

STUDENT GUIDE TO WORKING IN VICTORIA

**YOUR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN RETAIL, HOSPITALITY AND
CONSTRUCTION (AGES 15-18)**

Starting your first job is an exciting milestone! Whether you're looking to earn some money while studying or exploring potential career paths, this guide will help you understand your rights, find opportunities, and succeed in the workplace.

Age Requirements and Work Eligibility

What Age Can You Start Working?

- **Age 15+:** You can work in most industries without special permit
- **Under 15:** Employers need a Child Employment Licence from Wage Inspectorate Victoria
- **Construction:** Generally no site work for under-15s; limited restrictions for 15-17-year-olds with proper supervision

Hours You Can Work

- **During school term:** Maximum 12 hours per week for over-15s while attending school
- **School holidays:** Up to 38 hours per week
- **Work times:** Generally between 6am-9pm (some exceptions with supervision)

Know Your Minimum Wage Rights

Your pay depends on your age and the industry award. As of July 2025:

AGE	HOURLY RATE	PERCENTAGE OF ADULT WAGE
UNDER 16	\$9.18	36%
17 YEARS	14.42	57.8%
18 YEARS	17.04	68.3%

Important: These are minimum rates - many employers pay more, especially in competitive industries like hospitality.

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Industry-Specific Opportunities

Retail

- **What you can do:** Sales assistant, cashier, stock replenishment, customer service
- **Popular employers:** Supermarkets, clothing stores, electronics retailers
- **Skills you'll develop:** Customer service, communication, time management, cash handling

Hospitality

- **What you can do:** Food service, front-of-house, kitchen hand (with restrictions), cleaning
- **Popular employers:** Cafés, restaurants, fast food chains, hotels
- **Skills you'll develop:** Teamwork, multitasking, food safety, customer relations
- **Note:** Cannot serve alcohol without proper certification and supervision

Construction

- **What you can do:** Apprenticeships from age 15+, basic site work with supervision
- **Safety first:** Must complete safety induction training before starting
- **Skills you'll develop:** Technical skills, problem-solving, physical fitness, attention to detail
- **Note:** Higher injury risk - 25% of young worker injuries occur in construction

Getting Started: Essential Documents

Tax File Number (TFN)

- **Apply online** through the Australian Taxation Office
- **Age 15+:** You can apply independently
- **Age 13-15:** You or your parent/guardian can sign the application
- **Why you need it:** Without a TFN, employers must deduct 46.5% tax from your wages

Bank Account

- Most jobs pay via direct deposit
- Student accounts often have no fees
- Essential for receiving wages

Documentation

- Proof of age (birth certificate or passport)
- Proof of address
- Resume (even if you have no work experience)

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Writing Your First Resume

Essential Sections to Include

- **Personal details:** Name, phone, email, address
- **Education:** Current school, subjects relevant to the job
- **Skills:** Communication, teamwork, computer skills, languages
- **Experience:** Volunteer work, babysitting, sports teams, school leadership
- **References:** Teachers, coaches, family friends (not relatives)

Resume Tips

- Keep it to 1-2 pages maximum
- Use bullet points for easy reading
- Tailor it to each job application
- Check for spelling and grammar errors
- Focus on transferable skills from school and activities

Where to Find Jobs

Top Job Search Websites

SEEK: Australia's largest job board with advanced filters

Indeed: Global platform with local Australian opportunities

Jora: Australian-based search engine

CareerOne: Offers career advice alongside job listings

Workforce Australia: Government job portal

Local newspapers & Job Boards: Local jobs are often advertised in local newspapers and on job boards at supermarkets

Other Ways to Find Work

- Walk into local businesses and ask if they're hiring
- Check company websites directly
- Ask friends, family and teachers about opportunities
- Visit shopping centres and speak to store managers
- Use social media (LinkedIn for older teens)

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Acing Your Job Interview

Before the Interview

- **Research the company:** Visit their website and social media
- **Practise common questions:** “Why do you want this job?” “What are your strengths?”
- **Prepare questions to ask:** Show you’re interested and engaged
- **Plan your route:** Arrive 10-15 minutes early

What to Wear

- Business casual - khakis/dress pants and collared shirt
- Clean, polished shoes
- Minimal jewelry and makeup
- Avoid jeans, t-shirts, or revealing clothing

During the Interview

- **Make eye contact** and offer a firm handshake
- **Sit up straight** and show enthusiasm
- **Give specific examples** when answering questions
- **Ask questions** about the role and company
- **Stay positive** - never criticise previous employers or teachers

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Understanding Workplace Safety

Your Safety Rights:

- Right to a safe work environment free from hazards
- Right to proper training and supervision
- Right to speak up about unsafe conditions without fear of consequences
- Right to personal protective equipment (PPE) when required

Common Workplace Hazards for Young Workers

- Slips, trips, and falls (22% of injuries)
- Being hit by moving objects (35% of injuries)
- Body stress from lifting/repetitive tasks (27% of injuries)
- Workplace bullying or harassment

What to Do if You Feel Unsafe:

- Tell your supervisor immediately
- Document incidents in writing
- Contact WorkSafe Victoria on 1800 136 089
- Seek support from parents, teachers, or union representatives

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Apprenticeships and Traineeships

School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs)

- **Minimum age:** 15 years
- **Minimum hours:** 13 hours per week (7 hours paid work + 6 hours training)[32]
- **Available in:** Years 10, 11, and 12
- **Benefits:** Earn while you learn, gain qualifications, develop job-ready skills
- **Popular fields:** Construction trades, automotive, hospitality, retail, hairdressing

How to Get Started

- Talk to your careers counsellor at school
- Contact Head Start program for support
- Find an employer willing to take on an apprentice
- Register with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)

Balancing Work and School

Time Management Tips

- Create a weekly schedule including school, work, and study time
- Communicate with teachers about your work commitments
- Don't take on more hours than you can handle
- Prioritise your education - work should support, not hinder your studies

Legal Protections:

- Employers cannot require you to work during school hours[1]
- You have the right to refuse shifts that conflict with education
- Your employer should be flexible during exam periods

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Your Workplace Rights

What Employers Must Provide:

- **Proper induction and training** for your role
- **Safe working conditions** and equipment
- **Fair pay** according to your age and award rates
- **Regular breaks** and meal periods
- **Written information** about your rights and responsibilities

What You Should Never Accept:

- Working without proper training
- Unsafe working conditions
- Pay below minimum wage for your age
- Workplace bullying or harassment
- Being asked to do tasks beyond your capabilities

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Getting Support

If You Need Help

- **Youth Central Victoria:** Free career and employment advice
- **WorkSafe Victoria:** 1800 136 089 for safety concerns
- **Fair Work Ombudsman:** 13 13 94 for pay and conditions issues
- **Young Workers Centre:** <https://www.youngworkers.org.au>
- **Wage Inspectorate Victoria:** 1800 287 287 for employment law questions

Emergency Contacts

- If you're injured at work, seek medical attention immediately
- Report serious safety incidents to WorkSafe Victoria
- Contact police if you experience violence or serious harassment

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Building Your Career

Skills Employers Value

- **Communication:** Clear speaking and listening
- **Reliability:** Showing up on time and completing tasks
- **Teamwork:** Working well with others
- **Problem-solving:** Finding solutions to challenges
- **Customer service:** Being helpful and professional

Making a Good Impression

- Arrive early and stay until your shift ends
- Ask questions when you're unsure about something
- Take initiative and look for ways to help
- Be polite to customers and colleagues
- Learn from feedback and mistakes

Planning Your Future

- Use your first job to explore different industries
- Build references from supervisors and colleagues
- Consider how your interests might lead to career paths
- Look into further education and training opportunities
- Network with professionals in fields that interest you

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Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Know your rights:** You deserve fair pay, safe conditions, and proper training
- ✓ **Start early:** Begin looking for work opportunities while still at school
- ✓ **Be prepared:** Have your documents ready and practice interview skills
- ✓ **Stay safe:** Never compromise your safety for a job
- ✓ **Keep learning:** Use work experience to develop skills and explore career options
- ✓ **Get help:** There are many resources available if you need support

Remember, your first job is a stepping stone to your future career.

Focus on learning, building good work habits, and developing professional relationships that will serve you well throughout your working life.

With the right preparation and mindset, you can successfully balance work and study while gaining valuable experience in the job market.