

WORK EXPERIENCE

IN MANUFACTURING

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND JOB SEEKERS

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WHAT IS WORK EXPERIENCE?

Work experience is an unpaid, short-term placement where you get the chance to observe up close how things work in a particular workplace over a set period of time, often a week or two. It's more about getting a feel for the jobs and learning about what people do in that field, rather than getting too hands on. If you do work experience in Year 10, it can really help you with picking subjects for Years 11 and 12. Otherwise, picking up work experience in Year 11 and 12 can help you choose a job after school.

This guide only deals with work experience.

Some school-based or other vocational courses offer or require students to do structured vocational placements as a formal part of your course and are focussed on specific learning outcomes. These placements require students to complete different tasks and assessments to pass the course.

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships also require placements where people complete competency-based assessments that contribute to their qualification as they work towards their vocational qualification.

Manufacturing makes things happen

Think about what areas really interest you, and what might be available in your local area.

Picking the “right” field now isn’t a deal breaker. Work experience is a chance to have a look and even if the workplace or type of work isn’t for you, it is a valuable experience. If you find something else that sparks your interests, nothing stops you from asking to do more with other host employers (probably on your school holidays).

ARRANGING WORK EXPERIENCE

Most people looking for work experience are already in secondary school, and most schools have specialist careers guidance people who are there to help.

You'll probably see information come around in the school notices letting you know that work experience is coming up and to register your interest. You can also make an appointment with your careers guidance staff member to get the ball rolling.

Whatever route you take – don't forget that manufacturing is a big, growing and exciting area to work in, so look at where you might be able to go with local manufacturers.

Each school is slightly different in its approach and there may be a list of employers already prepared to take students on. You can also look online for organisations that do the kind of things you are interested in and ask for help contacting them and asking for a placement. You might already have a link to a possible host employer (you could even ask your family if they have contacts).

If you're out of school, there are still plenty of options to get work experience. Ask your family and friends for links to employers (you'll be surprised who knows who), keep your eyes open for careers expos, go to local manufacturing exhibitions and industry events to meet representatives face-to-face, go old school and do some research (see next page) and reach out to places which might offer a placement – some larger organisations have formal programs in place and others may be willing to take you on. Remember, when you contact an employer, you need to come across as professional and willing to learn, so put effort into your email and ask someone else to read it through first.

RESEARCHING BUSINESSES

It pays to be strategic when you research organisations which might offer you work experience. Work through this process:

What interests do you have? Perhaps making things, working with timber, designing or drawing, chemistry, whatever lights your fire.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? In protective gear making things, working in an office environment, outdoors putting things together, whatever you imagine yourself doing.

Jump on the internet and search for places which might be doing the things you're interested in. Be clever here – as well as searching for organisations directly using your search terms (what interest you and what type of work), you can search through things like local business associations or chamber of commerce directories.

Once you get a list of possible organisations, explore their websites to understand their values, culture, and current projects. Check out their social media profiles to understand their work environment.

Don't forget online platforms like LinkedIn that can reveal potential connections who might be able to introduce you.



PREPARING FOR WORK EXPERIENCE

Your school is responsible for helping you get ready for work experience – managing things like health, safety and wellbeing, as well as the educational value of the placement.

Your school will help you out with:

- your responsibilities (behaviour, attendance, managing absences, workplace health and safety, reporting incidents or accidents, and your role in the workplace)
- your basic rights (not to experience harassment or discrimination, and what to do if it happens)
- the work your host business does, and any specific requirements needed for you to be there
- required documentation (there is a workplace agreement you and your guardian need to sign, and there might be journals or reports depending on your school)
- the school's expectations of you (remember you are representing your school and the way you act reflects on them).

Your host employer might make contact with you to give a heads-up about who they are and what they do. If they do, don't forget to ask them important questions like when and where to turn up (both the address and where to go when you get there), what to wear and bring, who to ask for, whether you need to bring your own food or drink, and what time you finish.

This is also a great opportunity to get to know them a little and make a good first impression. If your host employer doesn't call you, it might be a good plan to contact them.

GET A HEAD START!

Before you even step into the workplace, consider completing the Manufacturing General Induction as preparation.

It's perfect to help you:

- build confidence before your first day.
- learn essential workplace safety procedures.
- understand industry terminology and expectations.
- gain insights into quality practices and teamwork.
- show potential employers your initiative and commitment.

This free online course covers theory components, letting you focus your work experience placement on valuable real-world learning. It's specifically designed for new entrants to the industry.

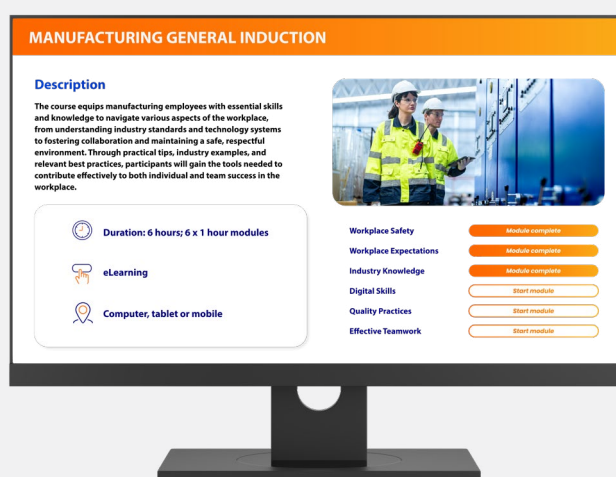
Get the edge: Having this induction completed and on your CV may make you more appealing to potential work experience hosts and help you get more from your placement.

Be ready on day one

This fully-funded induction equips you with the industry-specific knowledge manufacturers value from day one. With practical insights into workplace safety, professional expectations, and quality standards, you'll be well-prepared to make a strong start on your work experience placement.



Learn more > go.msq.org.au/general-induction



WHILE YOU'RE THERE

Host employer responsibilities:

- Host employers take on significant responsibilities having you in their workplace to keep you safe and free from harm.
- They will show you how the workplace functions and select a supervisor or mentor to look after and guide you while you are there.
- If you have questions, please ask your supervisor or host employer. If you are still confused, check in with your career guidance person.

Your responsibilities on your first day:

- Be early – make sure you are at the workplace and ready to go before the start time, make sure you know where to go and who to ask for.
- Take a pen and notepad.
- Wear whatever clothing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you have been told to bring or have been given to use.
- Ask where you can safely leave things like your lunch, phone or other personal items.
- You will receive an induction which is critical to making you safe, explaining what goes on, and will help you get the most out of your time there – listen, take notes and ask questions because this is the real world and is important. There's a template workplace induction sheet in the resources section at the back of this guide.
- Introduce yourself and remember people's names (write them down). Take special note of your supervisors' name/s.
- Learn the layout of the facility – there is likely to be a sign with a map shown as part of your induction and displayed on walls around the building. Make sure you know when and where you take breaks, where toilets are, and most importantly, emergency exits.

Your responsibilities every day:

- Turn up every day, on time and ready to get going. If for any reason you can't get there, contact your host employer or supervisor AND your school.
- Stay safe in the workplace – see page 10.
- Check in with your supervisor so you know what they want you to do, where to be and what to bring. Before you finish for the day, ask what they want you to do the next day.
- Do what you are told, when you are told to do it.
- Be polite and respectful, but don't be afraid to ask questions – it shows you want to learn and are interested in what's going on.
- When you finish a break, be where you have to be early.
- Most schools or employers ask you to keep a journal or daily record sheet. Keep it up to date and don't skimp on your notes.
- Thank your supervisor and other people when they help you, give advice or spend time with you. Just saying "thank you" means a lot and shows that you value the people around you.

Your responsibilities on your last day:

- Thank everyone you have worked with for their time and their help – these people might be your bosses or co-workers some day. It's really important that you thank your supervisor and host employer.
- Your host employer and supervisor will probably give you some feedback on your time with them. It's important to listen to this and take it onboard. It's not designed to disrespect you, but to help you get some tips for next time you go into a workplace – remember next time you might be looking for a job and getting it right is really important.
- You might also be asked if you have any thoughts on what your host employer could have done to improve the work experience placement. It's a good idea to put some thought into this before the meeting so you have something to say.
- Return any items you have been issued to use at work.



AFTERWARDS

Your placement supervisor might be asked by your school to send in a post-placement student report or evaluation which your careers guidance person should discuss with you. It will provide really valuable feedback on how you went and how you can perform even better next time you enter a workplace.

It's really important that you take the time to send your host employer and or supervisor a note – even by email – to thank them for the chance to spend time with them and learn what they do. If you enjoyed yourself, tell them. If you'd like to go back and learn more about their work, ask. If you'd like to be considered for a job when you finish school, ask them if you can contact them again.

Don't forget to update your CV with details of your work experience. Instead of just putting down "Work Experience with Big Wood Cabinets – 1-14 July" talk a bit about what they do and what you were involved with, more like "Two weeks work experience observing the design, cutting, assembly, delivery and installation of timber custom kitchen cabinetry with Big Wood Cabinets" so that people get an idea of what you experienced.

SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Manufacturing workplaces are getting things done and can have many moving parts. While they are set up to be safe for people who are fully trained and work there all the time, visitors like you need to be especially aware of staying safe:

- Wear the required PPE all the time
- ALWAYS take notice of and obey safety signage and briefings
- Do exactly what your supervisor tells you
- If you see something that looks like a hazard or have a safety concern, speak up
- Ask questions about anything you are not sure about.

Not only are you keeping yourself safer, you show your host employer you are a safe person to have on site and the sort of employee they want around.

GETTING THAT JOB

While getting a job might still seem like a long way off, getting work experience now is an important step.

As well as actually spending time in a manufacturing workplace, work experience brings many benefits:

- Helping you pick subjects in Years 11 and 12 to improve your chances of landing a job you want
- Giving you practical experience and building on your real-world job skills, both of which are great in your CV
- Gaining industry contacts who might be prepared to give you tips, other contacts or references
- Enhancing your employability by showing you know how a workplace operates.

You can improve your chances of getting the job you want by keeping in touch with your host employer, asking them for a reference, and when the time is right, asking them if they are taking people on for other job opportunities.

RESOURCES

Getting the most out of your work experience placement takes preparation and support. This section gives you the essential resources to guide you through the process from start to finish.

Whether you're working with your school's careers advisor or navigating work experience solo, these tools will help ensure your placement is properly arranged, documented, and meaningful.

These resources cover everything from formal agreements between all parties to daily reflection tools to get the most from your placement. Each document can be adapted to suit your specific circumstances (if your school or host employer do not already have something similar in place). They will guide you in maintaining the core requirements for a structured, safe, and educational work experience placement in manufacturing or engineering.



Pre-takeoff checklist
(Get ready for work experience). [Page 13.](#)



Work Experience Agreement
(your school may have a different one, but it will be similar). [Page 16.](#)



Workplace Induction Checklist
(your host employer will probably have something similar – if not, take this along with you). [Page 17.](#)



Work experience journal
(this is a sample to give you something to work from – your school or host employer may already have something, but if not, you're prepared with this one). [Page 18.](#)



Queensland Department of Education Work Experience Questions and Answers
(this is written for schools, but answers a lot of technical questions you might have).



PRE-TAKEOFF CHECKLIST

First, DON'T PANIC! You do not need to do everything on this list at the same time, just start at the top.

GETTING READY FOR WORK EXPERIENCE

Work experience agreement read, signed by you and your guardian, then returned to school.

Check out host employer's website or socials.

Their link is: _____

Find out what they manufacture? _____

Is there any recent news about them? _____

What sort of clothes are staff wearing, what equipment are they using in images? _____

What vibe do their socials have? (this points to the culture of the organisation) _____

CONTACT WITH HOST EMPLOYER – they might contact or, or you contact them

Their details are:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

THINGS TO ASK YOUR HOST EMPLOYER:

What should you wear? _____

What should you bring with you (check if you need to take lunch or something to drink, check if you can take your mobile, check if there is anything else)? _____

What time do you start and finish on the first day? _____

Confirm the address (and which gate or door to go to) _____

When you arrive, who should you speak to, and where should you go to find them? _____

GETTING READY FOR DAY ONE

Work out what you will wear

Work out what you will take – have a pen and notebook as a minimum

Visit the address of the host employer – make sure you know where it is, how to get there, and where the entrance is. If you'll be on a bike or driving, where will you be able to park?

If you have been given any PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) like gloves, eye protection, hearing defenders, boots or whatever else – make sure you know how they work

Print out this checklist and a copy of the journal template to take with you

Get a good night's sleep and be ready to go!

FIRST DAY

Bring everything you need with you

Dress as you have been instructed

Arrive early (10 minutes at least) and allow time to get to your check in place

Take a deep breath – everything will work out just fine

Find out where you can leave your bag, lunch, mobile (if you can't have it with you)

Meet your host employer / supervisor – make sure you write down their name and how to contact them

You should now get an induction (it might have a different name but will talk about safety, what to do and when, rules and other important information about the workplace). Take notes, and if anything isn't covered, ask the question.

A good start might be:

Do I know the layout of the building?

Do I know what different signs mean?

Do I know when to evacuate and where to meet up?

Do I know where to have breaks/lunch and where to go to the toilet?

Where can I get a drink?

Where will I be working?

Who am I working with?

What PPE do I need to wear and when/where can I take it off?

Do they want you to take notes or fill in a journal? If your supervisor doesn't have a journal, show them the one you printed out and ask if it OK to use it

Have a great day!

END OF FIRST DAY

Ask your supervisor if they have any tips for you, or things you might have missed or gotten wrong (don't worry, no one gets their first day perfect)

Check what time and where you are needed for the next day

Remember to pick up your bag and gear on the way out

Thank your supervisor and any people you've worked with

Go home and chill – AFTER you do your journal!

EVERY DAY AFTER THAT

Be where you are supposed to be, and just before you are supposed to be there

If you are sick or really can't get there contact your supervisor AND your school immediately.

The numbers are:

Supervisor phone: _____

Supervisor email: _____

Careers advisor phone: _____

Careers advisor email: _____

Listen, learn, ask questions, stay safe and have a great time finding out about manufacturing

When you get breaks, make sure you are back fast and with everything you need

Ask for feedback on how you are going, and change things so you are better every day

Don't forget your journal every day

LAST DAY

Think about what you have learned during your placement, the things you really liked, the things you had trouble with, and what would make it better – you might be asked for your opinion so it's good to be prepared with an answer

Ask for feedback on how you were during the placement, and take onboard what you are told

Thank your host employer and supervisor for their time and interest in you, as well as for offering work experience

If you think this might be a place you'd like to work, ask them when and how you can apply

FOLLOWUP

Check in with your careers advisor for any final paperwork and a chat about how it went

Send you host employer and supervisor an email to thank them and tell them how much you enjoyed being there

Update your CV

Enjoy the rest of your time at school as you prepare to make a great career in manufacturing.

WORK EXPERIENCE AGREEMENT

STUDENT DETAILS

Name: _____

School: _____ Year level: _____

Contact number: _____ Emergency contact: _____

HOST EMPLOYER DETAILS

Company name: _____

Address: _____

Supervisor name: _____ Position: _____

Contact number: _____ Email: _____

PLACEMENT DETAILS

Start date: _____ End date: _____

Hours: From _____ To _____ Total days: _____

Department/Area: _____

RESPONSIBILITIES

The student agrees to:

- Attend the workplace on the agreed dates and times
- Follow all workplace health and safety procedures
- Complete assigned tasks to the best of their ability
- Maintain confidentiality regarding business information
- Notify both the employer and school of any absence
- Dress and behave in an appropriate manner

THE EMPLOYER AGREES TO:

- Provide appropriate supervision at all times
- Ensure a safe working environment
- Provide meaningful work tasks related to the student's learning
- Complete required assessment documentation
- Contact the school immediately regarding any issues or concerns
- Provide induction and necessary training

THE SCHOOL AGREES TO:

- Maintain regular contact with the student and employer
- Provide support throughout the placement
- Ensure all paperwork is completed prior to placement
- Address any concerns promptly

SIGNATURES

Student: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Employer: _____ Date: _____

School representative: _____ Date: _____

WORKPLACE INDUCTION CHECKLIST

MANUFACTURING/ENGINEERING WORK EXPERIENCE

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Company: _____ Supervisor: _____

INTRODUCTION

Welcome and introduction to company/site

Tour of facilities and departments

Introduction to key staff members

Company background, products and services

Explanation of student's role during placement

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Emergency procedures and evacuation routes

Location of fire exits, extinguishers and first aid facilities

Accident/incident reporting procedures

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements

Manual handling procedures

Machine/equipment safety rules

Hazardous substances information

Electrical safety

WORKPLACE PROCEDURES

Working hours and break times

Sign-in/sign-out procedures

Restricted areas identified

Computer/technology usage policies

Communication protocols

Quality control procedures

Waste management and environmental practices

Confidentiality requirements

WORK EXPERIENCE SPECIFICS

Explanation of tasks and projects

Introduction to manufacturing processes

Tools and equipment instruction

Supervision arrangements

Performance expectations

Questions and clarifications

CONTACT INFORMATION

Supervisor: _____ Ph: _____

Safety officer: _____ Ph: _____

School contact: _____ Ph: _____

I confirm that the above induction has been completed and I understand the information provided:

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor signature: _____ Date: _____

MY WORK EXPERIENCE JOURNAL

MANUFACTURING & ENGINEERING PLACEMENT

Name: _____ Year level: _____

Company: _____ Dates: _____

DAILY RECORD – DAY: _____

Today I arrived at: _____ and finished at: _____

My supervisor today was: _____

What I did today: _____

New things I saw in the workplace: _____

Tools or equipment I used or observed: _____

Safety rules I followed today: _____

Something new I learned about manufacturing: _____

The best part of today was: _____

Something I found challenging: _____

MY THOUGHTS

Three words to describe today: _____

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

One question I have after today: _____

Tomorrow I hope to: _____

PHOTOS/SKETCHES

Send photos (with permission from the workplace) with this journal to your school career supervisor.

SUPERVISOR COMMENTS

Supervisor name: _____ Date: _____



CONTACT US

Manufacturing Skills Queensland (MSQ) is building a sustainably skilled workforce for a future-proofed manufacturing industry.

For more information on work experience programs in manufacturing or any other query on manufacturing skills, please contact us at:

P: 1800 677 000

E: msq.org.au/contact

W: msq.org.au



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