



Work-Based Learning Starter

Free Library · Bring real work into the room

Work-based learning does not have to mean a semester-long internship program. This starter gives you a menu that runs from a 30-minute guest speaker to a full apprenticeship, plus the templates that make the low-lift options actually happen. The teacher guide holds the options menu, the guest-speaker request email, a thank-you note, and a client/community-project brief; the student pages are the job-shadow observation sheet and the reflection worksheet. Edit any of it in the Word version.

HOW TO USE IT

Start with the options menu and pick one lift level you can commit to this month. Most teachers begin with a guest speaker: copy the request email, fill in the brackets, and send it. Hand students the observation sheet before a shadow or speaker, and the reflection worksheet after. Reuse the project brief any time a local client or community need becomes an assignment.

THE WBL OPTIONS MENU: PICK YOUR LIFT LEVEL

TEACHER

You do not have to build a program to get real work in front of students. Start low, prove it works, then climb. Every option below is genuine work-based learning.

Option	What it is	Lift
Guest speaker	A professional visits (in person or virtual) to talk about their work and take questions.	Low · one class period
Workplace tour	Your class visits a local employer to see the work environment and roles.	Low to medium · one field trip
Job shadow	A student follows one worker through part of a real workday.	Medium · a half or full day
School-based enterprise	Students run a real product or service inside the school (store, print shop, cafe).	Medium to high · ongoing
Client / community project	Students solve a real problem for a real client for a grade, not a paycheck.	Medium to high · a unit
Internship	A student works at an employer site over weeks, with learning goals.	High · a term, needs an agreement
Registered apprenticeship	Paid work plus related instruction leading to a credential.	Highest · a formal, multi-party program

START WHERE YOU CAN ACTUALLY FOLLOW THROUGH

A guest speaker you actually book beats an internship program you never launch. Pick one low-lift option, run it well, and let the relationships you build carry you up the menu next term.

GUEST-SPEAKER REQUEST EMAIL TEMPLATE

TEACHER

Copy this into your email. Replace everything in [brackets]. Keep it short: a busy professional should be able to say yes in under two minutes.

Subject: Would you speak to my [course name] class for 30 minutes?

Hi [Name],

I teach [course name] at [school name] in [city]. My students are exploring careers in [field], and I would love for them to hear from someone who actually does this work.

Would you be open to visiting my classroom (or joining by video) for about 30 minutes on [date / range of dates]? You would share what your job is really like and answer student questions. No slides or prep required. I will send questions ahead of time so it feels like a conversation.

If that is too much, even a 15-minute virtual Q and A would mean a lot to my students.

Thank you for considering it,
[Your name] · [Your email] · [Your phone]

THANK-YOU NOTE TEMPLATE

TEACHER

Send this within two days. A speaker who feels appreciated becomes a speaker who comes back, and often opens the door to a tour, a shadow, or a project.

Hi [Name],

Thank you so much for speaking with my [course name] class on [date]. The students are still talking about [one specific thing they said], and several told me it changed how they think about [field].

If you would ever be open to hosting a short job shadow or letting a student team take on a real project for you, I would love to keep the conversation going. Either way, you made a real difference this week.

With appreciation,
[Your name]

HAVE STUDENTS WRITE IT

Better yet, assign the thank-you note as the first task after a visit. It builds a professional-writing skill and the speaker hears from the people they helped.

Use this any time a real client or community need becomes an assignment. Fill it out with the client (a local business, a nonprofit, or another teacher) before students start, so the target is clear and the work is real. Then hand it to the student team as their brief.

Client / partner	
Contact & role	
The problem What real need are we solving?	
Deliverable What exactly will students hand over?	
Deadline	
Constraints Budget, brand, tools, must-nots	
Success criteria How the client will know it worked	

MAKE THE CLIENT SIGN OFF

Have the partner initial the deliverable and deadline rows before students begin. A brief both sides agreed to is the difference between a real project and a hypothetical one.