# Recruitment, Selection and Induction

Taking the time to carefully recruit, select, and induct your apprentices helps to set them up for success and ensures your investment delivers long-term benefits. A well-chosen apprentice will grow into a capable tradesperson who represents your business and its values with pride.

Across the furnishing, cabinet making, glass and glazing, upholstery and soft furnishing and flooring industries. Fewer young people are choosing trades as their career pathway. This makes every apprentice a valuable investment, both for your business and for the future of the industry. With fewer candidates entering the pipeline, employers need to make every opportunity count.

That means getting recruitment, induction, and ongoing support right from day one. By selecting the right person, providing a clear and supportive start, and maintaining regular contact and mentoring, you can build commitment, reduce early dropouts, and retain skilled tradespeople who will grow with your business.

In a competitive labour market, employers who take the time to recruit well and support their apprentices through the full journey are the ones who will benefit, with loyal, motivated staff who contribute to a stronger, more sustainable trade.

## 1. Finding and Attracting Apprentices

For small businesses, finding the right apprentice can be one of the biggest challenges. It’s important to be proactive and visible when recruiting.

### Where to Find Apprentices:

* Work with your local ACAP (Apprentice Connect Australia Provider). They can help guide you through the sign-up and funding process. For more information – [Click here](https://content.apprenticeships.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-07/Information%20for%20Employers%20-%20010724.pdf?)
* Connect with schools and career advisors - Contact local high schools and engage with Career advisors. Offer to take students for work experience, school-based apprenticeships, or short trial placements. These opportunities allow students to experience the trade firsthand while giving you a chance to observe their attitude, reliability, and potential before committing to a full apprenticeship.
* Advertise on job boards and social media. Post roles on Seek, Indeed, Facebook Jobs, and community pages. Keep your ad simple and engaging.
* Use word of mouth and your local networks such as suppliers, other trades, and staff know that you are looking for an apprentice.
* Engage with pre-apprenticeship programs. Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) often have candidates ready for full apprenticeships.
* Partner with Group Training Organisations (GTOs). GTOs employ apprentices and place them with host employees, managing the administration while you provide hands-on training.

***Tip:*** *Hosting a student or school-based apprentice can be one of the best ways to identify motivated young people early - and can help you build your own future talent pipeline*

### What a Group Training Organisation (GTO) Does:

A Group Training Organisation (GTO) employs apprentices and trainees directly, then places them with host employees like your business to complete their on-the-job training. The GTO manages the employment contract, wages, and administration, while you focus on supervision and skill development.

This setup offers flexibility to small businesses that may not be ready to take on a full employment commitment but still want to train an apprentice. If the workload changes or an apprentice needs different experience, the GTO can rotate them to another host employer so they can continue training.

Best suited for:

* Small businesses with fluctuating workloads or seasonal demand.
* Employers who want to support apprentices prefer less paperwork.
* Workplaces without a dedicated HR or payroll team.
* Employers new to apprenticeships who want additional guidance.

***Tip:*** *GTOs are a great entry point if you want to “try before you hire.” They handle compliance and paperwork while you focus on skill development*

### How to Attract the Right Apprentice:

* Show your passion for the trade. Most young people will respond to enthusiasm. Talk about what makes your work rewarding.
* Promote your workplace culture. Highlight mentoring, training, support, and sharing success stories.
* Offer clear career progression. Explain how apprenticeships will lead to qualifications and long-term work.
* Be inclusive. Promote your workplace as welcoming to women, Indigenous apprentices, and people with disabilities.
* Make contact easy - Provide clear steps on how to apply or arrange a trial day.

***Tip:*** *Small employers often have an advantage - apprentices get hands-on experience quickly and can see the impact of their work. Emphasise that personal learning environment when promoting your apprenticeship opportunity*

## 2. Vetting and Selecting the Right Apprentice

Taking time to properly vet potential apprentices will help ensure you invest in someone who is motivated, reliable, and genuinely interested in the trade. A good apprentice is more than just a pair of hands - they are a future tradesperson and a potential long-term team member.

Early recruitment decisions often determine whether an apprenticeship will succeed or fail. Choosing the right person reduces turnover, builds a positive team culture, and strengthens your business long term.

* Ask about their motivation and understanding of the trade.
* Check reliability, punctuality, and attitude.
* Involve a potential supervisor in the interview process.
* Consider a short-paid trial or pre-apprenticeship placement.
* Contact referees or schoolteachers for feedback on attitude and teamwork.

### Example Interview Questions:

* Why do you want to work in the cabinet making or furnishing industry?
* What interests you the most about this trade?
* Where do you see yourself in 12 months? In 5 years?
* Tell me about a time you learned a new skill - what was it and how did you approach it?
* How do you handle negative feedback or mistakes?
* What does a 'good day at work' look like to you?
* How do you make sure you stay safe on the job?

***Tip:*** *Look for responses that show curiosity, commitment, and pride in craftsmanship - not just “I need a job.” Apprentices who see a future in the trade are far more likely to complete their qualification and grow within your business*

# 3. Supporting Your Apprentice from Day One

Starting an apprenticeship is a big step - for both the apprentice and the employer. The first few months set the tone for the entire training relationship. A well-planned induction and regular early support help apprentices feel confident, safe, and part of the team from day one.

## Why It Matters:

Apprentices who feel supported early on are more likely to stay, succeed, and complete their qualification. A structured start builds trust, sets clear expectations, and ensures the apprentice understands their role, rights, and how their learning fits into real work.

## Setting Them Up for Success - The Induction

A strong induction will set the foundation for a successful apprenticeship. It ensures everyone - the apprentice, supervisor, and employer - understands their roles, expectations, and shared commitment to learning and safety. A clear and supportive start helps apprentices feel valued, confident, and ready to contribute from day one.

Apprentices who receive a structured induction and ongoing check-ins are more likely to stay engaged, feel supported, and complete their training. This process builds trust, sets standards early, and provides space for open communication.

**Key Elements of a Best Practice Induction:**

* Joint Discussion - Bring the apprentice, supervisor, and employer together to outline expectations, improve communication methods, and mutual responsibilities.
* Set Standards and Review Points - Establish workplace standards, review schedules, and check-in frequently (e.g., weekly or fortnightly during the first months).
* Two-Way Feedback - Encourage open conversation where both apprentice and supervisor share progress updates, challenges, and achievements. Document discussions and agreed actions.
* Self-Reflection - Give apprentices time to reflect on their own progress, identify skills they’ve improved, and set short-term goals for development.
* Wellbeing Check-Ins - Ask simple wellbeing questions at each review. Support goes beyond skills - it includes mental health, confidence, and work-life balance.
* Personal and Career Goals - Discuss long-term aspirations and career pathways. Connect training activities to these goals to maintain motivation and purpose.

**RESOURCE :**

To assist in this process, see the resources section for templates including:

* **Induction Checklist template - link**
* **Apprentice Probation Period Template – 3 months – link**
* **Apprenticeship Development Pathway Template – link**
* **Reflection & Growth Planning Form - Template - link**

***Tip:*** *Make every review session a two-way conversation, not just a checklist. When apprentices feel heard and supported, they’re far more likely to develop confidence, remain committed, and grow into capable tradespeople.*

## 4. Ongoing Support and Review

The first six months are critical for engagement and retention. Use short, structured check-ins to review progress, address challenges early, and celebrate wins.

* Keep it two-way: Ask how the apprentice feels they are going not just your own observations.
* Document any outcomes: Record key points, actions, and next steps.
* Include wellbeing questions: “How are you finding the balance between work and training?” or “Is there anything making work harder for you right now?”
* Encourage reflection: Have the apprentice identify what skills they have improved and what they want to focus on next.

**RESOURCE** – Refer to the Wellbeing check in template for guidance on discussing personal wellbeing with your apprentice regularly.

* **Wellbeing check in template - Link**

## 5. Understanding Apprenticeship Probation Periods

Every new apprentice or trainee in Australia begins with a probationary period - a crucial trial phase built into the training contract.

This period serves a vital purpose: it allows both the employer and the apprentice to thoroughly assess their compatibility and commitment before entering the full, long-term Training Contract.

The purpose and importance of the probation period is to ensure the arrangement is the right fit. It gives the employer time to confirm that the apprentice is suitable for the role, and committed to the training, and it gives the apprentice time to determine if the career, workplace, and Registered Training Organisation (RTO) are right for them.

**Key Points to Know – Overview**

**Length:**

The typical duration is usually between 60 and 90 days from the contract start date, but this varies by state or territory and sometimes by the qualification total duration.

**Rights:**

During the probation period, apprentices are still legally protected and are entitled to correct pay, all relevant awards/industrial agreements, and all National Employment Standards (NES) as well as being paid to attend off the job training during the probationary period

**Termination:**

Either party can generally terminate the Training Contract during probation without requiring formal approval from the State Training Authority (STA).

**Extensions:**

Many states allow the original period to be formally extended if more time is needed to make a final decision, but this extension must be applied for and approved before the original probation period expires.

For specific details on the probation period, including exact lengths and how to apply for an extension in your area, please refer to the **Quick Reference Guide – Probation Periods – Link**

# Making the Most of Your Apprentice’s Probation Period:

The probation period is more than just a legal requirement. It is your opportunity to set expectations, provide feedback, and confirm that your new apprentice is the right fit for your business. A structured approach helps identify any early issues, provide additional support where needed, and build confidence for both the employer and apprentice.

## Purpose of the Probation Period:

* To confirm that the apprentice understands and meets your workplace expectations.
* To identify early skill or behaviour gaps and provide support or retraining.
* To build trust and communication between the apprentice, supervisor, and RTO.
* To make an informed decision about whether the apprentice should continue past probation.

## Best Practice for Managing Probation:

* Set clear objectives from the start – Identify what “success” looks like in the first three months (e.g. attendance, safety awareness, teamwork, communication, etc.).
* Use structured review points – Schedule regular check-ins at weeks 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, and 12 (or monthly) to review progress and document outcomes.
* Provide feedback early – If you see issues with attitude, reliability, or performance, raise them immediately and offer guidance or additional training.
* Encourage self-reflection – Ask apprentices what’s working well and what they find challenging. This helps them take ownership of their learning.
* Document everything – Record each discussion, feedback session, and action plan. This ensures fairness, supports good communication, and provides documentation if probation does not continue.
* Use available templates – Structured forms make it easier to stay consistent and professional across all apprentices.

## Tools and Templates to Support You:

To help guide consistent and fair review discussions, use one of the following templates:

* Apprentice Probation Period Evaluation Form – 3 Months (Detailed review checkpoints at 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, and 12 weeks). – **LINK TO FORM**
* Apprentice Probation Period Evaluation Form – Condensed Version (Monthly checkpoints at 1, 2, and 3 months, ideal for small businesses). – **LINK TO FORM**

Both templates are designed to track attendance, performance, and teamwork throughout the probation period; provide space for supervisor and apprentice comments; record decisions and sign-off at the end of the probation period; and support workforce planning by identifying training needs and performance strengths early.

***Tip:*** *Use these forms as part of your ongoing workforce planning. They help identify high-performing apprentices early and highlight areas where additional training or mentoring will make the biggest impact*

# Deciding Whether to Retain or Release an Apprentice:

The end of the probation period is the point where both you and the apprentice decide if the arrangement is working. This decision should be based on clear evidence, open communication, and documented review discussions - not just a gut feeling.

## When to Make the Decision:

* A decision should be made at least 2 weeks before the probation end date.
* This allows time to communicate your decision, provide notice if the apprenticeship will not continue, and complete the necessary documentation (through your ACAP provider or Training Services).
* Never allow an apprentice to work past the probation end date without confirming the outcome - this automatically locks the apprenticeship contract in for the full term.

## How to Decide:

Use your review notes, evaluation forms, and discussions with the apprentice to assess their overall progress. Then ask yourself:

* Have they demonstrated a willingness to learn and take feedback?
* Are they meeting basic expectations for attendance, teamwork, and safety?
* Have they shown improvement in areas previously discussed?
* Do they fit well within the team and workplace culture?
* Are any issues due to lack of training, personal challenges, or mismatch of expectations?

If you’re unsure, consult your Apprenticeship Connect Australia Provider (ACAP) or Training Services representative - they can guide you through your options and help mediate discussions if needed.

## If You Decide to Retain the Apprentice:

* Hold a short meeting to confirm your decision and provide positive feedback.
* Outline the next phase of their training and development plan.
* Keep using regular check-ins every few months to maintain communication and momentum.

## If You Decide Not to Continue:

* Meet with the apprentice privately and explain your decision clearly and respectfully.
* Be honest about your reasons - reference documented evidence and prior discussions.
* Provide at least one week’s notice (as required under apprenticeship laws).
* Contact your ACAP provider or Training Services to formally cancel the apprenticeship before the probation end date.
* Offer constructive feedback and encourage the apprentice to continue in the trade if appropriate - sometimes a different environment or pace of work is a better fit.

***Tip:*** *Ending an apprenticeship is never easy, but if the fit isn’t right, deciding early is fairer to both parties. The goal of probation isn’t to “weed out” - it’s to give every apprentice the best possible start and the right support to succeed.*