress reviews. A progress review is a regular discussion that should take place between the employer, training provider and apprentice, to review the your progress of the apprenticeship in relation to the planned programme of learning set out in the commitment statement.

Progress reviews give you an opportunity to establish clear links between on and off-the-job training; set and review links; monitor your welfare; and raise any issues you may be having.

• An explanation regarding your end-point assessment (EPA)*

A formal EPA is carried out in England towards the end of the programme in order for the apprenticeship to be successfully completed or you may have an alternative assessment. Your training provider should go into more detail about what your final project looks like and how you can prepare for this throughout your apprenticeship.

*Note this is different to assessment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

what your employer and training provider will expect from you

Your employer and your training provider don't expect you to be an expert or to have a huge list of work experience. They're both committed to helping you become the best version of yourself, however, they do expect a few things from you.



Don't worry too much - you've got the apprenticeship, so it's likely you've already demonstrated most of the below characteristics and soft skills throughout your interviews.

Be interested and passionate about the subject you're studying and the role you're working in. Again, this is probably the reason you've made it so far already. Be sure to keep this passion throughout the apprenticeship though, it demonstrates you're interested but also makes your apprenticeship more enjoyable.

Be willing to learn. You don't need to have an extensive knowledge of your industry to get in the door for an apprenticeship, but you need to want to know everything to succeed. You should push yourself to learn as much as you can every day. Having a hunger to learn shows your employer and your training provider that you're committed but also means you get the most from your apprenticeship.

Be resilient. Apprenticeships can be demanding, and at times you may have to deal with these challenges independently. Having resilience helps you thrive in difficult situations and learn from tasks that may be new to you.

Be curious. Being curious means asking questions all the time. This helps you learn but also allows you to seek help when you may need it, which is key to apprenticeship success.

Be responsible for your own time and learning. Time management is extremely important. Navigating the world of work, studying and managing your outside life requires structure and management. Planning ahead and sticking to a schedule allows you to meet deadlines or to speak to the relevant people in a timely manner when a deadline may need extending.

Be yourself. Employers and training providers want to see the real version of you. They hired you because you're a great person who fits their organisation's values and culture.

so what exactly is

OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

Off-the-job training is an essential component of an apprenticeship. Although its meaning can often be misunderstood, there are numerous ways it can be achieved.

Off-the-job hours are defined as learning which is undertaken outside of your regular day-to-day duties, within your regular hours. This training contributes towards the achievement of your apprenticeship and must be related to the knowledge, skills and behaviours of your apprenticeship standard.

You must spend at least 20% of your normal working hours (capped at 30 hours per week for funding purposes only), over the planned duration of your apprenticeship practical period, on off-the-job training. This means that the minimum requirement, for apprentices working 30 hours or more per week is an average of 6 hours of off-the-job training per week (i.e. 20% of 30 hours) over the planned duration. For more information, contact your training provider and refer to the GOV.UK page where you will also find a OTJ hours evidence collection document. [Apprenticeships: off-the-job training](#).

How can I make sure an activity is considered to be off-the-job training?

To be considered as off-the-job training, the activity must:

- Teach new knowledge, skills and behaviours
- Be directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard
- Take place in the apprentice's normal working hours and exclude ineligible activities such as initial assessment and English and maths

What can you gain from off-the-job hours?

Firstly, your employer will benefit from improved work quality because the off-the-job training will bring enhanced knowledge, skills and behaviours to your role. This will give you more confidence in your current role and this will be reflected your abilities and work performance.

You will gain:

- Enhanced Knowledge and Skills
- Improved Work Quality
- Boosted Confidence
- Long-Term Career Development

Where can you access resources for off-the-job hours and what counts towards the hours?

Association of Apprentices has a wide range of quality resources that you can utilise such as their [Professional Soft Skills Programme](#) and [Career Development Programme](#), which will enhance your knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Also, the [AoA's Masterclasses](#) and [Networking and Development Apprentice Meet-Up events](#) both count towards your off-the-job hours.

So, what's included?

- Research seminars and networking events
- The teaching of theory (e.g. lectures, role playing, simulation exercises, online learning and manufacturer training)
- Practical training (e.g. shadowing, mentoring, industry visits and competitions)
- Learning support
- Time spent writing assignments
- Revision (where this is specifically required for achievement of the apprenticeship)

And what isn't included?

- Initial assessment and onboarding activities
- English and maths training
- Training to acquire knowledge, skills and behaviours that are not required by the apprenticeship standard
- Examinations and other testing
- Training which takes place outside the apprentice's normal working hours (unless the apprentice has been paid for these additional hours or been given time off in lieu)

If you are ever unsure of what can be included in your training log, my best advice would be contact your training provider.



By Nathan Humphreys, Level 3 Business Administrator & winner of AoA's Award for Most Engagement on AoA Connect. Read his OTJ tips on the next page...

top four tips for

OFF-THE-JOB-TRAINING

By Nathan Humphreys

TRAINING LOG

I would suggest completing your training log after each activity if you can or setting some time aside on a weekly basis to input your activity that week. You could make notes on your phone which you use to update your training log each week. Set a reminder in your diary each week to do this.

SCHEDULE

Developing a schedule that allocates dedicated time for off-the-job training can really help you stay on track. Treat this time with the same level of importance as you would for work tasks. Set aside regular blocks of time each week to focus solely on your OTJ hours. Your training log should be reviewed regularly by your training provider, if it is not, you can ask them to give it a check.

CHECK

Some training providers use an online system for logging ITJ hours. If you have an e-portfolio, look up their support guides or contact your training provider to find out the best way to record OTJ and how they expect you to do it, so you start correctly from the beginning.

REVIEW

Take time to reflect on your off-the-job training experiences and review your progress regularly. Identify what's working well and areas where you can improve, then adjust your approach accordingly.

PARS

POST-APPRENTICESHIP
RECOGNITION SCHEME

Empowering Apprentices and Enriching Organisations

The Association of Apprentices and the Chartered Institution for Further Education have created a brand-new professional recognition scheme for qualified apprentices.

Even though you are just starting out, it is important to know what you are working towards and the opportunities available to you. Once you have completed your apprenticeship you can apply for the PARS award which will allow you the use of post-nominals (letters after your name) such as CSA, CAA, CHA, or CGA, to highlight your achievements on the apprenticeship pathway.

**Apprentices
will receive
a certificate
and the
right to use
a post-
nominal
designation**



Eligibility

PARS is open to all apprentices (regardless of level or occupational pathway) who:



completed their
apprenticeship since
1 Jan 2019



completed their
apprenticeship in the UK



have the support of their
employer (or an industry-
linked sponsor)



THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION
FOR FURTHER EDUCATION



Association of
Apprentices

Who do you ask if you need help or support?

You can contact the **National Helpline for Apprentices by phone (0800 015 0400) 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week** or via email on nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk.

You can also go to [AoA Connect](#). There are plenty of apprentices on AoA Connect that have walked in your shoes and are ready to offer support.

HERE ARE A FEW ORGANISATIONS YOU CAN CONTACT FOR SUPPORT

- **Mind**
 - Information including taking care of your mental wellbeing and finding support for benefits or housing.
- **Rethink Mental Illness**
 - Online hub of practical support and information for people living with or supporting people with mental illness.
- **Student Minds**
 - Guidance on looking after your mental health, including ways you can support friends and family, guidance for those experiencing xenophobia and racism, and for those with ongoing mental health difficulties.
- **Support Connect**
 - Apprentice learning support is available for people who have Specific Learning Differences (SpLD). The term SpLD refers to any difference or difficulty you may experience with particular aspects of learning including: Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Long COVID, Anxiety, Physical Impairments, Mental Health, Hearing/ Visual Impairments and more.
- Try to talk to your line manager in the first instance or your HR manager. Alternatively, call ACAS for free HR Support on: 0800 470 0611.
- [The Disabled Apprentices Network \(DAN\)](#) examines the barriers that some disabled people might face, what makes apprenticeships successful and what employers, training providers, and educators can do to provide the necessary support.
- Youth Employment UK is a not for profit, community interest company and the expert voice on youth employment. Young people can find information, advice and tips in the [apprenticeship hub](#).



EVERYONE ELSE IS DOING IT

So should you...

Now that you've accepted your place on your apprenticeship, it is time to join 20,000 of your peers.

The Association of Apprentices is your exclusive community. Events, off-the-job training, a bespoke professional networking platform, and peer-to-peer support means you'll have all the tools you need get the most out of your apprenticeship. **[Unlock your free membership here](#)**

WITH THANKS TO

AoA Founding Partners
Advisory Panel Partners
Corporate Partners
NGTU
AoA's Apprentice Council
AoA Members

Some contributions may have been edited for length and/or clarity.



Gain access to:

- 1 AoA Connect – A vast online community connecting you to your peers, nationwide. With social and professional networking, industry news and topical discussions, you'll have access to peer-support at your fingertips through a compact app available on both android and iOS, or a browser on your desktop, too.
- 2 AoA Learn – An online learning platform full of innovative training resources. Designed to help you enhance your soft skills, this app is crucial for career success. From Communicating Under Pressure to the Resilience EDGE Model, there is a wealth of knowledge to learn from experts in their fields. You can also complete the 10-step [Career Development Programme](#) for certification.
- 3 AoA Events – We run both virtual and physical events, including AoA Masterclasses, created specifically for apprentices. These events are a fantastic way to learn interactively whilst networking and building professional relationships. All our past online events are available to stream on AoA On Demand so you can catch up anytime, anywhere.

You might have come across some technical jargon that you're just not sure about. Here, we break down what each term means so you can confidently navigate the world of apprenticeships.

GLOSSARY

ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT (ALS)	Methods used to support apprentices with learning difficulties, disabilities, or disadvantages.
APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD/Framework	An apprenticeship needs to have an approved 'standard' in England that defines what you do and learn while you're an apprentice. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, apprentices work towards an apprenticeship framework. These are how an apprenticeship is structured and detail what an apprentice is expected to be competent in by the end of the apprenticeship.
COMMITMENT STATEMENT	At the start of an apprenticeship, you, your employer and training provider all sign a statement, like a contract, that includes the details of your apprenticeship. This includes how the training will work and what's expected of you. It's designed to make sure you and your employer benefit from your apprenticeship.
EMPLOYER	Your employer is the organisation you work for.
END-POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA)	EPA is an assessment which you take at the end of your apprenticeship, carried out by an independent body (End Point Assessment Organisation). You'll have to demonstrate you can carry out your job responsibilities and that you have the knowledge and skills for your role. This is usually the last step before you get your qualification. If you are studying an apprenticeship framework in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, your assessments will be structured slightly differently.
INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN (ILP)	An ILP is a collaborative document that outlines your academic, personal, and employment goals. It is created at the start of an apprenticeship to ensure all parties are clear on your needs so they can provide the optimal training environment to help you achieve results.
KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND BEHAVIOURS (KSB)	These are things you need to learn and demonstrate throughout your apprenticeship and during your final assessment to be awarded your qualification. These will be set out at the start of your apprenticeship.
MATHS AND ENGLISH	Maths and English are a key part of an apprenticeship programme. Your Training Provider will confirm what maths and English study assessment you will need as this depends on your previous attainment in these subjects.
PORTFOLIO	Throughout your apprenticeship you will build a Portfolio of Evidence. This is a record of your work that best demonstrates that you can apply the knowledge and skills, and demonstrate the behaviours identified in the apprenticeship standard or framework.
TRAINING PROVIDER	Your training provider is the organisation that delivers the study part of your apprenticeship. For example, a university or college that is partnered with your employer to provide the apprenticeship.