

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP**

**50 QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED ABOUT APPRENTICESHIP**



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## **50 QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED ABOUT APPRENTICESHIP**

### **1. WHAT IS AN APPRENTICE?**

A qualified person of legal working age who has entered into a written agreement with an employer under which the employer is to provide an opportunity for the apprentice to learn an apprenticeable occupation.

## 2. WHAT IS APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeship is a unique, voluntary training through which individuals acquire trade and craft skills and knowledge. Training combines daily on-the-job instruction in manipulative skills with periodic classroom (related) instruction in technical subjects related to work requirements. The training design provides for learning all required practical and theoretical skills and knowledge for the chosen skilled occupation. Practical aspects of work are mastered on the job as apprentices are rotated through all phases of their particular occupations. Theoretical aspects of work are mastered during related subjects instruction in the classroom. Related instruction continues throughout the apprenticeship term and provides an opportunity to consider, in depth, the underlying principles of job activities. This arrangement of on-the-job and classroom instruction is a standard part of typical apprenticeship indenturing agreements. It ensures the individual's employability and guarantees competent workers for industry by providing for learning the complete range of skills and knowledge during training. (See question 13 – What is related training?)

## 3. WHAT IS AN APPRENTICE INDENTURE?

A required written agreement or contract between apprentice and program sponsor concerning the terms of employment and training experience of the apprentice during the learning period. The agreement sets forth expectations, duties and obligations of each party for the term of the apprenticeship. Among items typically incorporated into the agreement are the provision for related instruction, overtime regulations, minimum wage schedule for each period in the apprenticeship term, and approximate time schedule for training in different aspects of the occupation.

## 4. HOW DOES FEDERAL VOCATIONAL LEGISLATION DEFINE “APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM”?

“A program registered with the U. S. Department of Labor or the state apprenticeship agency in accordance with the Act of August 16, 1937, commonly known as the National Apprenticeship Act, which is conducted or sponsored by an employer, a group of employers, or a joint apprenticeship committee representing both employees and a union, and which contains all terms conditions for the qualification, recruitment, selection, employment and training apprentices.”

## 5. DO THE MILITARY SERVICES OFFER APPRENTICESHIP PORGRAMS?

Yes. The national apprenticeship system includes over 50,000 apprentices registered in program sponsored by the United States Armed Forces. Some are civilians.

6. IS AN EMPLOYER REQUIRED TO ACCEPT APRENTICEHSIP CREDIT EARNED IN THE MILITARY OR OTHER RESOURCES?

No; however, many companies generally will allow some credit based on bona fide work records provided by either the previous employer or prospective employee. In fact, credit may be given on past employment even if the past employer was not participating in a registered apprenticeship program. Prospective employers may require testing to verify the potential employee's performance level.

7. MUST APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM REGISTER WITH THE OFFICE OF APPENITCESHIP?

YES

8. MUST INDIVIDUAL APPRENTICES REGISTERED WITH THE OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP?

YES

9. MUST PUBLIC SCHOOLS OR POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER APPRENTICESHIP-RELATED TRAINING BE REGISTERED WITH THE OFFICE APPRENTICESHIP?

NO

10. ARE APPRENTICES EMPLOYED?

Yes. Apprentices must be full-time or near full-time employees of the company to which they are apprenticed. However, in the event of school-to-apprentice programs, registered apprentices may be part-time. Apprenticeship activities may cease for the apprentice if either laid off or unemployed. Cessation or continuance of apprenticeship activities may depend on length of time of layoff or unemployment.

11. WHAT RATE OF PAY DO APPRENTICES RECEIVE?

Usually the wage scale begins at 40%-50% of a journeyperson's rate and increased progressively with satisfactory completion of work assignments and training segments. Near the end of the apprenticeship term, pay ranges from 90%-95% of the full journeyperson's rate.

12. WHO DIRECTLY SUPERVISES APPRENTICE WORKING ON THE JOB?

Apprentices are directly supervised by journeyworker. The ratio of apprentices assigned to a journeyworker is dependent on the trade or craft involved, union contracts, and other agreements.

### 13. WHAT IS RELATED TRAINING?

Related instruction is the “classroom” portion of apprenticeship and is an integral part of an apprenticeship program. It provides each apprentice with the theoretical and technical knowledge base necessary to become a successful journeyworker. It also provides additional practice and useful example of job-related skills and knowledge at work. All registered programs include related subjects instruction. The National Apprenticeship and Training Standards require that minimum of 144 per year of apprenticeship training be provide to each trainee in related and supplementary subjects. This period of time can be increased by trade and craft standards or by program sponsors if content warrants the increase. Some industries require as much as 200 to 300 hours yearly in related subjects study by apprentices. Some states require all related training to be provided by the public school or institutions. (See Question 2- What is Apprenticeship?)

### 14. WHAT ARE THE SUBJECTS TAUGHT IN RELATED TRAINING?

The contents of related subjects instructions, like the number of hours required, varies by trade or craft. In general, the kinds of subjects taught include:

- (a) the theory, principles, and technical knowledge needed on the job;
- (b) auxiliary information that assists workers to better accept and discharge their responsibilities; and
- (c) occasional manipulative skills that are important to the craft or trade but are not provided conveniently in the apprentice’s on-the-job training. Frequently this means that related subjects instruction includes the principles, concepts, and information that apprentices must know and use from the subject matter such as mathematics, general physical sciences, safety, basic measurement, and blueprint reading, as well as the study of trade-specific materials and work processes and procedures.

In addition, related subjects instruction helps to ensure that workers can communicate effectively in job-specific ways, can work effectively in organizations, and have knowledge about apprenticeship system. However, regardless of the trade, craft, or situation, the subject matter is current on job demands, practical, and directly useful in working in the craft or trade.

### 15. IS RELATED TRAINING REQUIRED OF AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Yes, the arrangement of on-the-job and related training is a standard part of typical apprenticeship indenturing agreements.

16. MUST AN APPRENTICE COMPLETE THE PROGRAM OF RELATED TRAINING?

In order to be certified as a completer by the Office of Apprenticeship, an apprentice must attend and successfully complete the program of related instruction.

17. HOW LONG DOES RELATED TRAINING LAST?

Related training (instruction) continues throughout the apprenticeship term.

18. HOW MANY HOURS OF RELATED TRAINING ARE REQUIRED PER YEAR?

144 Hours or more, depending on the craft or trade.

19. WHERE CAN RELATED TRAINING BE PROVIDED?

At the public secondary schools offering adult education and at postsecondary institutions. Related instruction can also be conducted at a plant, union hall, ect. Many of the union apprenticeship programs are fully staffed by journey-level teachers. In extenuation circumstances for example: when the apprentice lives in a rural area or when the particular apprenticeable trade population does not warrant class size training, the related training may be provided to the apprentice(s) by correspondence course or by independent study arrangements. Some states mandate that the public schools and institutions provide related training.

20. WHO DETERMINES RELATED TRAINING CURRICULUM?

The sponsor of the program established training curriculum. Some trades and crafts with national associations or unions provide nationally-recognized curriculum; however, such curriculum may be tailored to the local level need of the program.

21. WHEN DOES THE APPRENTICE ATTEND RELATED TRAINING?

Some apprentices attend related training on weekends or evenings. Other may attend during the workday. i.e., two days per month.

22. DO APPRENTICES GET PAID FOR ATTENDING RELATED-TRAINING CLASSES?

If the apprentice attends related training provided during the workday, the employer may be required to provide half-pay or some other reduced rate of pay. Provisions for paying apprentices to attend related training would be provided for in the indenturing agreement or in contractual form.

### 23. WHAT IS THE CRITERIA FOR AN OCCUPATION TO BE APPRENTICEABLE?

Apprenticeable occupations generally are defined as those occupations for which:

- (a) skills are primarily learned through a combination of on-the-job training supplemented by related technical instruction;
- (b) requires at least 2000 hours of work experience plus related instruction;
- (c) involves manual, mechanical, or technical skills and is practiced industry-wide as a recognizable trade or craft;
- (d) involves the development of a body of skills sufficiently well-defined to be applicable throughout an industry; and
- (e) does not primarily involve only selling, managerial, clerical, or professional activities.

### 24. HOW MANY OCCUPATIONS ARE APPRENTICEABLE?

As of 2016, over 1000 occupations were recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor as being apprenticeable. More are added from year to year.

### 25. WHAT SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONS ARE APPRENTICEABLE?

Too numerous to mention here; however, the current occupations “by the Office of Apprenticeship are available from your local Office of Apprenticeship Representative.

### 26. WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF APPRENTICES?

Requirements vary depending upon the apprenticeable trade or craft. Some require very specific educational requirements; however, most require a high school diploma or its equivalent.

### 27. WHO PAYS FOR THE APPRENTICE PROGRAM?

The program sponsor plans, administers, and pays for the program.

### 28. WHAT IS A PROGRAM SPONSOR?

The program sponsor can be individual employers, groups of employers, or combinations of employers and unions, combination of equal numbers of employers and unions are called joint labor management apprenticeship committees. The term often is shortened to Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC) or Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC). The latter term, JATC, applies if the committee administers a journeyman training program to upgrade skills in addition to directing an apprentice program. Committees may represent labor and management interests at the national, state, or local level. Program sponsors may be governmental agencies at all levels, including universities and the military.

### 29. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PROGRAM SPONSOR?

The sponsor sets policy concerning the conduct of the program. The sponsor’s jurisdiction includes selecting and indenturing apprentices, supervising training, establishing training curriculum, and certifying apprentices as journeyworker upon completion of the program.

### 30. WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF APRENTICESHIP?

It is an agency of the United States Department of Labor that stimulated and assists industry in the development, expansion, and improvement of apprenticeship and training programs. The Office of Apprenticeship's principal functions is to encourage the establishment of sound apprenticeship and training programs and to provide technical assistance to industry in setting up such programs.

31. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP IN APPRENTICESHIP?

The federal role, as authorized by the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937, is to promote labor standards that safeguard the welfare of apprentices and to guide, improve, and assist apprenticeship. The Office of Apprenticeship is also responsible for registering apprenticeship programs and individual apprentices.

32. HOW CAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ASSIST THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM?

By providing evaluation and assessment services, associate degree programs, pre-apprenticeship experiences, curriculum development projects, instructor training and certification, related instruction, and advisory committee participation. Few of these are provided to the apprenticeship system. Generally, the related instruction is the most common type of service available from the educational system.

33. WHAT IS A JOURNEYWORKER?

A worker who has satisfactorily completed an apprenticeship and is classified as a skilled worker in that trade or craft. The journeyworker level of competency is conferred by a registered program sponsor.

34. TO BE IN AN APPRENTICE PROGRAM, MUST THE APPRENTICE BE A MEMBER OF A LABOR UNION?

NO

35. WHAT PERCENT OF APPRENTICES ARE NOT MEMBERS OF (ORGANIZED LABOR) UNIONS?

60% - 70%

36. WHAT IS THE AVERAGE AGE OF APPRENTICES?

Mid-twenties.

37. WHAT IS A SCHOOL-TO-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM?

It is a collaborative effort between business, industry, labor, the Office of Apprenticeship, and education. The linkage may serve secondary, postsecondary, or adult students. School-to-Apprenticeship Programs are similar to cooperative education; both involve formalized on-the-job training and require related classroom instruction. Sometimes, school-to-apprenticeship is part of co-op, with co-op coordinators recruiting the youth, assisting in placement, and arranging for related instruction.

38. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A SCHOOL-TO-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM?

To enable persons to achieve apprenticeship entrance competencies and advanced standing while achieving their formal educational requirements. Students are guided into part-time (cooperative) employment or preparatory in-school training as registered, part-time apprentices leading to an accepted journeyworker level as an occupational goal, including transition to full-time registered apprenticeship upon satisfactory completion of the formal vocational/technical program.

39. DOES THE OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP PROVIDE JOURNEYWORKER CERTIFICATION TO APPRENTICES AFTER COMPLETION OF THEIR APPRENTICESHIP?

No. The Office of Apprenticeship provides only a certificate of completion of the apprenticeship program. The Office of Apprenticeship does not certify completers of the apprenticeship as journeyworkers. If the apprentice is a member of a union, the union (under its own rules) may provide journeyworker certification.

40. HOW MANY PEOPLE PARTICIPATE NATIONALLY IN THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM?

National 1987 data indicated that each year approximately 320,000 individuals participated in 45,000 registered apprenticeship programs. National 1989 data indicated that 22% of the apprentices were minorities and 7% were females.

41. CAN APPRENTICES EARN COLLEGE CREDIT FOR THE APPRENTICESHIP EXPERIENCE?

Yes. Most technical colleges offer college credit for many apprentices. Many large corporations/unions nationally have transferred apprenticeship-related training to postsecondary institutions from non-postsecondary schools in order for the apprentices to receive college credit.

#### 42. WHY IS APPRENTICESHIP IMPORTANT FOR THE APPRENTICE?

- (a) Gaining varied skills through instruction and experience in all major aspects of a trade or craft;
- (b) Learning to work in harmony with different types of trades and crafts people in a work setting
- (c) Learning to work in a company or work organization;

#### 43. WHY IS APPRENTICESHIP IMPORTANT TO THE PROGRAM SPONSOR?

For the program sponsor, the advantages for participating in the apprenticeship training system include the following:

- (a) Developing and ensuring a supply of trained, skilled, and knowledgeable workers and supervisors for their occupations;
- (b) Increasing workers productivity, overall skill levels, and versatility;
- (c) Lessening the need for supervision of employees by developing initiative, pride in craftsmanship, speed and accuracy in work; and
- (d) Continuing to attract a constant flow of capable people in the trade or craft.

#### 44. HOW LONG DO TRADITIONAL APPRENTICESHIP LAST?

The traditional apprenticeship system stipulates requirements about the time period for training. For example, the required length of time for training ranges from one to six years, depending upon the specific trade. The majority of programs require three to four years of work and study to complete an apprenticeship.

#### 45. HOW LONG DO PERFORMANCE-BASED APPRENTICESHIPS LAST?

Under the performance-based approach, the time required by an apprentice to accomplish individual tasks and complete the over all program depends on the apprentice's ability to complete the work. Apprentices are permitted to move ahead at their own pace, depending on their prior training, ability to master the task, and motivation to progress.

#### 46. WHAT IS A STATE APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL (SAC).

A council created by a state to encourage apprenticeship training within the state's industries and by establishing minimum standards as a basis for apprenticeship training. The councils also assist and promote interest in the establishment of apprenticeship training and by serving as a clearinghouse for all matters pertaining to apprenticeship training in the state. The councils work in cooperation with the Office of Apprenticeship. Each council uses the Office of Apprenticeship standards establishing programs but may add any other state requirements in addition to the Office of Apprenticeship specifications.

#### 47. ARE STATE APPRENTICESHIP COUNCILS REQUIRED BY LAW?

State Apprenticeship Councils are not required by federal law. Throughout the U.S. 32 states do have such state councils.

#### 48. WHAT OCCUPATIONS ARE GENERALLY ACCEPTED TO HAVE THE LARGEST NUMBER OF APPRENTICES?

Electrician, carpenter, plumber, pipe fitter and sheet metal worker. In fact, nearly 80% of all registered

apprentices in the United States are in the building or metal trades.

49. WHAT DOES THE TERM “WORK EXPERIENCE” MEAN IN RELATION TO APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS?

The time apprentices spend on the job under journeyworker supervision, learning step-by-step, through demonstration and practice, the individual work process of a chosen skilled occupation.

50. WHERE DO INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN BECOMING APPRENTICES GO TO FIND ABOUT SUCH OPPORTUNITIES?

Individuals should get in touch with their local employment service office or the appropriate joint apprenticeship committee, union, or employers for the craft they want to enter.