

Starting a Career – Finding Work as an Apprentice

The First Step

The first step to becoming an apprentice is finding a job. This is like any other job search, except you are looking for an employer who is willing to hire you as an apprentice in a trade. Apprenticeship usually begins with a period of work followed by an in-school technical training session. This routine is generally followed in each period of the trade's apprenticeship program (programs range from 3 to 5 years, depending on the trade).

The Job Market

This is a good time to be looking for a career in the skilled trades. The Conference Board of Canada estimates there will be a shortage of one million workers in the trades and related occupations within twenty years. Employers in many industries and regions raise concerns about shortages of skilled workers in the trades. The "Baby Boomer" generation is going to retire soon and needs to be replaced.

Industries that rely on apprenticeship training - including construction, transportation, manufacturing and services - have been growing and need new workers. These jobs are highly skilled and pay well.

Governments have responded to this need for skilled people and have invested more in the apprenticeship system. This means new facilities and equipment and more classes.

Once you are a journey person, you may choose to practice in your trade or use your knowledge and skills to pursue other careers such as:

- an instructor
- a contractor
- an entrepreneur
- a manager
- a salesperson
- an inspector

As with any job search, finding an employer will take time. Patience and persistence will be rewarded. Don't be discouraged. The rewards will be worth your effort.

The Job Search

Here is a suggested checklist for the job search process:

1. Choose the trade that is of interest to you. Do not pick a trade just for the money as that can lead to disappointment and a great waste of your time (click this [Your Trade](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/Designated_Trades/)) http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/Designated_Trades/.
2. Read about conditions in the job market and other details about your chosen trade (click this [Job Markets](http://www.careersinconstruction.ca/)). <http://www.careersinconstruction.ca/>
3. Prepare a resume and a letter of introduction (click this [Marketing Your Skills](http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/career_planning/index.shtml#writing_resumes_c_over_letters)). http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/career_planning/index.shtml#writing_resumes_c_over_letters)
4. Launch a search for potential employers (click this [Tips for Your Job Search](http://www.saskjobs.ca/index.jsp)). <http://www.saskjobs.ca/index.jsp>

Your Trade

For a detailed description of each trade and its apprenticeship program requirements, see the [Trades and Occupations](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/siteimages/SYA/2010-11_HighSchoolCompletionAndYourFutureintheSkilledTrades_w_bookmarks.pdf) http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/siteimages/SYA/2010-11_HighSchoolCompletionAndYourFutureintheSkilledTrades_w_bookmarks.pdf section of the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Trade Commission and Certification website.

You will find all you need to know about each trade including the skills and abilities these tradespersons most have, working conditions, wage ranges, and educational requirements.

Job Markets

The web sites listed below offer specific information about market conditions, job availability, working conditions, income and benefits and other basic information for each trade. Some of these sites link to electronic job exchanges that identify specific businesses that are recruiting.

There are many sources of information for your job search. Here are some popular web sites:

- <http://www.careersinconstruction.ca>
- <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/>

Marketing Your Skills

Before you start your job search, there is one very important step that you must take. Prepare a clear and targeted description of your work experience and training, including an effective resume and cover letter. The resume should identify your desire to work in a specific trade. The cover letter should highlight your enthusiasm to learn the trade from the ground up from the best in the field.

Remember an apprenticeship program has minimum educational entrance requirements. If you are still in high school, be sure to take the courses that are required to enter the trade's Registered Apprenticeship Program. Without the required courses, you will have to write an entrance exam or upgrade before you can enroll in the technical training portion of a trade's apprenticeship program. Most employers prefer to hire high school graduates.

Here are some sites that will get you started on presenting yourself in the best light:

- <http://www.jobsetc.ca/>

Your resume and cover letter should be presented in person whenever possible and should never be send out in a generic bulk mail out. Remember to target your resumes.

Job Search Tips

The following advice has been gathered from experienced advisors in the apprenticeship system. They know the employers and have guided hundreds of apprentices from their start in the trades, through their apprenticeship program to becoming certified journeypersons.

The Basics

- Look Your Best:** You could have all the talent in the world, but if you look unkempt or miserable many employers won't give you a second look.
- Dress for Success:** You don't necessarily need a shirt and tie, but a shower and clean pressed clothes can make all the difference. Dress appropriately for the business you are visiting.
- Be Courteous:** People prefer to be around pleasant people who are considerate of others. Smile and be positive.
- Be Grateful:** Thank people for their time both when they can help and when they cannot. Leaving a good impression will encourage people to remember you the next time.
- Be Early:** Employers like to see prospective employees first thing in the morning. It shows initiative when you show up looking for work at the start of the workday.
- Be Reliable:** If you are scheduled to be somewhere, make it your habit to organize yourself to be on time. This is a vital skill for finding and keeping employment.
- Be Yourself:** Think about all the good traits that you have and feel good about yourself. Being positive about yourself will show. Try not to be nervous!

Network with People

Did you know that 80% of all job openings are never advertised?

Check out the "hidden" job market by going around to businesses that are in the trade that interests you. These jobs may not be advertised, but you can leave your resume and let them know you are available and eager to learn. When an opening does come up, you'll have your foot in the door.

Tell everyone you know and everyone you meet that you are looking for a job. (The fancy word for this is networking). Carry a resume with you everywhere and give one to every employer you speak to even if he/she says they are not hiring. They will remember and they might even pass your resume to a business acquaintance over coffee later that day.

Get the names and phone numbers from every employer or supervisor you contacted. This will allow you to contact them again later, maybe in a few weeks and a few weeks after that. The third time you speak to them they will remember your name and will realize that you are serious about your job search and working for their company. They may even invite you for a coffee and an informal interview right on the spot. This has happened before!

When an employer tells you they are not hiring, ask, "Do you know of anyone who is?"

Perhaps they know who won the last contract they bid on and can provide you with a lead.

Other Things You Can Do

1. If your family uses a journeyperson for jobs, ask the journeyperson if you can shadow him or her for a day or so.
2. Try to find employment with a business in a related area to prove your skills, attitude and desires for the long term. For example, mechanics should find work doing grease and oil changes, driving a parts truck, pumping gas/fuel, repairing tires, wash rack or general labouring duties, with the intention of moving into an apprenticeship position when it comes available.
3. An alternative to finding employment right away is to consider a pre-employment or technology course. This course may improve your chances of being hired in the trade and may also be credited towards the requirements of the Registered Apprenticeship Program (check with your nearest [SATCC office](#) for further information).
<http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/>

Interviews

How to Get Interviews

Do not sit at home faxing or phoning a long list of employers.



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The best way to make an impression is to visit the employer in person with your resume or application form. It is better not to take anyone with you (not even mom or dad).

Be prepared to visit and speak to many employers before you find someone willing to take you on. Although it can be tough and challenging to keep going and the inclination to quit may be tempting, it is your level of commitment that will ultimately determine your success at landing a job in the trades.

Ensure your resume is up to date and job specific. A cover letter detailing your goals can be extremely helpful. Make sure that the facts in your resume and cover letter are correct, as good employers can spot a fairy tale a mile away.

Start by making a list of employers (e.g. from the phone book) in a specific area of the city. You'll find that many employers can be grouped together in one area, making it easier for you to visit a larger number in one day.

Ask to speak with the person who does the hiring and leave your application or resume with him or her. Many employers will tell you they are not hiring right now. In the trades this can change very quickly. A follow-up phone call every week or two can do wonders for your application. Be persistent without being a nuisance.

Tips for Interviews

Be realistic about your wage or the position for which you are hired. A good approach for getting started is to let the employer know you are willing to start in an entry-level position. For example, it may be easier to get into a woodworking company as a general labourer than a machine operator. The wage can be negotiable because your goal is to be an apprentice carpenter and then a journeyman. What you're really looking for is an opportunity to prove to the employer that you are dependable and an asset to the company. Getting the opportunity can be easy; proving your worth can be challenging.

Never tell an employer you have no experience. By searching your history in detail, you'll be surprised at some of the skills you have that are in demand by employers. To find out what you are getting yourself into, talk with people already in that trade and ask them about the work they do.

Familiarize yourself with the apprenticeship program and the first part of your technical training so that you can speak with employers in their language. An employer will take you much more seriously when you have done your homework.

To see a detailed description of each trade and designated occupation in Saskatchewan, visit the [DESIGNATED TRADES http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/siteimages/SYA/2010-11_HighSchoolCompletionAndYourFutureintheSkilledTrades_w_bookmarks.pdf](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/siteimages/SYA/2010-11_HighSchoolCompletionAndYourFutureintheSkilledTrades_w_bookmarks.pdf) section of the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Trades commission and Certification website. Contained in these profiles is a summary of the duties, working conditions, skills and abilities, employment and

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advancement opportunities, wage rates and salary ranges specific to the trade or occupation, as well as access to the Course Outline and Regulation.

Tell the employer you are "looking for a career and not just a job." This lets the employer know that you are a serious applicant and are prepared for the challenges ahead.

Final Thoughts

Starting the Job

The attitude you show when you get a job is very important. Do the job as if you own the company, whether you like it or not, whether you want the job or not. People may not always say something, but they will always notice your attitude. Prove yourself to that employer by hard work. This will help you keep your new job.

Some Points to Keep in Mind

Understand employers feel more comfortable with an applicant who can give references. If you have no work experience, use other references. For example, ask your teachers or people you have done jobs for - even babysitting counts. Always ask the person to be a reference before you give their name out, as he or she may choose not to give you a recommendation.

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