

# These factory workers get paid to go to school

This lesson aims to discuss the varying needs of students, the economy, trade jobs, and professional-level occupations. Many believe that vocational or blue-collar work is low-paid and low-skill, but this is usually not the case. In the UK, plumbers and construction workers are paid the same and if not more than those of mid-level office workers. Understanding the benefits of apprenticeships to pass on vital skills is just as important as a university education.

**LEVEL: B1 / B2**    **INCLUDED TASKS:**

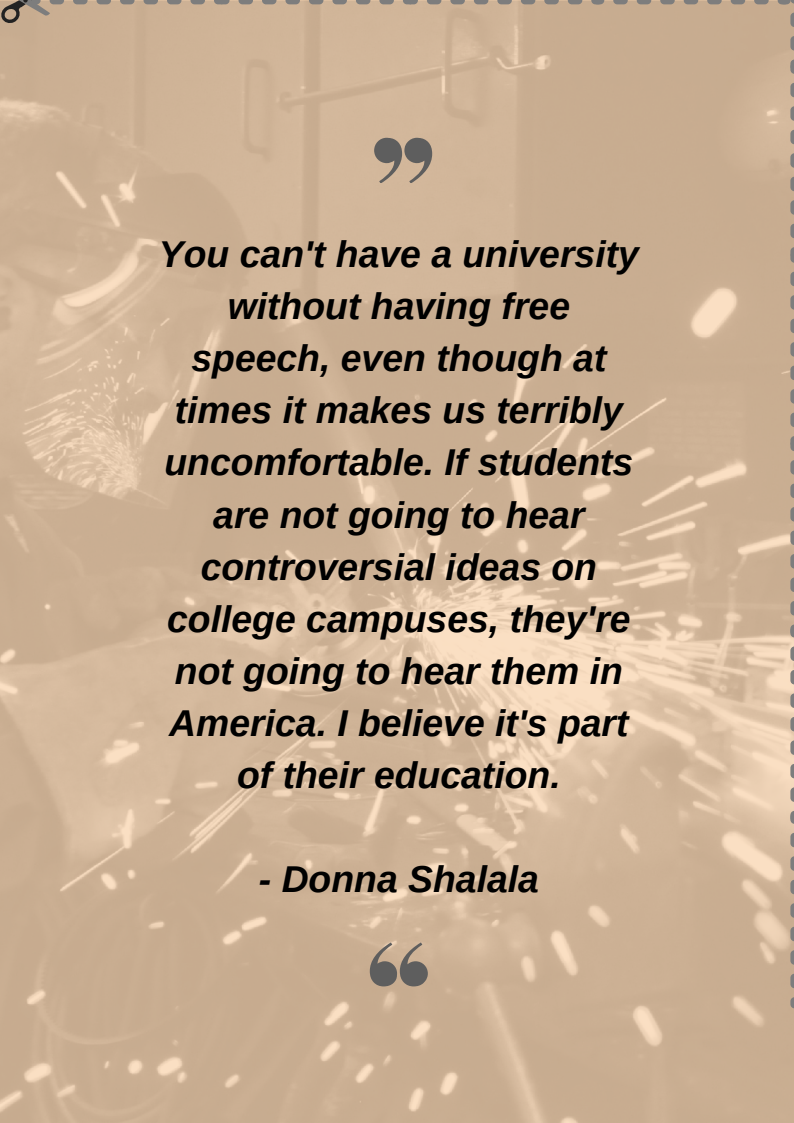
1. *Discussion questions - on subject topic discussion.*
2. *Reading - to gain subject knowledge.*
3. *Listening - skill practice (the teacher can read the reading section).*
4. *Listening Pair work - student pronunciation practice.*
5. *Vocab - to prepare for the video task.*
6. *Video comprehension question - subject input and listening comprehension.*
7. *Pros and Cons - organise the ideas and discuss more pros and cons.*
8. *Scenario - for group discussion and to use negotiating language.*
9. *Debate topics.*
10. *Images - for general class use.*



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**Apprenticeship is a proven model for developing a skilled workforce.**

**- Eugene Scalia**

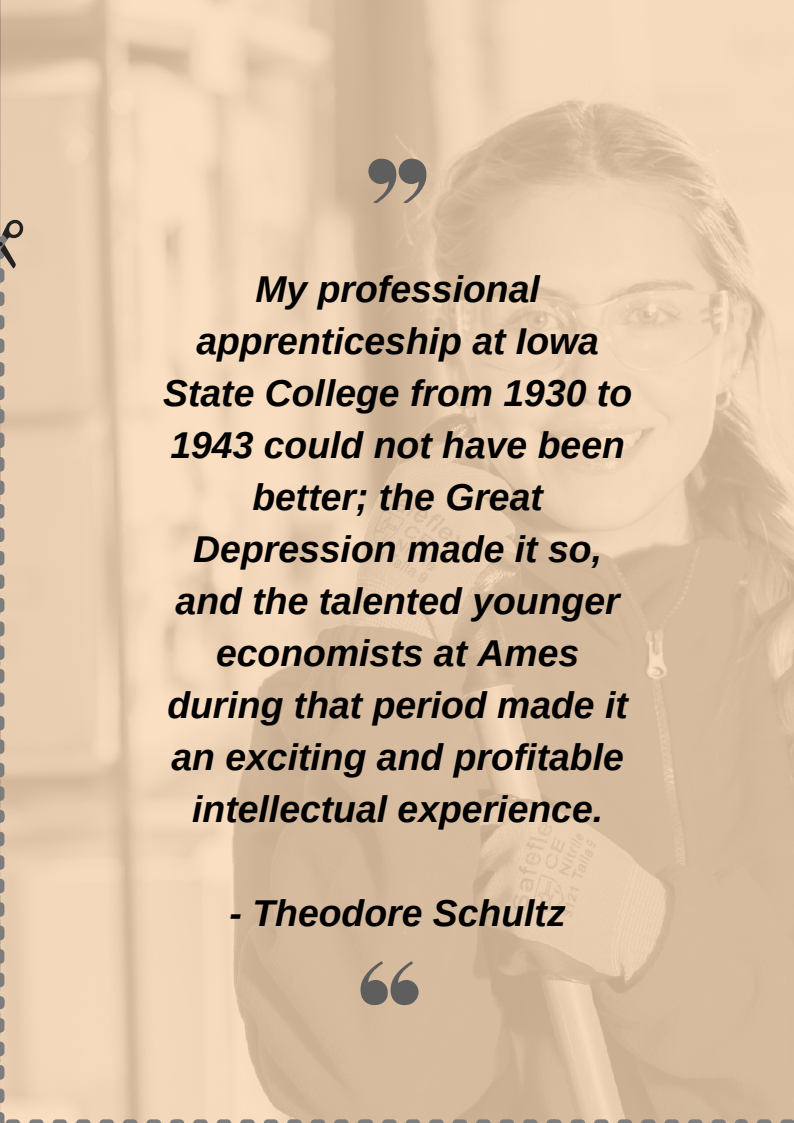
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**You can't have a university without having free speech, even though at times it makes us terribly uncomfortable. If students are not going to hear controversial ideas on college campuses, they're not going to hear them in America. I believe it's part of their education.**

**- Donna Shalala**

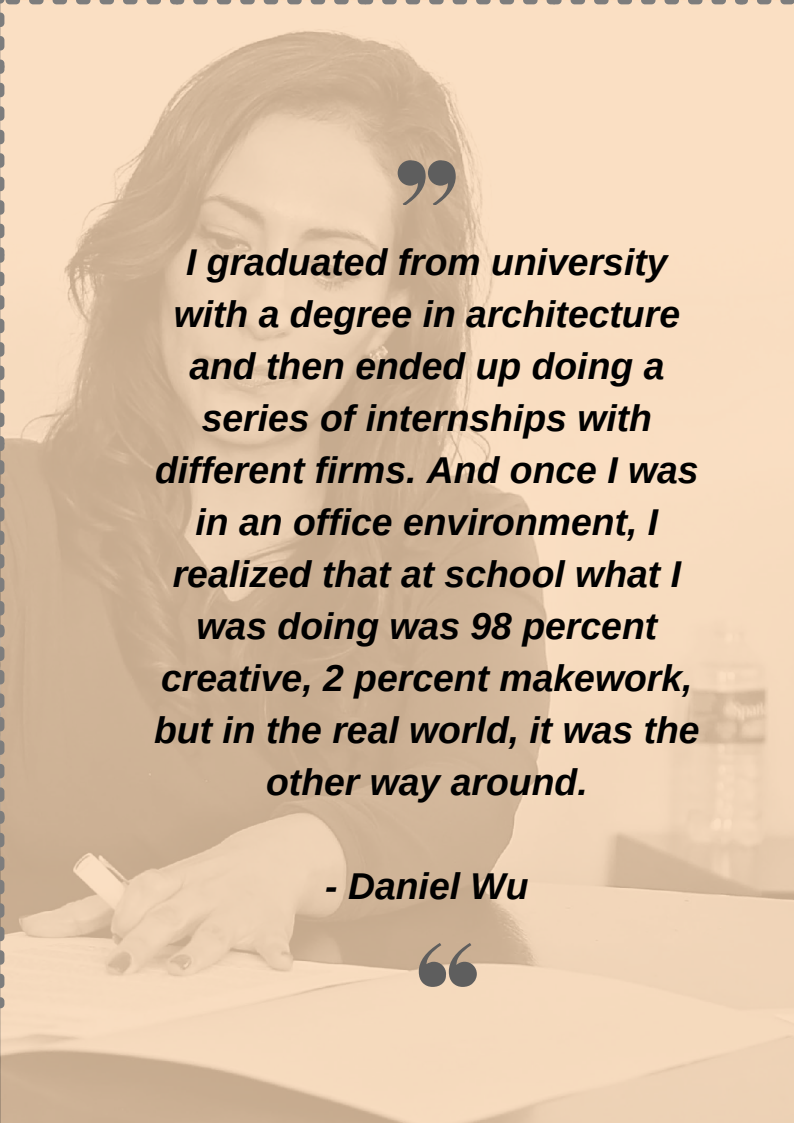
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**My professional apprenticeship at Iowa State College from 1930 to 1943 could not have been better; the Great Depression made it so, and the talented younger economists at Ames during that period made it an exciting and profitable intellectual experience.**

**- Theodore Schultz**

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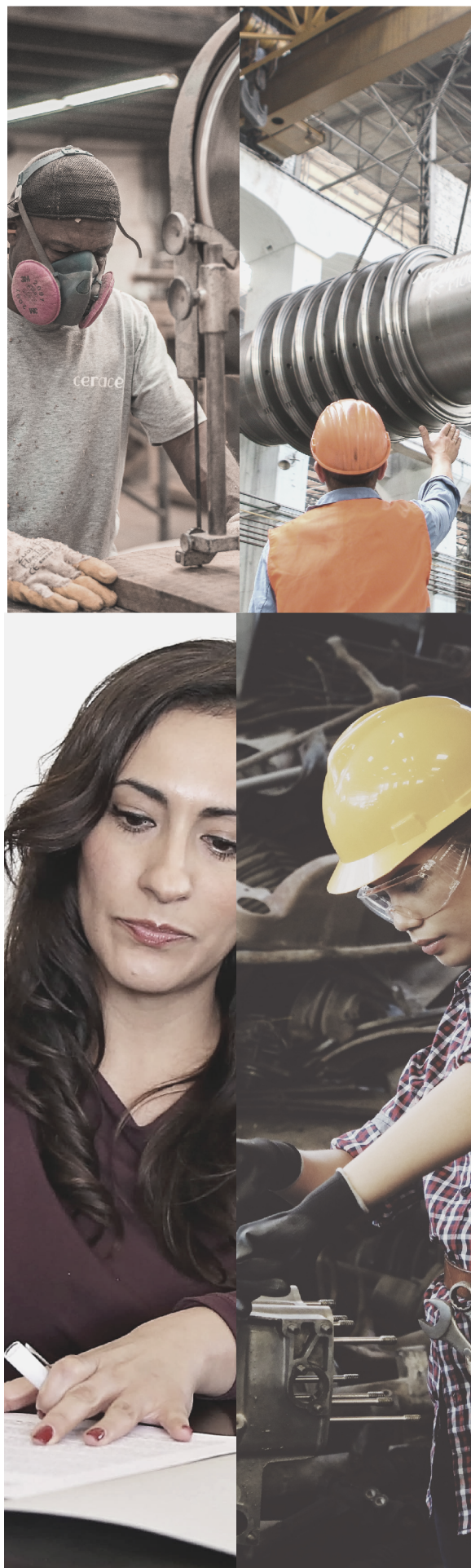
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**I graduated from university with a degree in architecture and then ended up doing a series of internships with different firms. And once I was in an office environment, I realized that at school what I was doing was 98 percent creative, 2 percent makework, but in the real world, it was the other way around.**

**- Daniel Wu**

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# Discussion Questions

1. When was the last time you looked for a job? What was the experience like?
2. How can you prepare yourself for a job interview?
3. What kind of questions do employers ask?
4. Have you heard of apprenticeships? Have you considered doing one?
5. What are the benefits and drawbacks of apprenticeships?
6. The U.S. Department of Labour has recognised over 1000 job types where an apprenticeship role can be created. More are added from year to year. What specific occupations can you learn on the job and which must be taught in universities?
7. According to figures from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 92% of employers believe that apprentices lead to a more motivated and satisfied workforce. So, to what extent do apprenticeships benefit businesses, if at all? What disadvantages could there be for employees?
8. If a person feels too old for an apprenticeship and under-qualified for an internship, is there any other alternative available in your country? What about in other countries?
9. Apprenticeships are valuable for direct job-related skills. In your opinion what is more important in the workplace: qualifications or experience?



# Reading

## THESE FACTORY WORKERS GET PAID TO GO TO SCHOOL

Jobs are often grouped into "blue collar" and "white collar" as it was the traditional colour of shirt while in different working environments. What set them apart was that blue-collar workers performed manual labour, like plumbing and construction, while white-collar workers were from the professional job class, like lawyers and doctors. These occupational categories do not seem so important, but the economy was and can be divided by these two types of job.

Traditionally, blue-collar workers wore uniforms, typically blue, and worked in trade occupations. Instead, white-collar workers normally wore white shirts and worked in office settings. Wages and education level are among the other aspects that separate blue-collar and white-collar workers. In this way, blue-collar workers are often associated with vocational education and skills related to their hands. This stereotype is quite wrong. Most blue-collar occupations involve specialised skills, extensive training, and technical expertise. For something as common as bricklaying, there are many years of practice required, as well as exams to pass to ensure work quality is high.

It is important to note that apprenticeships are common in blue-collar occupations. This is where training on the job, or "learning and earning" is the main component of learning the skill. Apprenticeships are a valuable way to learn vital skills in several critical trades.

Health care careers will grow 18% between 2016 and 2026, much faster than the US average.



The Chinese have a long history of apprenticeships. Long ago, Confucius once said, "If you memorise knowledge only, no matter how much you learn, what practical use is it if you cannot adequately perform tasks?". In the UK, the BBC, for instance, has numerous apprenticeship schemes focusing on journalism, business support, production, and technology. Though it is very popular to attend university to study a subject, it is possible to have a career in an industry without going to university, saving money along the way. That said, university enrolment in the UK is still very popular.

In 2017, President Trump signed an executive order to increase the number of US apprenticeships to 5 million by the year 2022. This trend is to address the need for important workers in the economy, but also provide an alternative to university, which may not be the best route for every young person making their way into the job market.

# Listening task

## THESE FACTORY WORKERS GET PAID TO GO TO SCHOOL

Jobs are often [1] \_\_\_\_\_ into "blue-collar" and "white collar" as it was the [2] \_\_\_\_\_ colour of shirt while in different working [3] \_\_\_\_\_. What [4] \_\_\_\_\_ them apart was that blue-collar workers [5] \_\_\_\_\_ manual labour, like [6] \_\_\_\_\_ and [7] \_\_\_\_\_, while white-collar workers were from the [8] \_\_\_\_\_ job class, like [9] \_\_\_\_\_ and [10] \_\_\_\_\_. These occupational categories do not seem so [11] \_\_\_\_\_, but the [12] \_\_\_\_\_ was and can be [13] \_\_\_\_\_ by these two types of job.

Traditionally, blue-collar workers [14] \_\_\_\_\_ uniforms, typically blue, and worked in [15] \_\_\_\_\_ occupations. [16] \_\_\_\_\_, white-collar workers [17] \_\_\_\_\_ wore white shirts and worked in office [18] \_\_\_\_\_. Wages and education level are [19] \_\_\_\_\_ the other aspects that [20] \_\_\_\_\_ blue-collar and white-collar workers. In this way, blue-collar workers are often [21] \_\_\_\_\_ with vocational education and skills [22] \_\_\_\_\_ to their hands. This [23] \_\_\_\_\_ is quite wrong. Most blue-collar occupations involve specialised skills, [24] \_\_\_\_\_ training, and technical expertise. For something as common as [25] \_\_\_\_\_, there are many years of practice [26] \_\_\_\_\_, as well as exams to pass to ensure [27] \_\_\_\_\_ is high.

It is important to note that apprenticeships are [28] \_\_\_\_\_ in blue-collar occupations. This is [29] \_\_\_\_\_ training on the job, or "learning and earning" is the main [30] \_\_\_\_\_ of learning the skill. Apprenticeships are a [31] \_\_\_\_\_ way to learn vital skills in several critical trades.



The [32] \_\_\_\_\_ have a long history of apprenticeships. Long ago, Confucius once said, "If you [33] \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge only, no matter how much you learn, what practical use is it if you cannot [34] \_\_\_\_\_ perform tasks?". In the UK, the BBC, for instance, has numerous apprenticeship [35] \_\_\_\_\_ focusing on [36] \_\_\_\_\_, business support, production, and [37] \_\_\_\_\_. Though it is very popular to attend university to study a subject, It is possible to have a career in an industry [38] \_\_\_\_\_ going to university, [39] \_\_\_\_\_ money along the way. That said, university enrolment in the UK is still very [40] \_\_\_\_\_.

In 2017, President Trump signed an [41] \_\_\_\_\_ order to increase the number of US apprenticeships to 5 million by the year 2022. This [42] \_\_\_\_\_ is to address the need for important workers in the economy, but also provide an [43] \_\_\_\_\_ to university, which may not be the best [44] \_\_\_\_\_ for every young person making their way into the job [45] \_\_\_\_\_.

# Listening task: pairwork

Work in pairs. Ensure you are sitting apart and facing your partner. Read your paragraph and help them to fill in the gaps on their sheet.

A

## THESE FACTORY WORKERS GET PAID TO GO TO SCHOOL

Traditionally, blue-collar \_\_\_\_\_ wore uniforms, typically blue, and worked in trade occupations. Instead, white-collar workers normally wore white \_\_\_\_\_ and worked in office settings. \_\_\_\_\_ and education level are among the other aspects that separate blue-collar and white-collar workers. In this \_\_\_\_\_, blue-collar workers are often associated with vocational education and skills related to their hands. This \_\_\_\_\_ is quite wrong. Most blue-collar occupations \_\_\_\_\_ specialised skills, extensive training, and technical expertise. For something as common as bricklaying, there are many \_\_\_\_\_ of practice required, as well as exams to pass to ensure \_\_\_\_\_ is high.

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B

## THESE FACTORY WORKERS GET PAID TO GO TO SCHOOL

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# Video vocab matching

Match the vocabulary on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

- A. Labour
- B. Overcrowded
- C. Assembly line
- D. Workforce
- E. Overhaul
- F. Automation
- G. Offshoring
- H. Bipartisan
- I. Apprenticeship
- J. Obsolete
- K. Blue-collar

1. A thorough examination of machinery or a system, with repairs or changes made if necessary.
2. A group of people who are either in work or are able to work.
3. A manufacturing process in which individual parts of a larger product are put together in a specific order.
4. A training programme for junior employees.
5. Relocate (a business or department) to a foreign country to take advantage of lower costs.
6. Involving the agreement or cooperation of two political parties that usually oppose each other's policies.
7. Fill (accommodations or space) beyond what is usual or comfortable.
8. The use of largely automatic equipment in a system of manufacturing or another production process.
9. No longer produced or used; out of date.
10. Work, especially physical work.
11. Whose job requires manual labour.

# Video vocab matching **ANSWERS**

Match the vocabulary on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

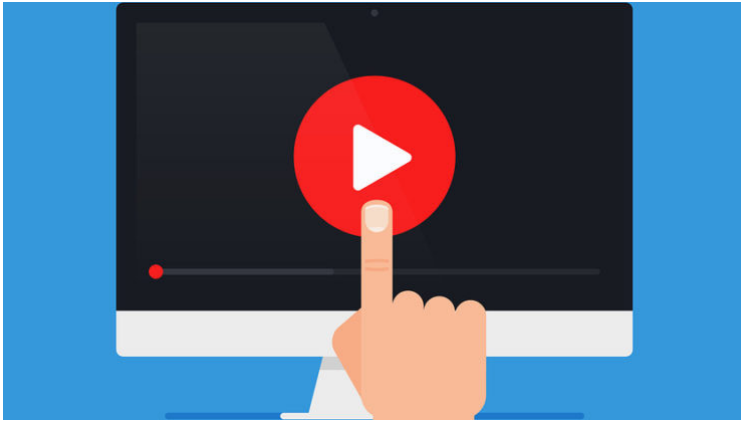
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1. A thorough examination of machinery or a system, with repairs or changes made if necessary. **OVERHAUL**
2. A group of people who are either in work or are able to work. **WORKFORCE**
3. A manufacturing process in which individual parts of a larger product are put together in a specific order. **ASSEMBLY LINE**
4. A training programme for junior employees. **APPRENTICESHIP**
5. Relocate (a business or department) to a foreign country to take advantage of lower costs. **OFFSHORING**
6. Involving the agreement or cooperation of two political parties that usually oppose each other's policies. **BIPARTISAN**
7. Fill (accommodations or space) beyond what is usual or comfortable. **OVERCROWDED**
8. The use of largely automatic equipment in a system of manufacturing or another production process. **AUTOMATION**
9. No longer produced or used; out of date. **OBSOLETE**
10. Work, especially physical work. **LABOUR**
11. Whose job requires manual labour. **BLUE-COLLAR**



# Video comprehension

## THESE FACTORY WORKERS GET PAID TO GO TO SCHOOL



Video Links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BU1w-yxQwIk>

<https://esldebates.com/these-factory-workers-get-paid-to-go-to-school/>

Before watching the video, read through the questions below and guess what the answers might be. Then, watch the video and try to answer the questions in full.

1. What is the workforce in manufacturing facing nowadays?
2. Has automation shrunk manufacturing jobs?
3. How are blue-collar workers coping with automation now?
4. How do apprenticeships differ from other training programmes?
5. What are the benefits of apprenticeships?
6. What seems to be the marketing problem in relation to apprenticeships in the United States?
7. In what field is the vast majority of apprenticeships concentrated?
8. What happens in countries like Germany and Australia?
9. What is the manufacturing industry projecting?
10. Which are the abilities needed to fill the “skills gap”?

# Video comprehension **ANSWERS**

## THESE FACTORY WORKERS GET PAID TO GO TO SCHOOL

1. What is the workforce in manufacturing facing nowadays?

It is facing a major overhaul.

2. Has automation shrunk manufacturing jobs?

Yes, it has. But, although automation offshoring has shrunk manufacturing jobs drastically over the past few decades, the industry is actually adding jobs now.

3. How are blue-collar workers coping with automation now?

Manufacturers are quick to adapt to automation, but workers need to adapt now. And the solution is bipartisan support: on the job apprenticeship.

4. How do apprenticeships differ from other training programmes?

Apprenticeships have to offer combined classroom or conceptual learning with on-the-job mentored training. Apprentices must be paid and employed by the firm and they have to last at least a year ending with a degree, certification or both.

5. What are the benefits of apprenticeships?

This means that apprentices earn on-the-job experience, while building an educational foundation simultaneously—and they are earning money while they do it.

6. What seems to be the marketing problem in relation to apprenticeships in the United States?

Americans often think of apprenticeship as old-timey training for blue-collar work.

7. In what field is the vast majority of apprenticeships concentrated?

The vast majority of apprenticeships in the United States are concentrated in the construction field, and they rely heavily on contributions from Union labourers.

8. What happens in countries like Germany and Australia?

In countries like Germany and Australia students can get an apprenticeship in nearly any profession, from IT to banking to hospitality and advanced manufacturing. Many of these students go on to complete a 4 year degree on top of the certifications.

9. What is the manufacturing industry projecting?

The manufacturing industry is projecting three and a half million new job openings over the next decade.

10. Which are the abilities needed to fill the “skills gap”?

The skills needed are: higher proficiency in math skills (60%), tech and computer skills (70%) and basic technical training (67%).

# Pros and Cons

Read the opinions in the boxes below and organise them as either a pro or con for apprenticeships. Once you have completed, work in a group and try to think of other benefits and drawbacks.

**Minimal Recognition:** Apprentices are usually less esteemed within a project or work team compared to full-time workers that respect each other as professionals.

**Low Pay:** Apprentices typically receive significantly lower pay than certified or professional workers, despite often sharing the same basic projects and tasks. This is generally because an apprentice is less experienced and skilled than his or her mentor.

**A New Qualification:** By the end of the programme, the apprentices will be able to add another qualification to their CV and present themselves as a knowledgeable and experienced professional to potential employers.

**Work Limitations:** Some apprentices are limited from engaging in some types of activities by legal or practical standards. States that require apprentices to hold a license or certification for certain types of electrical, plumbing or construction work may impede participation.

**Experience:** The apprentices will get hands-on training from the moment they begin. They will be ahead of university graduates who arrive a number of years later with a lot of academic knowledge but very little or no on-the-ground experience.

**Confidence:** On completing an apprenticeship, many apprentices have far more confidence than university graduates just starting out on account of wide-ranging practical experience of the industry they operate in.

**Inequality:** Some apprenticeships are less well supported and less well paid than others. In addition, similar to other interns and trainees, apprentices are often subject to "gofering" —which is common slang for being given unpleasant tasks that the professional worker does not want to do.

**Finances:** The apprentices will be paid a salary from day one, rather than accumulating considerable student debt over the course of a degree.

# Scenario

In a group of four take one card each and read your role as well as the beliefs on the card for that person (stakeholder). When you are ready, discuss the topic below and try to come to an agreement between the four of you. Remember you need to explain your feelings, and then work together to try and find a solution, it is find to compromise, but what solutions can you think of to make everyone satisfied?

1.

## Small Business Owner



Your design company started a few years ago and is growing slowly. You work long hours and started with a small loan from the bank. You feel that the local taxes are high and you dislike apprenticeships because:

- You do not have the time and money to train new junior staff who may not stay with the company.
- You feel that large businesses should pay a tax to create the apprenticeship programme.
- You feel that apprentices should work for free or even pay to work in your company because you are giving them important skills.

2.

## Government Representative



You know that local students are keen to become apprentices, you feel that:

- The local youth are finding it difficult to get work, so you want to introduce an apprenticeship scheme.
- The cost of the scheme will be put on local business owners because the local government doesn't have any money.
- Young people over 21 can not become an apprentice.

3.

## Local University Student



You are 24 years old and graduated from the local university. You have tried to find junior jobs but companies say you do not have enough experience.

You want to get an apprenticeship because:

- You want to gain work experience related to your degree and studies.
- You want apprenticeships to pay some money because you can not afford to work for free.
- You also feel business make excuses not to hire local students.
- You also feel the government is not working fast enough to help young people.

4.

## International Business Union



You represent over 50 large international businesses in the area. Many of the businesses do not want to have an apprenticeship programme because they want to employ full-trained people from overseas. Employing apprentices will not be profitable, so:

- You want the government to pay for the full cost of the apprenticeship programme, and for the government to pay apprentice wages.
- Any apprentices must be under 18 and do not have a university degree because companies want to provide their own training.
- Businesses who join the new programme will be allowed to pay less tax to local government.



# Debate topics

This house believes that a four-year university degree is often the best route to a profession.

This house believes that local government should pay for retraining and apprenticeships.

This house believes that companies are too reluctant to train their own workforce.

# Images for class

