



How to Prepare For a Successful Work Experience

Setting clear expectations from the beginning is crucial. Here are some things to discuss with employers before any experience where a student is on site at a business, whether for job shadowing, an internship, or a paid employment opportunity.

Salary

If the position is unpaid, make sure everyone is on the same page from the beginning. Many early work experiences will be unpaid but can be great learning experiences for the student. If there is a salary, make sure the student knows when and how they will be paid.

Length of Experience

Establish a timeline of when the job placement will start and end and be sure to communicate the information with your student, their family, and the employer.

Education and Experience Requirements

As you are learning about a student's preferences, be sure to find out what their preferred job requires in education and training. If a position requires extensive training or education that the student does not have, get creative and work with employers to adapt positions so that the student is still engaged and interested in the work they are doing.

Work Environment

Visit the workplace before placing a student there, and know what environments your student thrives in. For example, does your student get anxious in loud settings? Is the workplace a social, team-based environment or one where employees often work independently? Even the physical layout of the office will be important. Are there cubicles, offices, or open desks?



Physical Demands

Knowing physical demands and expectations will also help you determine whether or not a placement is a good fit. Get very specific about these demands. For example, if they will be lifting boxes, how heavy will they be?

Communication

Some employers prefer phone conversations, while others will be most comfortable with email. Establish the best form of communication early on, and set a predictable schedule of communication. How often will you need to touch base with the supervisor? Determining communication early on will help the employer get used to discussing concerns and celebrating successes with you and your student.

Point of Contact

Who will the student be checking in with at the job site? Is this their supervisor or a colleague? How should they check in when they arrive? This will ensure everyone involved (the student, teacher, provider, employer) know who to communicate with.

Meals

If the student will be there during a meal time, discuss with the employer what that break will look like. Where should they eat? Do most employees bring lunch or is there a cafeteria? If the student leaves the business to get lunch, do they need to check out with someone? If a student needs a longer lunch break or a different lunch time than other employees, work with the employer to adapt their schedule.

Dress/Attire

Know what attire is appropriate for the office. If there is a uniform, help the student know how to purchase this ahead of time.

Feedback

Establish ahead of time how everyone can provide and receive feedback on the experience. The student, employer, teacher, and anyone else should be able to report what worked well and what could have been improved.