



Work Experience Guidelines

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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What is work experience?

Work experience is a short-term industry placement with a host employer. During this time you will:

- Observe different aspects of work in a particular industry, and assist with tasks allocated by your supervisor
- You may also need to demonstrate certain competencies
- You will develop a range of skills and knowledge in an industry setting

What are the benefits of doing a work experience placement?

Exposure

- Gain exposure to the 'real' world of work
- Clarify your career goals and expectations
- Find out how jobs tick "from the inside"

Skills

- Improve your 'employability'
- Break the "can't get a job without experience, can't get experience without a job" cycle
- Build confidence in your skills and abilities
- Put your learned skills into practice

Contacts

- Develop useful industry contacts/networks
- Gain referees
- Promote yourself to potential employers

Remember - It is through contacts and networks that you are most likely to find your first job!

If you are under the age of 18 and seeking work experience you should inform your Joblink Midwest Careers Officer and ensure you have parent/guardian permission prior to the placement. Your parent/guardian will be required to sign approval documents.

Finding a work experience placement

The process of finding work experience is exactly the same as looking for paid work. One thing is different however, and that is that work experience is rarely advertised. So you will need to approach employers directly – it's called 'cold canvassing'. Many companies are happy to oblige and often use work experience as a chance to assess your skills, and observe whether you'd be suitable should a paid position arise.

To be successful when canvassing employers for a placement, you will need:

- An up-to-date resume
- A clear idea of what skills and qualities you can offer
- An idea of the type of experience you are seeking
- The willingness to approach employers either by phone, face-to-face, or in writing
- A clear idea of your availability
- A positive "can do" attitude

If you feel you need assistance with any of these, then contact your local Joblink Midwest. They run workshops and one-on-one sessions to give you the skills and confidence to find your own work experience.

Insurance

It is ESSENTIAL to take out personal accident insurance cover BEFORE starting your work experience placement. Joblink Midwest can provide this cover at no cost to you.

Arranging insurance cover

You must be insured for injuries and accidents in or on your way to the workplace. Known as *Personal Accident Insurance*, most employers insist that you have this cover.

When speaking to potential host employers, mention that Joblink Midwest can provide insurance cover for your placement at no cost to them. Being up-front about these things lessens the chance of the employer saying “no”.

To be eligible for cover

- Your work experience must be unpaid
- You must be a registered client of Joblink Midwest

When you do work experience is entirely up to you, and what you can negotiate with a host employer. How long your work experience lasts for is up to you and your agreement with the employer. Placements of 1-2 weeks duration are common. Some employers prefer this to be a single block. Other employers may be willing to offer you 1 day per week over a longer period, so you can fit it around your individual circumstances. When negotiating with employers be flexible as this improves your chances of being offered experience. When a suitable placement has been arranged ensure the necessary documents are completed and returned to Joblink Midwest.

Where can I do it?

Where you can do work experience is practically unlimited. Many small and large companies, non-profit groups and government agencies offer this, and it's up to you to find out who they are. However, some high risk activities are excluded, see below.

Excluded activities

Please read the exclusion clauses of the Insurance Policy. The policy also excludes claims for war, intentional use of military force or terrorist acts and any injury or illness caused directly or indirectly or attributable to or consequential upon the Insured Person engaging in the following activities:

1. Acting
2. Athletics
3. Crane Driving and / or Operating
4. Diving
5. Commercial Fishing
6. Horse Riding or Racing
7. Motor Racing
8. Tree-logging
9. Lumber-jacking
10. Underground Mining
11. Roofing / Roof Tiling

Things to do before your first day

Your first day on work experience is like your first day in a paid job. So to be prepared, make sure you know:

- Who your supervisor is
- Where to report
- What time you are expected to start
- What standard of dress is expected
- What to bring with you

It is also important that you think about what *you* hope to achieve through this experience: Enhanced skills? Greater confidence? Better understanding of the industry you hope to work in? By letting your supervisor know, they are better able to help you achieve your goals (see Suggesting a project).

Suggesting a project

Often employers are willing to provide you with experience, but aren't sure what that should be. You can help them by suggesting projects on which you'd like to work. Even if your suggestion is not possible, it can be a springboard for further discussion. Projects should be achievable in the time available.

It is expected that you will:

- Negotiate a work schedule with your supervisor. It is not acceptable to 'not show', even if it is good beach weather!
- Arrive promptly for work. If you need to change your work schedule, make sure to negotiate this with your supervisor in advance.
- Exhibit appropriate behaviour, interacting appropriately with your supervisor and other staff.
- Take care to minimise any risks to yourself and others. Report any risks to your supervisor immediately.
- Comply with any Occupational Health and Safety guidelines (check with your supervisor).
- Comply with any confidentiality requirements (check with your supervisor).

Your host employer's responsibilities

Your host employer has a responsibility to provide you with:

- A supervisor
- Meaningful tasks to develop your skills and knowledge (see Suggesting a project). However, your employer may also ask you to perform more routine tasks. This is reasonable provided they don't form the focus of your work experience
- An orientation to the organisation
- A chance to interact with other staff
- Feedback at the end of your experience

Accidents

If you are injured in an accident, inform your supervisor immediately and seek medical assistance. Make sure you **a)** get a certificate from the doctor and **b)** keep any receipts, as you will need both for insurance purposes. Your supervisor will contact Joblink Midwest and inform them of the accident. You will receive a claim form to complete, and return with your medical certificate and receipts attached. Once processed, you will be advised of the outcome.

After your work experience

Work experience is an opportunity for you to improve your 'employability' in the world of paid employment. It is up to you to make best use of this opportunity. Some useful tips which you may wish to consider include:

- Send your employer a *thank you letter*. In your letter, mention some of the skills you acquired or knowledge you gained. This will work in your favour, especially if you ask them to be a referee.
- Ask your supervisor to be your referee. A referee is someone who can speak about you, and your work, to a possible employer. Referees are very important for anyone starting out, who may not have much experience.
- Send your supervisor a copy of your *resume*.
- Ask your supervisor if they can introduce you to other managers at the organisation, or suggest other people *you can talk to*. This is known as *networking* and it's a way for you to introduce yourself to possible employers, or people who could put you in touch with them.
- *Stay in touch* with your supervisor on a regular basis, to find out about upcoming opportunities for paid work.