

E-Book

# Tradies Guide

Hiring & Retaining  
an Apprentice

Free Download!

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# INTRODUCTION

At BUSY At Work, we understand the significant role apprenticeships play in the growth and sustainability of the trades sector. This guide is designed to provide tradies with all the essential information they need when considering hiring an apprentice. From understanding the legal requirements to finding the right candidate and supporting them through their training, this e-book will equip you with the knowledge to make informed decisions and effectively integrate an apprentice into your business.

## **Why Hire an Apprentice?**

Hiring an apprentice offers numerous benefits, including contributing to the development of the industry, accessing fresh talent, and ensuring that the skills and knowledge you've honed over the years are passed on to the next generation. Moreover, with the availability of wage subsidies and financial incentives from both Federal and State governments, the costs associated with hiring and training an apprentice can be significantly reduced.

# UNDERSTANDING APPRENTICESHIPS

## What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a structured training program that combines practical on-the-job experience with formal education, leading to a nationally recognised qualification.

Apprenticeships are available across a range of trades including carpentry, plumbing, electrical and more. They are a great way to ensure that new entrants to the industry develop the skills and knowledge required to succeed.

## Types of Apprenticeships

In Australia, apprenticeships typically fall into three categories:

- Full-time apprenticeships: The apprentice works and trains full-time, on average 38 hours per week.
- Part-time apprenticeships: The apprentice works and trains part-time, on average less than 38 hours per week. These apprentices work a regular pattern of hours which are usually recorded in writing. Part-time apprentices get entitlements such as annual leave and sick and carer's leave.
- School-based apprenticeships: The apprentice combines work and training while still attending school, often part-time.

Each type of apprenticeship has its own set of requirements and it's essential to choose the one that best fits your business needs and the apprentice's circumstances.

### **The Role of the Employer**

As an employer, your role in the apprenticeship is crucial. You'll be responsible for providing a safe and supportive work environment, ensuring that the apprentice receives appropriate training and monitoring their progress. You'll also need to comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, which are outlined in detail in the following chapters.





# LEGAL AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

## Apprenticeship Contracts

A formal training contract must be signed by both the employer and the apprentice. This contract outlines the terms of the apprenticeship, including the duration, type of training provided and the rights and responsibilities of both parties.

These contracts must be registered with the relevant State Training Authority, [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority \(VRQA\)](#) in Victoria, the [Apprenticeship Office WA](#) in Western Australia, [The DESBT](#) in Queensland and [Training Services NSW](#) in New South Wales.

## Workplace Health and Safety

Employers are legally required to ensure the health and safety of their apprentices while they are at work. This includes providing appropriate training, supervision and personal protective equipment (PPE). In Victoria, you must comply with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#), which outlines your obligations regarding workplace safety.

## Award Wages and Entitlements

Apprentices in Australia are entitled to be paid according to the relevant award or enterprise agreement. [The Fair Work Ombudsman](#) provides detailed information on apprentice pay rates and entitlements, which vary depending on the industry, the apprentice's year of training and whether they have completed year 12.

For sole traders you can view award wages at [Wageline](#).

It's important to note that adult apprentices (those starting at 21 years or older) may have different pay rates. Additionally, apprentices are entitled to be paid for time spent in training. In Victoria, employers should refer to awards such as the [Building and Construction General On-site Award 2020](#), while in Western Australia, relevant awards might include the Building and Construction General On-site Award 2020.

However, employers should always check the specific award that covers their trade, as apprentices often have a different pay structure, with rates increasing as they progress through their training.

## Licensing and Accreditation

Some trades require specific licenses or accreditation to legally perform work. If your business operates in such a trade, you'll need to ensure that your apprentice is working under the supervision of a licensed professional and that they are progressing towards obtaining their own license as part of their training.

# FINDING THE RIGHT APPRENTICE

## Recruitment Strategies

Finding the right apprentice is crucial for both the success of your business and the apprentice's future career. Consider the following strategies for recruiting an apprentice:

- **Advertise the Position:** Use job boards, industry associations and local newspapers to advertise the apprenticeship.
- **Post the position to our National, apprenticeship specific jobs board** [www.apprenticeshipcentral.com.au](http://www.apprenticeshipcentral.com.au)
- **Partner with TAFEs and Training Organisations:** Establish relationships with local TAFEs and vocational education providers who can refer students to your apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Networking:** Leverage your existing professional network to find potential candidates.
- **Utilising government resources:** Each state offers government resources for apprenticeship recruitment. In Victoria, consider the [Victorian Government's Recruit Smarter](#) initiative. In Western Australia, the [Hiring Managers Toolkit](#) offered by the WA Government can be useful.



## Interviewing Tips

When interviewing potential apprentices, look for candidates who demonstrate enthusiasm for the trade, a willingness to learn and a strong work ethic. Consider asking questions about their past experiences, what interests them about the trade and how they handle challenges.

Remember, your recruitment process should reflect your company's values and culture. By implementing these strategies, you'll be well-positioned to find the right apprentice for your business

## Skills and Attributes to Consider

An ideal apprentice should have a mix of technical aptitude and soft skills, such as:

- **Technical skills:** Basic understanding of tools, machinery, or relevant technologies.
- **Problem-solving abilities:** The capacity to troubleshoot issues and find solutions on the job.
- **Communication skills:** The ability to follow instructions and work well with team members.
- **Physical fitness:** Many trades require physical labour, so good health and stamina are important.



# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

## Creating a Training Plan

A structured training plan is essential for ensuring that your apprentice acquires the necessary skills and knowledge. The plan should outline:

- On-the-job training: Practical tasks that the apprentice will perform, aligned with their coursework.
- Off-the-job training: Formal education provided by a TAFE or registered training organisation (RTO).
- Progress milestones: Key competencies or skills that the apprentice should master at different stages of their training.

## Balancing Work and Study

Apprentices often have to balance their work responsibilities with their study commitments. As an employer, you should provide support by:

- Allowing time off for study: Ensure that your apprentice has enough time to attend classes and study for exams.
- Encouraging practical application of studies: Where possible, align their work tasks with what they are learning in their coursework.



## Mentoring and Support

Providing mentorship is one of the most effective ways to support an apprentice. Consider assigning a senior team member as a mentor to:

- Guide the apprentice through their training: Offer advice and share industry insights.
- Provide feedback: Regularly discuss the apprentice's progress and areas for improvement.
- Encourage professional growth: Support the apprentice's career development beyond the initial apprenticeship.

## Assessment and Feedback

Regular assessment and feedback are critical for an apprentice's development. Implement a system where:

- Formal assessments: Are conducted at regular intervals, aligned with their training milestones.
- Constructive feedback: Is provided to help them understand their strengths and areas that need improvement.
- Documentation of progress: Keep detailed records of their development to ensure they are on track to complete their apprenticeship successfully.



# FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

## Understanding Apprenticeship Wages

Apprentices are paid a percentage of the fully qualified tradesperson's wage, with the rate increasing each year of their apprenticeship. The exact rate depends on the specific award covering your trade. For instance, under the [Building and Construction General On-site Award 2020](#), first-year apprentices receive a lower wage that gradually increases as they advance through their training.

## Federal Incentives

The Australian government recognises the importance of apprenticeships in developing a skilled workforce and offers significant support to employers who take on apprentices. The cornerstone of this support is the [Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System \(AAIS\)](#).

The AAIS offers support throughout the apprenticeship journey, from commencement to completion. It aims to encourage businesses to invest in training and development, particularly in industries facing skills shortages. The program includes various payments and support measures, such as wage subsidies, completion incentives and additional support for apprentices facing disadvantage.



In addition to federal incentives, each state offers its own set of programs to further support employers in taking on apprentices. Let's examine the specific incentives available in Victoria and Western Australia:

### **Victoria:**

- [Victorian Skills First Program](#): Offers additional support to Victorian businesses, including subsidised training costs and targeted wage subsidies for specific industries.
- Payroll tax exemptions: Victoria offers payroll tax exemptions for wages paid to apprentices under registered training contracts.

### **Western Australia:**

- [Jobs and Skills WA](#) Employer Incentive: Provides up to \$8,500 for WA employers who employ an apprentice or new entrant trainee. Additional loadings may apply for target groups or regional areas.
- [Construction Training Fund \(CTF\)](#) grants: Employers in the construction industry can access up to \$34,500 for apprentices and trainees working in onsite construction, installation, or fabrication.
- Payroll tax exemptions: WA offers payroll tax exemptions for wages paid to apprentices under registered training contracts.

- 
- [Group Training Organisation \(GTO\) Wage Subsidy Program](#): This program offers subsidies for employers to help cover the average estimated award wage of full-time apprentices in the building and construction industry.

### **Budgeting for an Apprentice**

- While apprenticeships are a valuable investment, it's important to budget for the associated costs, including:
- Wages: Ensure you account for the rising wage rates as the apprentice progresses.
- Training costs: Consider the expenses related to formal education and any additional training you might provide.
- Tools and equipment: Factor in the cost of providing the apprentice with the necessary tools and safety equipment.
- Superannuation contributions: Remember to include the mandatory superannuation payments for your apprentice.
- Workers' compensation insurance: Ensure you have appropriate coverage for your apprentice.
- State-specific levies or charges: Be aware of any additional costs that may apply in your state or territory.



# LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

## Workplace Rights and Obligations

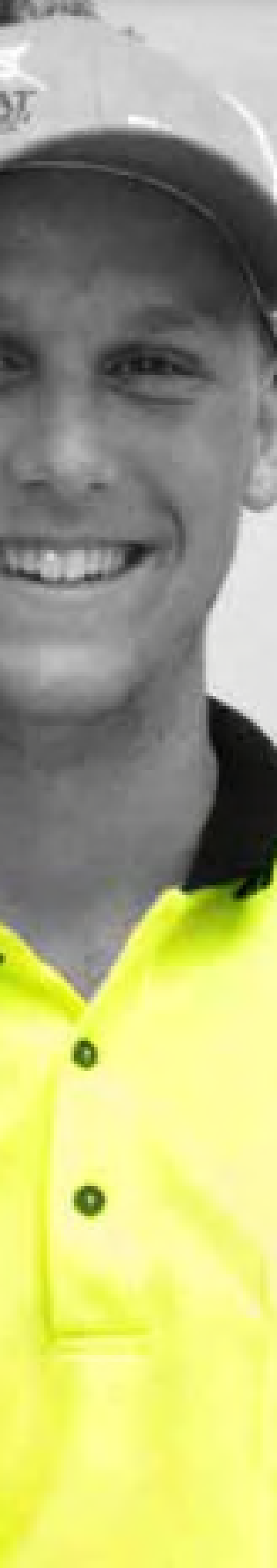
Apprentices are entitled to the same workplace rights as other employees, including:

- Fair pay: In accordance with the relevant award or enterprise agreement.
- Safe working conditions: Compliance with Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) regulations.
- Leave entitlements: Including annual leave, sick leave and public holidays.
- Protection from discrimination: Ensuring that the apprentice is treated fairly and with respect.

## Managing Apprentice Records

Accurate record-keeping is essential for compliance and for monitoring the apprentice's progress. This includes:

- Training records: Documenting the on-the-job training provided and the apprentice's achievements.
- Wage records: Keeping detailed records of wages paid, including any adjustments due to progression or completion.
- Contractual documentation: Maintaining copies of all agreements and contracts signed.



## Handling Disputes

Disputes between employers and apprentices can arise, but many can be resolved through clear communication and mediation. If a dispute escalates, you may need to involve:

- Access the BUSY At Work mentorship services to assist with any disputes.
- [Fair Work Ombudsman](#): For issues related to wages, conditions, or workplace rights.

### Victoria-specific:

- Victorian Apprenticeship Field Officers: Who can assist in mediating disputes specific to apprenticeships.
- [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority \(VRQA\)](#): Can also assist with apprenticeship-related disputes.

### Western Australia-specific:

- [Department of Training and Workforce Development](#): Can provide support in resolving apprenticeship issues.

# INTEGRATING APPRENTICES INTO YOUR BUSINESS

## Onboarding Processes

A well-structured onboarding process helps set clear expectations and makes the apprentice feel welcomed and valued. Your onboarding process should include:

- Introduction to the team: Helping the apprentice get to know their colleagues.
- Overview of company policies: Including safety protocols, communication channels, and workplace expectations.
- Assignment of a mentor: To guide them through their initial stages of the apprenticeship.

## Creating a Supportive Environment

Building a supportive environment is key to the apprentice's success. This includes:

- Encouraging open communication: Allowing the apprentice to ask questions and provide feedback.

- Promoting a culture of learning: Where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities.
- Recognising achievements: Celebrating the apprentice's milestones and progress to keep them motivated.

### Team Dynamics

Integrating an apprentice into an existing team can present challenges, particularly if team members are not used to working with trainees. To foster a positive team dynamic:

- Promote inclusivity: Encourage team members to support and mentor the apprentice.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities: Ensure that everyone understands the apprentice's role within the team.
- Provide conflict resolution mechanisms: To address any issues that may arise from misunderstandings or differing expectations.

# LONG-TERM PLANNING

## Retaining Apprentices Post-Completion

Retaining an apprentice after they complete their training can be beneficial for your business, as they are already familiar with your processes and have the skills needed to contribute effectively. Strategies for retention include:

- **Offering competitive wages:** Ensure that your pay rates are competitive with industry standards.
- **Providing career development opportunities:** Offer further training, certifications, or the possibility of advancing within the company.
- **Creating a positive work environment:** Foster a culture that values and rewards loyalty and hard work.

To ensure a smooth transition for competency-based apprentices:

- **Update Records:** Track competencies as they're achieved to recognise progress.
- **Provide Completion Statement:** Issue a formal statement once all competencies are met, certifying them for employment.
- **Submit to Authorities:** Finalise apprenticeship status by sending documents to the State Training Authority.
- **Emphasise Growth:** Show how certified skills support career growth within the company.



## Succession Planning

Apprentices can play a critical role in the long-term sustainability of your business. By developing a succession plan, you can:

- Prepare for future growth: Ensure that you have a pipeline of skilled workers ready to step into key roles as your business expands.
- Retain valuable skills: Prevent the loss of expertise by training apprentices to take over from experienced team members who may retire or move on.

## Developing Future Leaders

Identify apprentices with leadership potential and invest in their development. This might include:

- Leadership training programs: Offering formal leadership training to those who show promise.
- Mentorship opportunities: Pairing future leaders with experienced mentors to guide their development.
- Involvement in strategic projects: Giving apprentices opportunities to participate in larger, more complex projects to build their skills and confidence.

Remember, long-term planning is about creating a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers who can contribute to your business's growth and success.



# HOW BUSY AT WORK SUPPORTS EMPLOYERS

*Employer Support Every Step of the Way*

**At BUSY At Work**, our mission is to support businesses in developing a skilled and committed workforce. We believe that the success of your apprentices is directly linked to the success of your business.

Our comprehensive support services are designed to ensure that apprentices are well-prepared, supported and motivated to complete their training and contribute to your organisation.

## **Why Choose Us?**

**BUSY At Work** brings unparalleled knowledge and a trusted reputation in apprenticeship services and support

### **Tailored Support Service**

- **Capability Assessment:** Pre-apprenticeship assessment that evaluates your apprentice's suitability for their career ahead.

- 
- **Wraparound Support:** Comprehensive services for apprentices facing barriers, including women in trades, First Nations Australians, apprentices with disabilities and those in remote areas.

### **Focus On Retention & Completion**

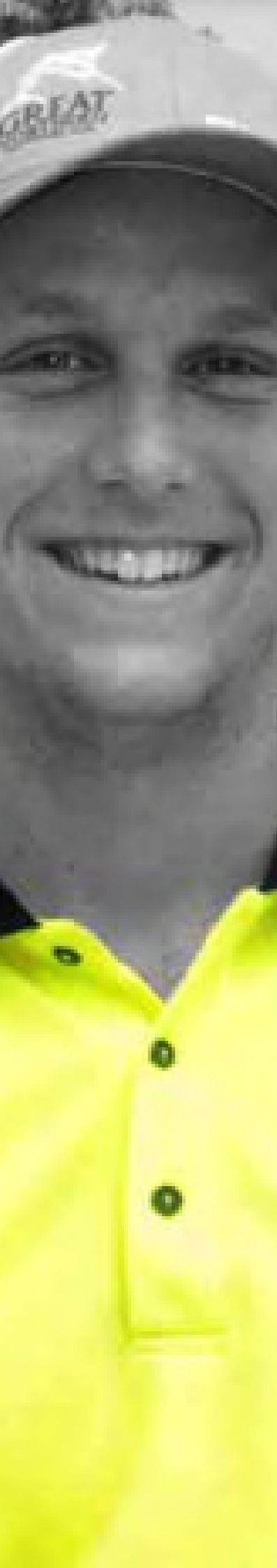
- **Integrated Support:** Targeted mentoring and regular check-ins to keep apprentices on track.
- **Continuous Engagement:** Ongoing support for both apprentices and employers to promptly address any issues.

### **Mentoring & Education**

- **Demand-Driven Mentoring:** One-on-one guidance, skill development and emotional support.
- **Employer Education:** Best practices for supporting apprentices and fostering an inclusive work environment.

### **Streamlined Processes**

- **Accessing Government Incentives:** BUSY will assess you and your apprentice for eligibility and help you receive maximum benefits.
- **Administrative Ease:** Assistance with all paperwork for a hassle-free process.
- **Technical Support:** Help with the Apprenticeship Data Management System (ADMS) and the claiming process.



# A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO GET STARTED

*Throughout the process, BUSY At Work provides support with:*

## **1. Assessment**

An assessment will be completed prior to sign up to determine the readiness of both you and your Apprentice/Trainee and to identify tailored supports that BUSY At Work can provide.

## **2. New Employee Induction**

BUSY At Work will carry out a full sign up for both you and your Apprentice/Trainee.

## **3. Choosing A Training Provider**

BUSY At Work will provide you and your Apprentice/ Trainee a list of suitable Registered Training Organisations to choose from to deliver the training.

## **4. Government Registration**

BUSY At Work will finalise the Training Contract and forward to the State Training Authority for registration.

### **5. Eligible Incentive Claims**

BUSY At Work will assess you and your Apprentice/ Trainees' eligibility for incentives and process accordingly.

### **6. Mentoring & Support Services**

BUSY At Work will provide mentoring and support services throughout the apprenticeship to both you and your Apprentice/Trainee by one of our industry qualified mentors.

### **7. Completion Of Training**

Your Apprentice/Trainee now gains a formal industry 7 qualification that is nationally recognised.



# CONCLUSION

## *Summary of Key Points*

In this guide, we've covered the key considerations for hiring an apprentice, including understanding apprenticeships, legal and regulatory obligations, recruitment strategies, training and development, financial considerations, compliance and long-term planning. By following these guidelines, you'll be well-equipped to successfully integrate an apprentice into your business and contribute to the growth and sustainability of the trades industry.

### **Next Steps**

If you're ready to take the next step in hiring an apprentice, or if you have further questions, BUSY At Work is here to help. Contact us for advice, support and resources tailored to your needs.

13 BUSY (13 28 79)

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[busyatwork.com.au](https://busyatwork.com.au)



# FAQS

## **What is the minimum age to start an apprenticeship?**

In most cases, apprentices must be at least 15 years old, though there are exceptions for school-based apprenticeships.

## **Can apprentices work part-time?**

Yes, apprentices can work part-time, but the duration of the apprenticeship may be extended to accommodate the reduced hours.

## **What happens if an apprentice doesn't complete their training?**

An apprentice must complete all the applicable training on and off the job as per the training plan that all parties sign and agree to. The apprentice is signed off on each module once they become competent. Once done the employer can sign the completion agreement.

## **How long will it take?**

Full-time apprenticeships will take between 36 to 48 months, depending on the apprentice and how quickly they complete the competencies. An apprentice will undertake qualifications from Cert Level III to Advanced Diploma.



### **Can I hire an apprentice if I'm self-employed or run a small business?**

Yes, as long as you can provide the necessary training and supervision. Some small businesses partner with Group Training Organisations to share apprentices.

### **What qualifications do I need to train an apprentice?**

You don't need formal teaching qualifications, but you or a supervisor must be qualified in the relevant trade and able to provide on-the-job training.

### **How much time off does an apprentice need for training?**

This varies by trade and qualification, but typically apprentices need regular time off for off-the-job training, often one day per week or in blocks of time.

### **Can I terminate an apprenticeship contract?**

Yes, but there are specific procedures to follow. Termination should be a last resort after attempting to resolve any issues.

### **I'm having trouble managing my apprentice, how can BUSY Help?**

Yes, BUSY has dedicated mentors who can assist at risk apprentices and employers with concerns that may effect their work arrangement and/or successful completion of their apprenticeship.

# INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

*New Apprentice*

## **Background Questions**

- What inspired you to pursue an apprenticeship in the construction industry?
- Do you have any previous experience or exposure to construction work?
- Have you completed any relevant pre-apprenticeship courses or training?

## **Technical Knowledge**

- What basic tools are you familiar with and how have you used them?
- Can you explain the importance of workplace safety in construction?
- What do you know about reading construction plans or blueprints?

## **Practical Skills**

- Describe a time when you had to solve a practical problem. How did you approach it?
- Have you ever worked on a team project? What was your role?
- How comfortable are you with working at heights or in confined spaces?

### **Work Ethic and Attitude**

- Construction work often involves early starts and long days. How do you feel about this?
- How do you handle constructive criticism or feedback on your work?
- Describe a situation where you had to learn a new skill quickly. How did you manage it?

### **Career Goals**

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years within the construction industry?
- What specific areas of construction are you most interested in learning about?
- How do you plan to balance your apprenticeship training with on-the-job work?

### **Scenario-Based Questions**

- If you noticed a safety hazard on site, what would you do?
- How would you handle a disagreement with a co-worker about the best way to complete a task?
- If you were unsure how to complete a task, what steps would you take?

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

- What do you consider to be your biggest strength that would benefit you in this apprenticeship?
- What area do you think you need the most improvement in and how do you plan to address it?

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