



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT UNION REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

## How do I choose a skilled trade that is a fit for me?

There are nearly 20 different trade pathways to choose from that each require a variety of skill sets and focus on different areas of construction. The WRTP|BIG STEP teams offer services to help you find a fit and get connected with industry professionals in the field. Consider factors such as your comfort with working in closed spaces or heights, your desire to work in extreme weather conditions, and your math skill level.

## What is the process to starting an apprenticeship right out of high school?

You will need to be 18 years old and have a high school diploma or HSED to be eligible to start an apprenticeship. Each skilled trade has a unique application process, and for many trades you can begin to submit these documents in your senior year of high school. You will complete your application by submitting your high school transcripts and finishing the steps in the application process. You do not need to have college certifications or degrees to be eligible for an apprenticeship after high school.

## When does an apprenticeship begin?

The first step is to complete the application process. These processes and application days depend on your trade. The WRTP|BIG STEP team can help you with this through their apprenticeship readiness services. Your construction apprenticeship is through the state of Wisconsin, and you will sign a contract. When you get to this point, you will be hired by a local contractor and also join your local's trade union.

## What classes should I take in high school?

Your math courses will be especially important if you are considering a career in construction. Take Algebra and practice skills like basic calculations, reading a ruler, and understanding fractions. The skilled trades will want you to have a good understanding of reading, language, and science as well. Most trade application processes require passing test scores, so your reading, math, and language ACT scores will be important. Take the opportunity to enroll in any career and technical education classes such as welding. Reach out to WRTP/BIG STEP for training opportunities as well.

## What does the schedule look like for an apprenticeship throughout the year?

If you complete the application process, get selected, and find an opportunity with a contractor to begin an apprenticeship, then you will spend about 80% of your time on the job and 20% of your time in school depending on your trade. An apprenticeship with the construction union trades is an “earn as you learn” program, meaning you are paid from the start of your apprenticeship for the work you do, learn from professionals in the field, and also have an opportunity to attend classes.



WRTP | BIG STEP  
SERVING MILWAUKEE

For more information about union apprenticeship, visit our website:  
[buildingadvantage.org](http://buildingadvantage.org)



### **What does the schedule look like for an apprenticeship throughout the year? (cont)**

Be aware that construction is often seasonal work, so apprentices may be out of work or laid off as certain points in the year (i.e. colder months). You will need to plan for this in how you spend your money and time, but part of being in a construction union supporting you in finding work when contractors are hiring.

### **What is a typical week like for an apprentice?**

A construction apprenticeship is a full-time opportunity to work and attend classes. The class schedule will vary based on the trade apprenticeship program you begin. Some trades have classes once or twice a week, sometimes in the evenings or on weekends. Other trades have apprentices attend classes during slower parts of the season when there is not as much work in the field. This schedule will depend on the trade you choose and how the local training center runs the program.

### **What do I do while waiting for an apprenticeship?**

You may have a wait before getting hired once you complete the application process for apprenticeship. Be patient. Be persistent. You may choose to take courses or trainings, and this is a good time to work on your resume and interview skills. Reach out to WRTP|BIG STEP to learn more about their services. Stay connected to your local union to learn about job opportunities and hiring contractors.

### **Can I get a good paying job right out of high school?**

Yes! One perk of the construction union trades is that each trade has a standard starting wage for new apprentices that is very competitive and offers strong benefits like health insurance and retirement savings. You will be eligible for wage increases as you earn hours towards your apprenticeship. Apprenticeships typically last 3 - 5 years, and you get paid the entire time you are working. You then can become a journey worker with the average hourly wage of over \$40/hour.

### **What are opportunities for growth in the field such as promotions and wage increases?**

As part of your local construction union, you will be eligible for wage increases based on the number of hours earned as an apprentice. During your apprenticeship, you work towards becoming a journeyworker who is an experienced professional in the field that can train apprentices. There are also opportunities to become a foreman leading crews on a job site, or a superintendent overseeing project job sites. The construction industry has many employment pathways and opportunities for continuing education to advance in your career!

### **What are current opportunities and job availability in the construction industry?**

The construction industry has work as long as communities are building and infrastructure needs improvements. Based on the trade that you choose, construction work may be seasonal. The trades are a growing industry in need of young people to join the workforce.

### **How do I get started?**

Visit our website or scan the QR code to fill out the form. Our staff will connect with you to begin your union trades career.

