

Vocational training (Ausbildung)

Vocational training in a profession (berufliche Ausbildung)

In Germany, vocational training in a profession is a special way of learning a trade. These programmes usually last between 2 and 3.5 years and are concluded through a final written and practical exam.

Advantages of vocational training

- Improved chances of finding a secure, well-paid job
- Earn money while learning
- Opportunities to later obtain qualifications, e.g. continue schooling, complete a university-entrance degree (Abitur) and attend university. (An Abitur is the school-leaving certificate required for university admission.)

There are two ways of doing vocational training in a profession:

Vocational-occupational training:

The trainee learns the practical aspects of the profession by working at the company and the theoretical aspects at vocational school (Berufsschule). For some vocational training professions, the programme begins with one year at the vocational school. If this is successfully completed, it is followed by the practical part (learning on the job). As a vocational trainee (Azubi), you receive a salary and paid leave.

Vocational training at school:

For certain professions – primarily those related to healthcare (nursing) – the vocational training programme lasts 2-3 years and takes place at a special state-run or private school with internships that last several weeks. Not every school vocational training programme is free of cost. For some vocational training professions (e.g. training in medicine or caring for the elderly), you receive compensation.

See also:

Pre-requisites for vocational-occupational training:

- Recognised secondary-school degree: Each company decides for itself which qualifications it is looking for in candidates. Generally speaking, you need a secondary-school degree from a basic secondary school (Hauptschule) or standard secondary school (Realschule) (8 years).
- Good German language skills in speaking and writing – successful completion of an integration course at at least B1 but preferably B2 level, because the classes and exams at the vocational school are in German.
- Permission from the respective Immigration Office regarding the vocational training / employment – see entry in your identification document: “Employment only by permission from the Immigration

Office. Self-employment or similar employment not permitted.”

(“Erwerbstätigkeit nur mit Zustimmung der Ausländerbehörde erlaubt. Selbstständigkeit oder vergleichbare Beschäftigung nicht erlaubt.”)

- Age: usually between the ages of 16 and 40.

Pre-requisites for vocational training at school (e.g. nursing):

- There are a variety of requirements regarding schooling and language skills
- You can get information from the websites of the Federal Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit) or Job Centre and the counselling centres for the vocational schools in question.