

How to Become a Hardware Beta Tester

Technology manufacturers often seek beta testers to take their new products for a spin before releasing them to the public. Testers use the product on their own in order to spot and resolve any issues, bugs, or other problems that need to...

Method 1 of 3:

Pursuing Your Interests

1.



Understand what the job entails. Expect the conditions for beta testing to vary from company to company and project to project. Some may rely totally on telecommuting, while others may require you to report via phone or even in person. The timeline for one project may be much shorter than the next, and may even change mid-project.^[1] Some companies may offer monetary payment, while others may compensate you instead with a discount on the finished product.^[2] Consider whether these conditions are an acceptable use of your time before applying.

2.



Think about which products you enjoy most. Expect companies to be more picky with the people they choose to test hardware. Improve your odds by focusing on products and/or specific brands that you are already familiar with. Increase your value in their eyes by offering some experience with their existing products and/or similar hardware.^[3] For example:

1. If you are a gaming fiend, focus your search on companies that design consoles and attendant gear.
2. If every device that you own is made by Apple, target them.

3.



Create a list of manufacturers that develop such hardware. If your focus is on a particular type of hardware, rather than a brand, widen your search. Write down companies whose products you already own or know of. Search online to find others that have slipped your mind or escaped your attention.

1. For example, if you want to test new mobile phones, develop a list that starts with Apple, Motorola, Samsung, HTC, LG, and Nokia.

2. Be aware that some companies may expect you to test whatever type of hardware they send you, and not just your preferred piece of tech.^[4]

4.

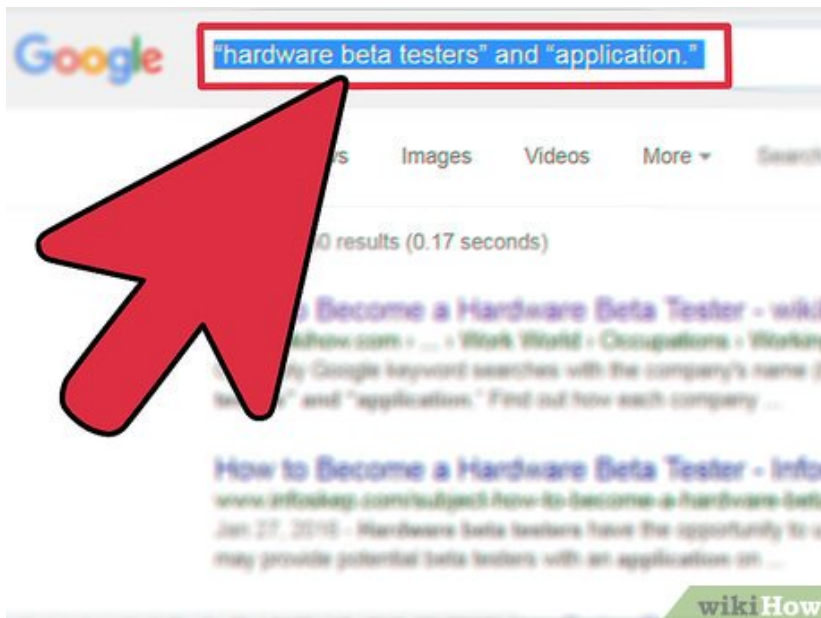


Don't let being a novice discourage you. Research each company that interests you, even if you have little to no experience with their products. Remember that companies are always looking to expand and reach new customers who may have never used such hardware before. Expect them to value your status as 'beginner' just as much as long-time users with lots of technological know-how.^[5]

Method 2 of 3:

Applying for Beta Testing

1.



Visit each company's website. Search their home page for links to applications for beta testers. Or simply Google keyword searches with the company's name (like, say, 'Google') plus 'hardware beta testers' and 'application.' Find out how each company recruits their testers.

1. Many companies will offer online applications that you can submit right away.
2. Some companies may then screen candidates through direct email or phone calls.^[6]



Sell yourself. The exact format to the application will vary from company to company. However, where appropriate, be sure to include any information that will make you stand out from other candidates. Do the same with any follow-up interviews or surveys that you may be asked to complete.^[7]

1. List all types of technology that you own and/or use frequently, such as phones, computers, other devices, and entertainment systems.
2. Include personal info like age, gender, and location, since they may want to test certain products with specific demographics.
3. Include your level of expertise with each one. For instance, if you can take a gaming console apart and put it back together again, say so.
4. On the other hand, if you have no idea how one works but play them every so often, sell yourself as someone who could gauge how easily a product can be used by a novice.^[8]

3.



Follow additional steps. Again, the application process may differ from company to company. Expect follow-up surveys or interviews conducted by either the company itself or a second party that has been contracted to oversee their beta testing.^[9] Follow any directives about joining and participating in the company's online community.^[10] Complete all necessary prerequisites to qualify for consideration.

1. Be aware that fewer candidates are picked for hardware testing than with software testing. This is due to the fewer numbers of test units that the company can provide.^[11] Since there are more opportunities to test software, consider starting with that to gain a solid reputation and experience with the company.

Method 3 of 3:

Meeting Expectations

1.



Understand the difference between hardware and software testing. Once you are accepted to become a beta tester, appreciate the unique demands that hardware testing faces. Remember that software can be shared with nearly countless people all at once, updated to address issues almost immediately, and then shared again for further testing. Expect hardware to face much more limiting logistics. Because of this, aim to meet the company's expectations of you as a tester to ensure that they select you for future tests. Remember:^[12]

1. Only so many units of the hardware can be manufactured and set aside specifically for testing.
2. Because of this, fewer testers can be utilized, which means there is a greater chance that issues with the product may be overlooked.
3. Hardware tests are usually shorter than software tests, which means there is less time to spot and resolve problems.

2.



Test as many features as you can. Provide as much feedback as possible to the company and impress them with your thoroughness. With each product, concentrate on one feature or function at a time and try to use it in every way possible. Explore as many as you can, if not all, in the time allotted by the company. [13] For example, if you are issued a smartphone, don't limit yourself to how it functions as a phone. Test the following and more:

1. Wifi and cellular connectivity
2. Camera functions
3. Battery power
4. Video playback
5. Installation, performance, and upgrades of apps
6. Durability



Communicate effectively. Understand that the company is most likely working on a tight timeline to complete this beta test. Regularly check their preferred form of contact (phone, email, texts, forums) for any updates and changes to the test's schedule and/or focus. Update them about your progress frequently. Explain your results clearly and in full to prevent unnecessary back-and-forths to clarify this or that point. [14]

1. Send digital photos or screenshots so they can see the issue for themselves without anything being lost in translation.
2. Take note of any clarification they ask for after you submit reports. Refer to this when writing future reports so you know what info to include in order to save them time.

4.



Honor their privacy. Bear in mind that you are testing a piece of hardware that is most likely protected by proprietary rights. Expect to have to sign a nondisclosure agreement (NDA) or similar paperwork that legally binds you to silence about some or all of the testing process.^[15] Bite your tongue and refrain from sharing any information about the test. When in doubt about whether or not a certain aspect is protected by the NDA, assume it is and zip it.^[16]

1. Keep this in mind when applying to test hardware with new companies. Refer to any previous NDAs that you have signed before listing your prior experience as a beta tester. Don't shoot yourself in the foot by breaking that previous contract and advertising yourself as untrustworthy to your potential new employer.

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