

Work Experience

The NCTJ recognise the importance of practical experience that compliments the study of journalism. Work experience is an excellent way to put the skills learned on a journalism course into practice and it may become the first step towards a successful career in the media.

Students are expected to organise placements themselves and these can take any form: a two-week block, two blocks of one week or single days spread out over a longer period. However, here are some tips on finding and making the most out of your work experience placement.

Finding work experience

- Start by contacting your local media outlets: newspapers, magazines, news websites, radio stations or broadcasters. Try to find out who deals with work experience so that you can call or email them directly.
- Editors are busy people, especially when their deadline is approaching. Find out what time of day is best to contact them.
- If sending an email, introduce yourself, explain that you are looking for work experience and suggest some dates. Attach an updated copy of your CV and mention that you are studying, or intending to study, an NCTJ qualification. For advice on writing a CV see [here](#).
- Always give the media organisation enough notice to process any requests for work experience. Some companies have a waiting list of a couple of months for placements. Do not expect to get work experience the week after sending a request.
- Tutors can be good sources of information about possible work experience placements – use your contacts.
- Don't take rejection personally: learn to be thick-skinned and, if at first you don't succeed, keep trying.
- It is recommended that you spend at least 10 days on work experience before, during or after your course but you should look for as many opportunities as you can in as many different media organisations as possible.

On placement

- Be prepared with your own ideas for stories. Employers value creativity and initiative.
- Be punctual - if you can't get to work on time, how can your editor be sure you'll be able to meet your deadlines?
- Volunteer for any tasks that are suggested, whether it be phoning a press officer or going out to get vox pops - it shows enthusiasm and dedication.
- Always have a notebook and pen at hand - you never know when you'll hear something that could make a good story.
- Talk to your colleagues- they are a mine of information and advice on the industry.
- Ask for feedback and/or a reference. Try and get a couple of minutes to sit down with your editor and ask for some constructive criticism - what did you do well and what could you have done differently? If you have completed an extended placement, getting a reference from an editor will be invaluable for any future job applications.