



Work and Careers

Short-answer questions: Germany's dual training system | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. Would you rather learn a job in a classroom or in a workplace?
2. What skills can only be learnt through practice?
3. Should apprentices be paid while they train?
4. What makes a young person ready for work?

Exercise 1 at a glance

Read one factual text. Answers are in the text. Copy exact words and check the question carefully before choosing your answer.

2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. How does Germany's dual training system prepare young people for work?

Germany's Dual Training System

Germany is well known for its dual vocational training system. It is called dual because apprentices learn in two places: a company and a vocational school. This means that young people do not only study a job in theory. They also practise real tasks in a workplace, where they can see how a business runs from day to day.

An apprentice usually signs a training contract with a company. The company teaches practical skills, gives workplace experience and pays a training allowance. This is different from a short work-experience placement because the apprentice is training for a recognised occupation over a longer period. Many programmes last between two and three and a half years, depending on the occupation.

The vocational school is the second part of the system. There, apprentices study subjects connected to their occupation, as well as general subjects. For example, a trainee in a technical job may learn about materials, safety, communication and workplace calculations. A trainee in an office job may spend more time on customer service, digital systems and business documents.

The system depends on cooperation. Companies need qualified trainers, and schools need teachers who understand the world of work. Chambers and other organisations also help to check standards, so that training in one region is not completely different from training elsewhere. This matters because the final qualification should mean something to employers across the country.

Dual training can help young people move from school into employment. By the end of the programme, apprentices have experience, references and a qualification that employers recognise. Many stay with the company that trained them, although others use the qualification to apply for different jobs. Some later continue into further training if they want more responsibility.

The system is also useful for employers. A company can train young people in the exact skills needed for its work, instead of hoping that applicants already have the right experience. Apprentices learn the routines, tools and expectations of a real workplace. At the same time, vocational schools give them background knowledge, so they understand why certain methods are used.

For students, the decision to enter dual training is not always simple. Some may feel pressure to choose university, while others may worry about committing to one occupation too early. Careers advice is therefore important. Applicants need to research the job carefully, prepare for interviews and understand that practical training still includes exams and written work. Parents and teachers may also need clear information, because vocational routes are sometimes misunderstood.

The system also has challenges. Some popular occupations attract many applicants, while other sectors struggle to fill places. A small company may not have enough staff to train an apprentice alone, so inter-company training centres can provide extra practice. Apprentices also need to meet deadlines, behave professionally and balance schoolwork with workplace duties. For many learners, however, the mix of practice and theory is what makes the system useful.

3. Strategy focus

Scan for the exact detail

Underline the key words in the question. Then scan the paragraph for the same idea. Copy only the words needed to answer the question.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. Why is the system called dual? [1]

2. What does the company pay the apprentice? [1]

3. How long do many programmes last? [1]

4. Who should recognise the final qualification? [1]

5. What can provide extra practice for apprentices in small companies? [1]

6. According to the text, what are three things apprentices may gain by the end of the programme? [3]

5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Would dual training suit you? Why, or why not?

2. Summary: Summarise the system in about 50 words.

3. Creative task: Write a short advert for an apprenticeship.

4. Research: Find one apprenticeship or vocational course in your country.

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4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. because apprentices learn in two places
2. a training allowance
3. between two and three and a half years
4. employers across the country
5. inter-company training centres
6. Any three from: experience; references; a qualification that employers recognise; practical skills; workplace experience.

Notes for checking

1. Answers should be short and clearly based on the text.
2. Accept bracketed or optional wording if the meaning is clear.
3. For the final question, learners need three separate details.