

Skills for Work

Book **4**

Rights & Responsibilities

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First published in Australia in 2007

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ISBN 978 1 921085 63 5

Cover design by Lauren Statham, Alice Graphics
Cover photograph: Australian Picture Library
Printed in Australia by Five Senses Education

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The author will donate a proportion from the sale of this book to 'Tree Project'. This donation will support Tree Project and Victorian schools in planting native seedlings to restore and preserve our precious environment.

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SAMPLE

Introduction

Skills for Work Book 4 provides teachers and trainers with a resource which will help them work with young people in a range of situations. It helps build on the skills already developed throughout the 'Skills for Work' series, and assists young people in taking the next step into the workforce with confidence and ease.

The Skills for Work series as a whole endeavours to help build young people into capable, aware and safe workers who are able to function independently in a workplace of their choosing. *Skills for Work Book 4* focuses on the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers, and encourages young people to be proactive and aware of their own needs in a workplace.

Entering the workforce is a challenging and confusing time for many young people. They are unsure of their place, and cautious about doing the wrong thing. They are often keen to impress with their knowledge and skills, but sometimes can find themselves in situations for which they are under prepared. Many young people feel concerned about whether they still have rights in a workplace, particularly in the light of changes to federal employment laws. Indeed, young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in workplaces in many ways.

Even more so, that particular group of young people who have special learning needs, lower literacy skills or a disability can be very much at risk in some workplaces. They need to be supported and guided through what can be a difficult and challenging part of their lives. They need encouragement to assert their rights, and the knowledge to understand what to reasonably expect in a workplace.

What is in Book 4?

Unit 1 – Getting started

This unit explores the very beginnings of the worker–workplace relationship. It provides information, activities, discussion prompts and worksheets relating to starting work. It focuses heavily on the responsibilities that young people have in a workplace, and helps them become aware of what employers will expect of them.

Unit 2 – Getting along

This unit looks at the relationships which exist in a workplace. It encourages young people to see themselves as a part of a whole, rather than just focusing on their own needs. It encourages them to become a part of a team where possible, and to practise taking on different roles within a team situation. It also examines the legislation and workplace expectations in areas such as bullying, harassment, worker rights and discrimination.

Unit 3 – Staying safe

This unit focuses on worker and workplace safety. It aims to protect young people, particularly in that very vulnerable time when they are first in a new job. It helps them learn to be assertive and to use common sense and a problem solving approach to dealing with safety issues. It provides practical advice and links for further information which can be explored as part of a class activity or independently.

Unit 4 – Building a future

This unit dares students to dream! Work is not all about just doing the same old nine-to-five stuff every day. Futures are meant to be unique and fascinating things. Students need to be able to dream and imagine what they want from the rest of their lives. They need skills, and strategies for building on existing skills. They should be able to take control of their lives and do what they want with them. With 'Building a future', the journey students have been taking throughout the series is complete. They are now ready to move on to the next phase of their lives, and should be able to do so happily and with a sense of confidence.

Using the book

Skills for Work Book 4 has been designed to meet the needs of a range of students. It could be used with students who:

- have lower literacy skills
- are from an ESL background
- have special learning needs
- have a disability
- have missed important phases of their school-based learning
- are completing an apprenticeship or traineeship

It can be used in a range of environments, including TAFE, schools and community learning settings. It may be particularly relevant to students in courses such as:

- mainstream secondary programs
- integrated students within mainstream programs
- VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning)
- Certificate 1 in Work Education
- Certificate 1 in Transition Education
- Certificate of General Education for Adults

Teachers and trainers should feel free to adapt the activities to suit their own purposes and the particular needs of their students. The units can be worked through in order, or sections can be used to complement other areas of classroom or on the job learning.

For many students, the activities and worksheets will work most effectively when combined with a practical component to learning. Students often learn best when they are doing a task which reinforces theoretical learning. A simple practical task such as visiting a shopping centre and taking note of the safety signs displayed can be an effective tool for reinforcing what has already been learnt in the classroom. It makes the information presented in class real, and makes it much more likely to be retained over time.

The book has deliberately been written to provide general information about possible workplace situations, rather than giving prescriptive advice. While some legislation information has been included, teachers should be aware that they will need to tailor information about current workplace laws to suit their students, and to allow for any changes that may happen over time. Care has been taken to provide accurate and up-to-date information about workplace laws, but teachers and trainers should check with their relevant state or territory bodies to ensure information is still accurate and up to date.

Unit 1: Getting started

Activity ideas

Many learners are able to learn most effectively when they are able to complete a practical, hands-on task in addition to theoretical learning. This is often known as 'learning by doing'. For this reason, some of the activities listed in this section are practical in nature, and will work best when combined with a real-life workplace situation or classroom-based scenario. Other tasks can be completed as a home-based task, or by using research skills in a library or online.

- Make a list of possible questions and areas of interest that students would like to learn more about. Give a series of prompts related to the topic of 'Getting started in a workplace'. Focus on prompts that will encourage an awareness of personal responsibility at work, as well as understanding the responsibilities of others.
- Ask students to find examples of pictures of people wearing clothing that is suitable for a range of workplace environments and create a scrapbook of the pictures.
- Have students visit a store (real or online) that sells workplace clothing and learn about clothing that would be suitable for a workplace which is of interest. For example, find out about work boots, overalls, protective eyewear, hair nets, aprons, laboratory coats or safety vests.
- Ask students to create a shopping list of personal presentation items that may be needed before applying for a job and starting work.
- Ask students to work out a weekly or monthly budget for two workers – one working full time and the other part time or casually. Discuss the implications for loans, bank accounts and credit cards if a worker is employed casually.
- Create a role play where students act out a 'first day at a new workplace' scenario and use suitable 'wardrobe' items to dress appropriately for their new jobs.
- Invite a speaker from a job network or job support agency to visit and discuss clothing and personal presentation expectations for various workplaces.
- Encourage students to visit websites about workers' rights, particularly those focused on young workers and disability rights.
- Suggest that students write a blog about starting work and the process of learning to be a worker.
- Organise a debate on either of the following topics:
'Piercings should not be permitted in any workplace' OR
'Girls who wear short skirts and low cut tops are just trying to impress the boss'.

Ask teams of students to prepare their arguments, and then present them in a logical, organised and structured debate in front of the class.

- Locate pictures of people who are dressed inappropriately for the workplace, and ask students to write a list of five words that describe their first impressions of the pictures. Extend the activity by asking students to write a list of three changes they believe the person should make to their appearance.

- Have students imagine that they are an employer. Ask them to write a dress code for their own workplace.
- Ask students to do some online research to learn about the dress codes and presentation expectations of three different workplaces.
- Ask students to write some notes about what people in a work team or group wear to a workplace. Tell them to take particular note of how the clothing is maintained, and whether small factors such as hair brushing and shoe cleaning seem to affect the overall appearance of a person.
- Ask students to write a step-by-step procedure for a simple set of tasks such as a morning routine. Focus on identifying any steps that are not in order, or where insufficient time may have been allowed. Discuss how missing a step or not allowing enough time can affect an overall project or task at work.
- Have students act out the entrance into a room of a number of characters that you describe. Use props and wardrobe items to add to the realism of the performances. Examples might include 'Slovenly Steve' who cannot be bothered doing anything and has an extremely laid back approach to life and work; 'Ernest Enid' who is a bit too keen to impress; 'Timid Tina' who struggles to overcome her shyness in order to have a conversation; and 'Rapid Chat Roger' who talks rapidly to cover his nerves.
- Discuss and practise assertive and respectful body language suitable for a first day at a workplace. Talk about issues such as mannerisms and habits that people often do more frequently when they are nervous, and think of alternatives that might be used. Guide the discussion into areas where students feel they may need to do further learning, and adapt your training program to suit their needs.
- Develop strategies for dealing with information overload in a new workplace, and talk about how people sometimes pretend they understand something when they don't.
- Have students make a poster as a group listing ten ways that you can not only BE responsible, but can also SHOW you are responsible in a workplace. Encourage students to apply these words and phrases to the 'demonstrated abilities' section of their resumes.
- Discuss ways of staying positive in the first few weeks at work, once the initial novelty of working has worn off. This might include making new friends, joining a social club, becoming involved in projects or additional tasks, asking questions and taking notes about new areas of the workplace which interest you, or setting some savings goals for enjoying your income.
- Encourage students to use research and enquiry skills to learn about the rules that apply in a workplace regarding use of technology such as emails, chatrooms, visits to various websites and personal use of computers at work.
- Encourage students to keep a picture- or text-based journal or blog of their work experiences, noting in particular areas of responsibility they have been given that they had not previously had, and any new achievements or skills that have been developed.
- Read some sample policies and procedures from a real life workplace and discuss what they mean.

- Ask students to write out a list of times for a typical work day, including time for breaks and lunch.
- Discuss ways of being assertive at work, and how body language and voice control are important features of assertive behaviour. Have students act out or role play examples of situations where assertive behaviour might be needed.
- Visit websites or locate relevant information about issues such as workplace bullying and harassment. Encourage students to guide their own online learning by writing a set of focus questions for themselves prior to going online. Talk about how and why these issues need to be addressed in the workplace. Think of strategies that students could use if they found themselves being bullied or harassed at work.

Topics for discussion

These topics can be used as whole-group discussion starters, or as prompts for small-group or pairs conversations. Ask students to think about their own views and beliefs for each statement or question, and remind them that there are not necessarily any right or wrong answers for each topic.

- Workplace bullying – does it really happen?
- Do we really need rules about how to behave in a workplace? If everyone is an adult, shouldn't they just know how to do the right thing anyway?
- I hate doing all this reading – can't I just pretend I have read the policies and then use my common sense?
- My boss won't give me time off when I am sick. I am scared he will sack me if I complain. I don't have any rights anyway.
- How I dress is my own business. I shouldn't have to change how I look just to go to work.
- Other people at work take time off to have a smoke when they want to. I figure that means I can come to work a bit later, otherwise I end up working more hours than they do because I don't smoke.
- No one will notice if I just finish this tomorrow. Who cares if the job is not done on time anyway? It's not my money!
- Find out about industrial relations which are relevant to your workplace. These may be laws set by the state government or the Commonwealth government. Do you think they will affect you and your work?
- What do you think about the new Work Choices Industrial Relations laws? Do you think they will affect you and your work?
- Do you think the rules for 'unfair dismissal' should be different depending on what size workplace you are in?
- How are workers rights different now compared with 100 years ago?

Know your rights

Things have changed a lot in the last few years when it comes to your rights at work. It is important you know and understand your rights. Although most bosses are pretty good, there might be some who do the wrong thing. They may not pay you enough, or not offer some of the entitlements you should be getting by law.

- Here are some areas that could be helpful to know about. Do some research in the library or online to find out about each one. Write a definition in the space. Discuss what you have found with a partner or in a small group.

Australian Workplace Agreement

Award

Normal hours

Overtime

Penalty rates

Unfair dismissal

Redundancy

Casual loading

Dealing with your employer about pay and conditions



Many young people find it very hard to deal with their new employer about their pay and conditions. They may never have had to bargain or negotiate about work before. They may feel as if they have to do just what their employer says they should.

Here are a few tips that might help:

- Ask your employer to write down exactly what you are being offered – this might include your job title, award or agreement, whether you are a trainee or apprentice, whether you are a junior, if the job is full time, part time or casual.
- Do some research about your award or agreement. Visit some sites like www.workchoices.gov.au or www.wagenet.gov.au, talk to other, more experienced workers, or your family or other support people. Remember, you are allowed to take your time to think about any job contracts such as Australian Workplace Agreements, and you can have an adult help with negotiations if you are under 18.
- Get some advice from a union, organisation or group that covers your work area. There are also government organisations and groups that are there to give you advice and help if you need it.
- Find out about the minimum pay and conditions rules that apply to your work. Learn about your rights and how these might change if you are a junior worker, a trainee, apprentice or a worker with a disability.
- Ask someone else to help you negotiate. This could be a parent, friend, relative or someone else you know and trust. The person should be over 18, and should be responsible and trustworthy.
- Think carefully through what you want out of your work, and what is important to you.
- Write out your questions and make sure you have them answered fully before you sign an agreement.
- Talk to your employer in a calm and respectful way. Remember work is a part of the adult world, and you are expected to behave like an adult. (This should also mean that your employer shows you the same courtesy!)
- Take any contracts or agreements home if possible, so you can read them carefully and make sure you understand them. Your employer should not pressure you into signing something you do not understand or have not read properly.

Workplace words – can you speak the language?

Match each word or phrase with its meaning by drawing a line between the two boxes.

Flexitime

A worker who is paid on an hourly or daily rate, and who may work a variable number of hours or days. They are paid a higher rate to make up for not getting holiday or sick leave.

Unfair dismissal

Money paid by an employer into an approved fund. This money is used by an employee once they retire at the end of their working life.

Minimum wage

Being sacked from your job in an unfair manner which breaches your award, agreement or the law. You may be able to appeal, depending on what has happened and how you are employed.

Group certificate

A worker decides on their own that they want to leave their employment and end their contract with their employer. They usually do this in writing.

Casual employee

A certificate or statement given to workers at the end of the financial year. It tells you your total pay for the year as well as the amount of tax paid.

Resignation

Working flexible hours within a day. The start and finish time is between certain times, and a set number of total hours must be worked.

Superannuation guarantee

The lowest amount of money that can be paid to a worker by law.

Work trials

Give Mohammed some tips for doing a work trial at the Fast Fries Take-Away restaurant. His work duties are:

- To serve customers and take money
- To prepare food and take orders
- To clean the tables and floor in the restaurant
- To deliver dirty dishes, cups and trays to the kitchen

Did you know?
You must be paid for a work trial. Unpaid work trials are illegal. (This is not the same as unpaid work experience through school or TAFE though). The longest a work trial can last is three months.

Draw what you think Mohammed should wear to work:

Give Mohammed some tips for dealing with customers:

Are there any health and safety points that Mohammed should keep in mind? List them here.

Mohammed's boss has told him he will be on trial for a week without pay. Then he will be paid at half the normal rate for the rest of his trial. He says he will let Mohammed know when he thinks he is ready to work on full pay.

Is this right? What should Mohammed do?

Your pay slip

One of the best bits about going to work is getting paid! This happens each week, fortnight or month, depending on your workplace. Your pay details will be written on a pay slip. The pay slip tells you what you have been paid for, and how much.

Some handy tips to remember about pay slips:

1. You should be given a pay slip when you are paid by your employer
2. Your pay slip should have information about your pay, allowances, superannuation and leave taken in writing
3. Check your pay slip each time you receive it to make sure you have been paid the right amount
4. Check your bank account to make sure what has gone in matches with what is written on your pay slip

Employee name _____ Department _____

Date of pay _____ Pay period _____

Employer name: _____ Employer ABN _____

Name of award /agreement _____

Job title _____ Classification _____

Status (full time / part time / casual) _____

Ordinary hours worked _____ hrs @ _____/hr = _____

Overtime hours worked _____ hrs @ _____/hr = _____

Total gross amount this pay period _____

Deductions (tax) _____ Other deductions _____

Total net amount this pay period _____

Superannuation (employer contribution) _____ paid to
_____ superannuation fund

Leave taken _____ hrs Leave remaining _____ hrs

- Read through the pay slip carefully. Highlight any words or phrases you don't understand. Talk to your teacher / trainer about these. Write down their meanings so you can remember them for later.