

Get Into Construction



Your guide to choosing subjects and work experience to help you get into construction.



How to choose subjects that make the grade

Make sure the subjects you choose can help you to move on to a rewarding career in construction after school, college or university.

Studying at school, college and university is one way to get the skills to succeed in an exciting career in the construction industry.

Your studies

GCSEs, A levels and Degrees can all open doors for you, allowing you to choose from a wide range of work and training options later in life.

But deciding which subjects to study is no easy task, especially as you may have no idea what you want to do 10 or 20 years down the line.

With a huge range of jobs on offer in construction and the built environment, there's every chance you'll find one that's your perfect match.

Now is a really great time to get involved in construction as it's estimated that 200,000 new jobs will be created over the next five years.



Keep your options open

Optional subjects vary between schools, but are likely to fall into categories including:

- Design and technology
- Creative subjects
- Humanities

You can keep your options open and develop several skills by choosing subjects from different fields.

For instance, Design and Technology offers the chance to practise working with your hands, while humanities subjects like business studies can give you an insight into how companies are run.

English, Maths and Science, meanwhile, are compulsory and could be especially important for your future career as they often form part of the main entry requirements for Highers and A-levels.

And if you decide to leave school after your exams, English, Maths and Science are also crucial for apprenticeships, which can give you the chance to earn a wage while learning new skills.

Build up practical skills

You'll have the chance to build up practical skills, which can then be put to use as part of a career in construction.

Physics can give you a good grounding for engineering and project management, while creative areas like Art can help prepare you for jobs in design.

Do your research

Research all the subjects you're thinking of taking by:

- Speaking to people in the construction industry
- Speaking to teachers
- Checking online for information about what employers want
- Visit the Go Construct web site www.goconstruct.org



Work experience

Having the right work experience can make a big difference when you're getting started in construction. It helps you get a feel for jobs you're interested in, looks good on your CV and gives you a chance to make contacts.

What is work experience?

Work experience lets you find out about jobs in all parts of construction. You could be helping out with office work or shadowing experienced tradespeople like carpenters or plumbers, depending on what you're interested in.

A quality work experience host will ensure certain things are in place to keep you safe. You can usually expect them to have a risk assessment, provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and give you an induction that includes health and safety.

No matter what kind of work experience you do, you'll be learning skills that employers want. Academic and vocational qualifications like NVQs are still important because they show that you have the knowledge for the job, but when you add hands-on work experience it shows that you can put that knowledge into practice.



What are the benefits?

Almost two thirds of employers prefer people with solid work experience when hiring, so this gives you a real advantage at interviews. Here are just a few of the other benefits:

- You fit into teams more quickly
- You have skills that others don't
- You need less training
- Although work experience is usually unpaid, some companies might give you a small amount for your costs
- Many employers like to use work experience as an unofficial interview and you might be hired by the company if they like you.

Finding work experience

Some employers will get in touch with schools, colleges and universities about work experience opportunities, but most of the time you'll have to hunt them down yourself.

It's a good idea to apply to more than one company at a time. This will improve your chances and you might even be able to arrange experience with different companies at different times.



Tips for finding work experience

- Think about what construction jobs you're interested in
- Do some research online about local companies who offer work experience
- Apply to more than one company, if you can, to improve your chances
- Ask family and friends if they have any contacts you could use
- Write a letter or email to the company's HR department. Follow up by phone if you haven't heard back after a week
- When you do get a placement, find out what the role is, what the hours are and where you need to go
- Send the employer a thank you letter or email when you finish.



Useful websites for Apprenticeships

- goconstruct.org
- citb.co.uk/apprenticeships
- apprenticeships.gov.uk

Always discuss your options with a trained careers advisor.

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