

Exit Tickets for High-Quality Work-Based Learning

A Practical Implementation Guide

WHO IS THIS FOR | OVERVIEW | HOW TO USE | WHEN TO USE
HOW TO CREATE EFFECTIVE EXIT TICKETS | ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



WHO THIS IS FOR

PRIMARY USERS

Work-based learning (WBL) coordinators and teachers who run career awareness activities, job shadows, internships, or other workplace-based learning experiences and want to:

- Ensure students leave with clear next steps
- Identify which students need additional support
- Gather data for program improvement
- Connect student experiences to career pathway planning

Counselors, career coaches, and advisors who need:

- Insight into student WBL experiences to guide quality conversations
- Information about student career interests and readiness
- Data to support individualized pathway planning and informed decision-making

SECONDARY USERS

Employers and workplace mentors who want to:

- Understand how students are experiencing the workplace
- Provide feedback that supports student growth
- Demonstrate the value of their participation in WBL programs

CONTEXT

This tool works across the full WBL continuum—from career awareness activities through sustained workplace experiences—no prerequisites required. You can start using exit tickets immediately, even with a [simple two-question version](#).

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OVERVIEW

WHAT ARE EXIT TICKETS?

Exit tickets are brief reflections completed at the end of a work-based learning experience. When designed well, they are one of the most powerful tools for ensuring students make informed decisions about their education and career pathways—a primary outcome of high-quality WBL.

WHY THEY MATTER

The Power of Two Simple Questions

You don't need elaborate surveys to have an impact. Research shows that two well-designed questions can transform career readiness outcomes:

1. What's your next step?
2. Who can help you take it?

These questions ensure students leave every WBL experience with clarity about what to do next and confidence that they have support. When combined with quality conversations with trusted advisors—whether that's a WBL coordinator, counselor, career coach, employer mentor, or parent—these next steps become the foundation for informed decision-making about college, training, and career paths.

CONNECTION TO HIGH-QUALITY WBL

Exit tickets align directly with GPS Ed's Four A's framework for high-quality WBL—Authenticity, Aspiration, Ability, and Agency. They are particularly powerful for developing Agency; empowering students to make informed decisions and navigate their own career paths with clarity and confidence.

Exit tickets create a critical bridge—they capture student thinking in the moment and communicate it to the adults who can support meaningful next steps. They prevent WBL experiences from becoming isolated moments and instead build them into coherent pathways of development.

KEY OUTCOMES

When used effectively, exit tickets lead to:

- Students who can articulate clear next steps in their career exploration
- Students who know where to turn to for support and guidance
- Educators with actionable data about which students need intervention
- Quality conversations between students and trusted advisors
- Informed student decisions about education and career pathways
- Continuous program improvement based on real-time feedback

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HOW TO USE

GETTING
STARTED

Start small for big impact: You don't need elaborate surveys. Even using just the [two-question exit ticket template](#) below can transform outcomes. Start simple, then expand as needed.

Frame exit tickets as a tool FOR students:

- **Challenge:** Students rush through or give superficial answers.
- **Solution:** Tell students, "This helps YOU figure out what to do next," not "This helps us evaluate the program." When students see personal benefit, quality improves.

Provide examples to build social capital:

- **Challenge:** Students write "I don't know" for who can help them.
- **Solution:** List examples directly on the exit ticket (teacher, counselor, mentor, today's presenter, family member). These examples teach students to recognize their support network.

Look for patterns, not perfection:

- **Challenge:** Too much data, no time to analyze.
- **Solution:** Spend 10 minutes sorting responses into "Clear next steps" | "Needs support" | "Red flags." Focus your follow-up energy on students who couldn't identify next steps or support.

Connect exit tickets to quality conversations: Exit tickets capture student thinking, but their real power comes when information leads to quality conversations with trusted advisors. Use responses to guide follow-up conversations that help students make informed decisions.

Build in time—don't squeeze it in: Exit tickets work best when students have time to think. Build 3–5 minutes into the end of the experience. If you consistently run out of time, shorten the experience by 5 minutes to make room.

Close the loop: Tell students what you learned collectively and what changes you're making based on their feedback. Closing the loop builds trust and improves future response quality.

Use insights for program improvement: Look for patterns: Are students identifying skill gaps? Do they know who to ask for help? Are certain experiences more impactful? Use these insights to refine your program.

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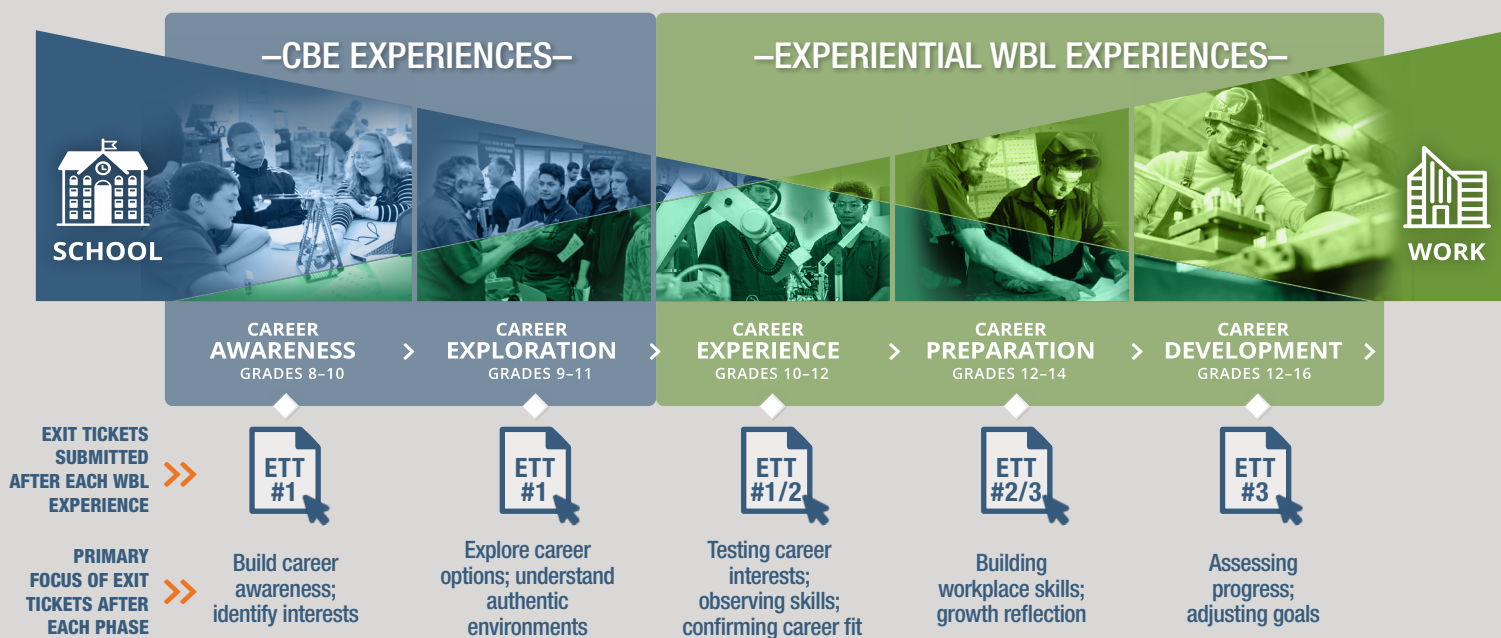
WHEN TO USE

TIMING

You should use exit tickets after every experience along the WBL journey (see below).
An exit ticket helps the student reflect on: “Why did I do this, and why was it important?”
An exit ticket allows you to base the next step on the data collected.
Exit ticket templates (ETT) are linked below in the graphic.

The Work-Based Learning Journey

CONNECTING TODAY'S CLASSROOM TO TOMORROW'S CAREERS



UNDERSTANDING THE WBL JOURNEY

A Continuum of Learning

Career-based education (CBE) experiences focus on building awareness and exploring possibilities—helping students answer “Does this interest me?” These include career fairs, speakers, tours, and job shadows.

Experiential work-based learning (EWBL) experiences focus on applying skills and testing career fit—helping students answer “Am I good at this? Do I want to pursue this?” These include internships, apprenticeships, and sustained workplace experiences.

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HOW TO CREATE EFFECTIVE EXIT TICKETS

Effective exit tickets for WBL activities include 2 or 3 targeted questions aligned with specific program goals. Questions might prompt reflection on **Authenticity** (“What workplace skills did you practice today?”), **Aspiration** (“How did today’s experience influence your career interests?”), **Ability** (“What new knowledge or skill did you gain?”), or **Agency** (“What questions do you still have about this career path?”).

TIP: Always include at least one “Next Steps and Agency” question to ensure students leave with clarity and a support network.

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING EXIT TICKETS

FOUR A'S FOCUS	For CBE Activities (Awareness/Exploration)	For WBL Activities (Engagement/Immersion)
AUTHENTICITY (Real-world application)	What did you see professionals doing that you want to learn more about?	What on-the-job skill do you want more training in?
ASPIRATION (Goals and motivation)	How would you like to learn more/get your questions about your experience answered?	Who can help you reframe your career goals and plans based on your experience?
ABILITY (Skills and competencies)	What step(s) would you like to take to build skills related to this career?	How would you like to build/practice skills that you used during this experience?
NEXT STEPS AND AGENCY	What's your next step? Who can help you take it? What questions do you still have about this career?	What's your next step for growth? Who can help you develop this skill? What support do you need to succeed?
PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT	What was most valuable? What would have made this better? Would you recommend this?	Did you feel supported? What would improve this experience? How meaningful was this for your growth?

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FURTHER EXPLORATION

For more on exit tickets and next steps:

- Two Simple Questions That Will Transform Your Career Readiness Data (GPS Ed)
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/two-simple-questions-transform-your-career-readiness-data-daniels-8bs2c/>

For more on high-quality WBL frameworks:

- Jobs for the Future (JFF) Work-Based Learning Framework
<https://www.jff.org/idea/work-based-learning-framework/>
- Aurora Institute's Best Practices for High-Quality Work-Based Learning
https://aurora-institute.org/cw_post/best-practices-for-high-quality-work-based-learning/

For general exit ticket strategies:

- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2004). Improving Adolescent Literacy: Strategies at Work

About GPS Education Partners

GPS Ed supports schools, employers, and communities in designing and implementing high-quality work-based learning programs that center student growth through our Four A's framework: Authenticity, Aspiration, Ability, and Agency.

We've designed this tool to adapt to your local context. We encourage you to customize these templates to align with your program goals, student needs, and stakeholder priorities. To learn more about GPS Ed, visit: gpsed.org.

TEMPLATE 1: Simple Exit Ticket for Career Awareness

For Career-Based Education (CBE) Activities

USE AFTER: Career fairs, guest speakers, facility tours, job shadows, career exploration events, etc.

DESIGN TIP: Keep it simple for awareness activities. These two questions ensure students leave with clarity and know they have support—the foundations for informed decision-making.

Student Name (Optional): _____ **Date:** _____

Experience: _____

1. What's your next step? (Choose one or write your own)

- ☐ Job shadow someone in this field
- ☐ Talk to someone who works in this career
- ☐ Research education or training programs
- ☐ Take a related class
- ☐ Explore other careers that use similar skills
- ☐ Other: _____

2. Who can help you with this next step? _____

IMPLEMENTATION TIP: Provide examples to build social capital awareness. List options like: teacher, counselor, career coach, today's presenter, family member, mentor, or friend who works in this field.

TEMPLATE 2: Exit Ticket for Academic Pathway Planning

Connecting WBL to Education Decisions

USE AFTER: Multi-day job shadows, end-of-internship reflections, capstone experiences, etc.

DESIGN TIP: *This template helps students connect their WBL experience to informed decisions about college, training programs, or direct workforce entry.*

Student Name (Optional): _____ **Date:** _____

Today's Experience: _____

1. Based on this experience, what did you learn about the education or training needed for this career?

2. Has this experience changed how you think about your plans after high school?

- ☐ Yes, this experience confirmed my current plan
- ☐ Yes, this experience helped me realize I want to explore different options
- ☐ Not yet, I need more information to make a decision
- ☐ No, but I learned valuable skills I can use in other pathways

3. What information do you still need to make an informed decision about your education or career pathway?

4. What's your next step toward making this decision? (Choose one or write your own)

- ☐ I intend to research specific college programs or training options
- ☐ I am prepared to talk to someone about education costs and financial aid
- ☐ I plan to explore other careers in this field or related fields
- ☐ I will aim to get more hands-on experience through an internship
- ☐ Other: _____

5. Who can help you with this next step? _____

TEMPLATE 3: Exit Ticket for Career Skill Development

For Ongoing Workplace Learning

USE DURING: Weekly/bi-weekly internship check-ins, apprenticeship reflections, etc.

DESIGN TIP: Use this template regularly (weekly or bi-weekly) to track student growth, identify development needs, and ensure students know their next steps for skill building.

Student Worker Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Workplace: _____

1. What is one workplace skill or professional behavior you practiced this week?

(Examples: Communication, problem-solving, time management, teamwork, technical skills)

2. What did you learn about yourself through this experience?

☐ I discovered I'm good at: _____

☐ I found this challenging: _____

☐ I'm more confident in: _____

3. What is one area where you'd like to grow or improve?

4. What's your next step to continue developing in this area? (Choose one or write your own)

☐ I will practice this skill more in my current role

☐ I intend to ask my mentor or supervisor for feedback and coaching

☐ I plan to take a class, watch tutorials, or do independent learning

☐ I will seek out a different project or task to build this skill

☐ Other: _____

5. Who can help you take this next step? _____

6. On a scale of 1–5, how confident do you feel about your ability to succeed in this career field?

(Not confident) ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 (Very confident)

IMPLEMENTATION TIP: Frame this as a tool FOR students, not FOR the program. Tell them:
"This helps you track your growth and figure out what to focus on next."