

BSB 7.0

BSBOPS201

**WORK
EFFECTIVELY
IN BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENTS**

BSBOPS201

Work effectively in business environments

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1



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© 2020 Aspire Training & Consulting
Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 9820 1300

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Contact details

Participant
Name:
Start date:
Phone number:
Email:
Work location
Name:
Address:
Postal address:
Workplace supervisor name:
Phone number:
Fax:
Email:
Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
Name:
Address:
Postal address (if different):
Phone number:
Fax:
RTO contact name:
Mobile:
Email:

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBOPS201 Work effectively in business environments*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this Learner Guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These highlight key learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.
Summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning Checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a Learning Checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which Learning Checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews documentation to identify relevant information for requirements of job role and organisation
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes documentation necessary for work tasks and reporting requirements using clear, concise and accurate grammar and language
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies requirements and responsibilities of job role and organisation by using effective questioning and listening techniques to seek advice, information and feedback Contributes to an effective working environment by communicating with others, behaving courteously and using non-discriminatory language
Enterprise and initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows clear instructions within defined level of responsibility, seeking clarification when required Identifies and accepts responsibility for working within common work frameworks Identifies organisational expectations and follows explicit protocols and procedures
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies common differences in other people and implements basic strategies to address own reaction to these differences Uses basic communication strategies to implement and complete work tasks including seeking advice when required
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows clearly defined instructions and sequencing, and monitors own progress for tasks, seeking assistance when necessary

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Identify the business context	1A Identifying an organisation's requirements and responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Understanding employee and employer rights and responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Complying with duty-of-care obligations and organisational objectives, standards and values	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Determining the roles and responsibilities of staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1E Identifying the requirements of your own role	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Working in a team	2A Following requirements for a safe work environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Work with others in a positive manner	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Complete tasks according to workplace requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Clarifying instructions and responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Seeking assistance to resolve issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3: Developing effective work habits	3A Identifying work and personal priorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Applying time-management strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Communicating issues to team leaders	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Seeking feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic 1 | Identify the business context

- 1A Identifying an organisation's requirements and responsibilities
- 1B Understanding employee and employer rights and responsibilities
- 1C Complying with duty-of-care and organisational requirements
- 1D Determining the roles and responsibilities of staff
- 1E Identifying the requirements of your own role

1A Identifying an organisation's requirements and responsibilities

When you start a new job, it is important that you understand the organisation's requirements and your own responsibilities.

When you start at a new workplace, you usually attend an induction program to learn what you need to know about your job and the organisation.

There are specific rules, regulations, policies and procedures that all employees must understand and follow. For example, everyone in Australia must abide by work health and safety (WHS) laws. Both individuals and organisations can incur penalties if they fail to meet these legal requirements.

There are many ways to find out what your organisation expects of you and what policies and procedures you need to understand and follow. These might include:

- attending an induction program
- asking others for advice
- consulting organisational documents, such as workplace manuals.

It is your employer's responsibility to confirm that you understand your role and what is required of you.

Attending an induction program

Induction programs provide new employees with vital information about an organisation.

Most employers run an induction or initiation session for new employees to introduce them to the organisation or provide an induction kit.

An induction session may be a formal session at which the employee is given detailed information about the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of each department, or it may be conducted informally, with the employee taken around the office and introduced to each worker. Large employers often use online training modules as part of their staff induction. The type of induction offered depends on the size and nature of the organisation.

An induction kit generally contains a manual of policies and procedures and other information relating to the organisation. The policies and procedures manual may include a plan of the office and an organisational chart showing employees' names, their titles and the location of their workstations, as well as the new employee's position description and list of duties.

At the end of your induction, you may be asked to sign a form or complete an online checklist stating that you have read and understood the information provided to you.

Induction programs usually cover:

- The organisation's strategic direction
- The organisation's structure and reporting hierarchy
- Policies and procedures
- Legal requirements, such as WHS obligations
- Regulatory requirements, such as forms that need to be completed
- Terms and conditions of the job, including holiday and sick leave entitlements, hours of work and reporting requirements
- Payroll and time sheet arrangements
- Introductions to key members of staff
- Training specific to the new employee's position

Asking others for advice

All new employees have questions, so don't be afraid to ask.

There's a lot to learn when you start a new job, and you're bound to have questions. You may have trouble transferring calls, finding a document you need or understanding workplace guidelines. If so, you should ask for help. For example, if you're not sure how to fill in your time sheet, you could ask a co-worker, your supervisor or staff in the human resources department.

If it's a brief query, you can make a phone call or send an email. In other cases, you'll need to make an appointment, to allow the person to set aside time to speak to you.

Different people will be able to answer different questions for you. Make sure you ask the right person. Your co-workers will be able to answer many of your questions, but sometimes you might need to seek help outside your organisation. For example, you might ask a contact at an industry body or association if you want to find out about further training in your field.

If you have questions about work, you could ask:

- A more experienced colleague
- Your supervisor
- A department manager, such as the human resources manager
- Your union representative
- An industry body or association
- An authority such as Safe Work Australia

Consulting organisational documents

An organisation's documents often contain important information that staff need to understand.

To find out more about an organisation, you can look at its key documents. These might include a company's strategic plan and mission statement, or its annual reports.

You will probably deal with other documents, such as order forms, contracts or invoices, as you complete your everyday tasks at work.

Sometimes it's hard to find the document you need. If you're not sure where to look, you can ask a colleague for help.

You should also ask for help if you have trouble interpreting a document or need to clarify unfamiliar words or concepts. If there's something you don't understand, ask a colleague to explain it in a different way. It may be that the document was not well written in the first place, and your questions may prompt changes that will help other staff members too.

If you have trouble reading workplace documents due to a disability or condition that makes reading a challenge, or because English is not your first language, don't hesitate to ask for help. There is always someone who is willing to help you understand.

Never pretend you understand a document when you really don't. It is always better to ask questions than to make a mistake that could be costly or dangerous to yourself or someone else.

Paper and electronic documents

There are two types of documents: paper and electronic. A paper printout is referred to as a 'hard copy' and an electronic file is a 'soft copy'.

It is easier to read long or complex documents in hard copy. People often print out important documents to proofread, even if the document will be distributed electronically. Soft-copy documents are easy to search, update and distribute to staff in remote locations.

Paper documents are usually kept in an organisation's library, a central filing system or a central office. If you use a hard-copy document, particularly one related to a policy or procedure, always ensure you are using the latest version. Check the date on the document, or ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

Electronic documents are kept in a central electronic filing system or on an organisation's intranet. This is convenient when there are a large number of policies, procedures and forms, or if frequent changes are made to the documents. Always check the central electronic filing system to make sure you have the latest version of a document, rather than relying on a copy that you printed out or downloaded earlier.

Strategic plans

A strategic plan is an important document that outlines an organisation's goals.

Most large businesses have a strategic plan that sets out their short- and long-term goals, so that employees know what they are working towards. These goals are often financial, but others might be less tangible, such as employee satisfaction or environmental sustainability.

The strategic plan is like a kind of map or guide, showing where the organisation is headed and plotting out how it will get there. It may determine which products or services the organisation offers, the skills it needs, the audience it targets and the marketing strategies it uses. When the strategic plan is re-evaluated, it may mean drastic changes to the business.

A strategic plan is used to:

- Help an organisation do a better job
- Focus the organisation's energy
- Ensure that members of the organisation are working towards the same goals
- Assess and adjust the organisation's direction in response to a changing environment

Example

Mission and vision statements

An organisation's broader mission or purpose is often explicitly stated in its strategic plan, along with its vision for the future. You will often see a company's mission and vision displayed in its reception area or on its website.

Mission	Our mission is to provide the best-quality clothing to our customers at the best price.
Vision	We want our name to be the first that springs to mind when you think of buying clothes.

Other operational documents

An organisation's strategic plan is often supplemented by more detailed operational documents, including business, departmental and quality assurance plans, employee manuals, charters and codes of practice. All employees should have a basic familiarity with these documents, as they determine how the organisation is run.

Business plan	A business plan documents an organisation's short- and long-term objectives and the strategies for achieving them. It sets the direction for the business and keeps the organisation on track once it is up and running. An organisation has to present its business plan when seeking finance. Monthly and annual reports measure the organisation's progress against the targets set out in its business plan.
Department plan	Each department or team in an organisation has its own plan, showing how its goals fit in with the overall goals of the organisation. Each employee should have an individual work plan outlining their specific tasks.
Quality assurance plan	Many organisations have a policy of continually updating and improving their systems and processes. Some are motivated by the desire to do things better, but improvements may also be necessary to meet new accreditation standards.
Employee manual	An organisation's employee manual outlines employees' legal obligations at work and the procedures they must follow. For example, it may include instructions for answering the telephone, responding to customer queries and dealing with customer complaints. Manuals also describe administrative procedures, such as booking leave and making travel arrangements, and protocols for holding meetings, conducting performance reviews and so on.

Code of conduct	A code of conduct or staff charter sets out the standards of behaviour expected of staff when dealing with people both inside and outside the organisation. These detailed guidelines ensure that staff behaviour is consistent throughout the organisation.
Code of practice	Many industries and professions have a code of practice setting out rules that members must follow and standards they are expected to uphold. Codes of practice often deal with questions of privacy, confidentiality and ethical work practices.

Legal documents

Like individuals, organisations must obey the law. They are obliged to keep records, including contracts, financial statements and reports documenting workplace injuries.

These records are legal documents, which the organisation may be asked to produce at a later date in the event of a dispute.

Many organisations also keep reference copies of relevant legislation and government policies on hand. It is an employer's responsibility to keep up with changes in legislation, and to make sure that employees are aware of these changes. Some organisations periodically run training programs at which they hand out booklets or brochures to staff, informing them about any new responsibilities they might have as a result of changes to the law.

Contract	A contract is a formal agreement between two or more parties. An employment contract is an example: it is usually a written document, signed by both the employer and employee, listing the rights and responsibilities of both parties. Important details include the employee's salary or hourly wage, the hours they will work, their key responsibilities and the performance standards they are expected to meet.
Legislation	Employers need to keep up to date with many kinds of law, including employment law, tax law and WHS law. They must also ensure that employees are aware of the law and comply with it. For this reason, relevant WHS legislation is often covered in an organisation's employee manual, and WHS notices about the safe operation of equipment are displayed near machinery.
Policy	Some workplace policies are designed specifically to ensure that the organisation and its staff comply with the law. For example, employers are required by law to make sure they do not discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, religion or disability when hiring staff. An organisation may outline a specific hiring policy in its staff manual to be sure that all employees comply with the relevant laws when interviewing potential candidates for a vacant position.

Confirming that you understand what is required of you

Managers and colleagues need to know that you understand your responsibilities in the workplace.

When you apply for a job, you may be asked to confirm that you have the qualifications, skills or experience you need to do that job successfully. If you are offered the position, your employment contract will set out your responsibilities in the workplace. By signing the contract, you are confirming that you understand these responsibilities and are prepared to carry them out.

Once you have started work, you may also be asked to confirm that you know how to perform your tasks safely and to the appropriate standard. This confirmation may be formal or informal, depending on your role and the nature of the organisation. In some cases, it might be enough to show your supervisor that you can do a task safely. In other cases, you might need to provide the organisation's safety officer with a certificate showing that you have done the required training.

Some organisations will ask you to confirm that you understand their policies and procedures in writing. This might mean signing a form and giving it to the human resources department or replying to an email from your manager or department head.

Formal confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing copies of formal qualifications ▪ Signing an employment contract ▪ Signing induction documents ▪ Completing a workplace training program or certification process ▪ Replying in writing to a request from your manager, department head or other senior staff
Informal confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrating that you know how to perform a task ▪ Participating in on-the-job training ▪ Taking part in work-related conversations ▪ Contributing at workplace meetings

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Are the following statements correct? Tick all that apply.

- Induction programs help new employees understand what an organisation requires from them and what their responsibilities are.
- You must always confirm in writing that you can perform a task safely and to the required standard.
- New employees often have questions about their role and responsibilities.
- All employees should know details of an organisation's business plan.
- Only the safety officer needs to know about work health and safety legislation.

Question 2

Which of the following documents inform workers about an organisation's requirements and the employee's responsibilities? Tick all that apply.

- Induction manuals
- Employment contracts
- Codes of practice
- Customer invoices
- Strategic plans

Question 3

What are **three** ways of formally confirming that you understand your responsibilities at work?

1B Understanding employee and employer rights and responsibilities

The terms and conditions of your employment are determined by an award or an enterprise agreement and set out in your employment contract.

They include important details such as:

- employment status (temporary or permanent)
- employment type (full-time, part-time or casual)
- hours of work
- start and finish times
- breaks
- whether overtime is expected
- recreation and personal leave entitlements
- wages or salary, work allowances, and overtime and holiday pay.

Other arrangements, such as performance bonuses, may also be outlined in an employment contract.

Awards

An award sets out terms and conditions for all workers doing the same job or employed in the same industry.

An award is a legally binding document drawn up by a state or federal industrial court or commission. It sets out the rights and obligations of all employers and employees in the same industry or sector. For example, most administrative workers come under the Clerks Private Sector Award.

Awards establish minimum terms and conditions. They set out rates of pay, conditions of employment and worker entitlements, including public holidays, annual leave, personal and long service leave and superannuation, among others.

Enterprise agreements

An enterprise agreement sets out terms and conditions at a specific organisation.

Like awards, enterprise agreements set out the rights, entitlements and obligations of employers and employees. The main difference is that enterprise agreements only apply to the employees of one organisation or group of organisations and not the whole sector.

Enterprise agreements are a voluntary agreement between employers and a group of employees. In most cases, employees seek to have a union represent their interests when negotiating such an agreement. When a workplace has a registered agreement in place, the award does not apply; however, the base pay rate in the agreement cannot be less than the base pay rate in the award, and minimum national employment standards still apply.

For more information about awards and enterprise agreements, visit the Fair Work Ombudsman's website: aspiresr.link/awards-and-agreements.

Employment contracts

All employees have a right to the terms and conditions set out in their employment contract.

When you are employed, the terms and conditions of your employment should be clearly set out in a written contract. If you are not given an employment contract or letter of appointment, the relevant award automatically applies.

As discussed, the terms and conditions of your employment must meet minimum standards set out in the relevant award or enterprise agreement. An employer can pay above the award wage but cannot pay below it.

In some cases, you may be able to negotiate a better deal for yourself and receive more than the minimum. This will depend on factors such as your value to the organisation, your length of service, the organisation's budget and broader economic conditions.

To show that you agree to the terms and conditions, you must sign the contract and return it to the employer. If you don't understand the terms and conditions, seek advice before signing the contract. You should always retain a copy of your employment contract, as you may need it in the event of a dispute about your employment status, wages or conditions.

Once both parties have signed the contract, you have a right to the terms and conditions it specifies, and your employer has a responsibility to meet them. One of the most important responsibilities an employer has is to pay you the agreed amount of money (your wages or salary) at the agreed times. They are also obliged to pay the overtime rates and allowances specified in your contract, and if you earn above a certain amount in a month, they have to pay money into your superannuation account.

It is also your employer's responsibility to:

- Review your salary and conditions if the requirements of your job change, such as when you are given more responsibility or asked to work longer hours
- Update your contract to reflect such changes

Your rights at work

All workers in Australia have basic rights in the workplace.

You have rights at work, and it's your employer's responsibility to safeguard these rights. They can face serious penalties if they fail to do so.

Your rights at work include:

- Union representation
- A safe and healthy workplace
- Freedom from discrimination
- Freedom from sexual harassment
- Freedom from bullying

Right to union representation

A trade union is a collective body of workers who share the same trade or profession, such as teachers, nurses or construction workers.

Members pay fees, known as union dues, in exchange for which the union seeks to protect their rights and promote their interests. People join unions because it gives them greater bargaining power in negotiations with employers and government.

Some unions have more bargaining power than others, but together they form a powerful political bloc at the state and federal level. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is the peak body for all trade unions in Australia and represents 1.8 million workers. The states and territories have their own peak bodies, known as trades and labour councils, all of which are members of the ACTU.

Your employer cannot legally discriminate against you for joining a union, and it is your right to have your union represent you in contract negotiations. If your employer refuses to negotiate, the union can ask Fair Work Australia to issue a bargaining order.

The role of a union
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing its members in negotiations over terms and conditions including hours of work, rest breaks, rates of pay, annual leave, long service leave and overtime
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing advice and support in dealing with health and safety, redundancy, discrimination and welfare issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing its members in disputes with employers over matters such as redundancy pay, stand-downs and notice of termination

The right to a safe and healthy workplace

As an employee, you have the right to a safe working environment.

It is your employer's responsibility to provide a safe workplace. Failure to do so can result in severe penalties, including criminal prosecution, if employees or others are injured.

The workplace must be free of potential hazards, such as loose cables on the floor, faulty equipment, mould or asbestos dust. In some workplaces, additional precautions are necessary. For example, if you work with dangerous chemicals, your employer has to supply you with personal protective equipment (PPE), such as a mask and safety glasses. If you work in manufacturing, you might be required to wear a hard hat and hearing protection when visiting the factory floor.

You also have the right to expect that your co-workers will contribute to a safe workplace by behaving in a way that ensures others' safety. Your employer is responsible for establishing and enforcing safe systems and practices throughout the organisation. These may include the correct use of machinery and protective equipment; hazard identification, reduction and reporting procedures; emergency drills; safety signs; and injury reporting protocols. Many larger organisations have a WHS representative or committee specifically responsible for workplace safety.

The right to a workplace free from discrimination

Discrimination means treating people differently.

When you treat someone differently on the basis of their sex, race, cultural background or other personal characteristics, you are discriminating. Though federal and state laws differ slightly, it is illegal in most circumstances to discriminate against another person in the workplace anywhere in Australia.

It is an employer's responsibility to promote equal opportunity by identifying and eradicating discriminatory practices. There are many areas where discrimination may occur in the workplace, including interviewing, hiring and firing; terms of employment, including remuneration; allocation of tasks; access to training programs; the provision of benefits such as working from home or working part time; and determining seniority and awarding promotions.

An employer must not discriminate on the basis of:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gender ▪ Race ▪ Ethnic origin ▪ Marital status ▪ Parental status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexual preference ▪ Pregnancy ▪ Physical characteristics ▪ Physical or intellectual impairment ▪ Religious beliefs ▪ Political beliefs |
|--|---|

The right to a workplace free from sexual harassment

Sexual harassment in the workplace should never be tolerated.

Sexual harassment is different from sexual discrimination. Sexual discrimination is discriminating against someone because of their sex. Sexual harassment is unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour.

It is unlawful under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) to sexually harass a person. Under this act, sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. It is prohibited not just in the workplace and during work hours, but also at work-related functions such as training courses, conferences, field trips and office parties.

Employers must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. The first step is introducing a sexual harassment policy and monitoring its effectiveness. Employers should also have procedures in place for dealing with complaints. If you are sexually harassed at work and make a complaint, your employer must take appropriate action without delay. Sexual harassment does not need to be repeated or continuous to justify making a complaint; it can involve a single incident.

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written and can include:

- Unwelcome comments about a person's sex life, behaviour or appearance
- Suggestive behaviour, such as leering or ogling
- Unnecessary familiarity, such as standing or sitting too close
- Offensive comments, jokes, notes, emails, texts, phone calls, images or objects
- Sexual propositions or continual requests for dates
- Unwanted physical contact of any kind
- Indecent assault (which is also a criminal offence)

The right to a workplace free from bullying

Bullying is prohibited in most Australian workplaces by national anti-bullying laws.

Workplace bullying occurs when a person uses their power or position to abuse another member of staff, repeatedly treating them unreasonably or putting their health and safety at risk. It takes many different forms, including aggression, intimidation and humiliation.

Examples of bullying
Initiation pranks
Verbal abuse
Sarcasm and ridicule
Constant criticism or insults
Displaying written or pictorial material that degrades or offends an employee
Excluding or isolating an employee
Encouraging others to take sides against an employee
Spreading misinformation or malicious rumours about an employee
Giving an employee the majority of unpleasant or meaningless tasks
Withholding information or resources that are vital for effective work performance
Setting impossible deadlines
Deliberately changing work rosters to inconvenience an employee

Bullying can have a variety of physical and psychological effects, some with long-term effects on a worker's health and wellbeing. Commonly reported effects include stress, anxiety and depression; feelings of social isolation; loss of confidence and self-esteem; and deterioration of personal relationships. The effects can also take the form of physical symptoms, such as headaches, backaches and stomach cramps. When bullying involves physical aggression or pranks, the victim may even be in direct danger of physical harm.

Bullying can have serious implications for an organisation too. Employees cannot do their best work if they feel hurt, angry, vulnerable and powerless, and some may decide to leave rather than pursue a formal complaint against a bully. But the consequences go beyond poor morale, reduced productivity and the loss of trained staff. Bullying can result in workers compensation claims, and employers may even face criminal charges. In some cases, a staff member's bullying behaviours contravene not just anti-bullying laws but WHS and anti-discrimination laws too.

The most effective way for employers to prevent bullying is to send a clear message that it is unacceptable. Senior management must show their support for this message by giving complaints of bullying the attention they deserve. Health and safety committees are ideally placed to deal with these issues.

As an employee, it's important to distinguish between bullying and legitimate criticism of your performance at work. Employers are entitled to be critical of your work, but their feedback should be constructive. This means they should explain what you have done wrong, show you how to do it properly, and follow up to make sure you are on the right track.

Your responsibilities

Rights assure workers of certain minimum standards; workers' responsibilities are 'the other side of the bargain'.

As an employee, you have certain responsibilities in the workplace. These include the tasks or duties listed in your position description, in addition to legal responsibilities, such as complying with WHS and anti-discrimination legislation. You also have some responsibilities that all employees have in common, such as being punctual, courteous and diligent in completing your tasks, respecting confidentiality and obeying lawful instructions. It is your employer's right to expect this of you, and to take disciplinary action if you do not meet your responsibilities.

Fulfilling the requirements of your position description

Your position description outlines the specific skills you must have and tasks you will do.

Your employment contract often includes a position description outlining your duties, responsibilities, level of authority and relationship to other members of staff. The duties outlined in your position description are specific to your position in the organisation.

Your duties may change over time as you gain experience and develop new skills, or as the organisation's requirements change. If your responsibilities change, your contract should be updated to reflect that.

A position description usually includes:

- the position's title
- the title of the person to whom you'll report
- the position's location (where you will work)
- the position's objectives or main purpose
- a list of tasks or duties specific to the position
- a description of the skills and experience you'll require.

Example

Position description

POSITION DESCRIPTION

OFFICE ASSISTANT, EAGLE BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (EBE)

Title: Office assistant

Direct report: Office manager

Location: EBE head office

Objectives:

- Assisting the office manager
- Providing secretarial and administrative support
- Maintaining the company's financial records

Duties:

- Staffing the reception desk
- Handling mail
- Filing
- Word processing
- Preparing and processing banking documents
- Recording and balancing petty cash transactions
- Reconciling invoices for payment to creditors
- Preparing invoices for debtors

Requirements:

The position requires sound organisational and communication skills, and familiarity with Microsoft Word and Excel. The office assistant will carry out basic bookkeeping and reception duties and provide general administrative support.

Complying with work health and safety laws

As an employee, it's your responsibility to act with due regard for your safety and that of others.

All employees must comply with federal, state and territory WHS laws and their workplace's safety policies and procedures. It is everyone's responsibility to contribute to the maintenance of a safe and healthy workplace.

You need to be aware of your organisation's safety procedures, such as identifying and reporting risks or hazards and using protective equipment. You should follow the safety procedures yourself – for example, by ensuring your workstation is set up correctly – and make sure that your co-workers do too. You should always use equipment correctly and

follow any safety instructions you've been given. Never use equipment that has a warning notice or hazard sign on it, and never interfere with safety devices designed to protect you, such as a guard shielding a blade or a machine's moving parts. You have a duty to report anything unsafe to your supervisor or WHS officer.

Keeping your work environment safe	
Kitchen areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep clean and free from spills
Office areas and walkways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep clear
Exits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep clear and easily accessible
Workshop/factory areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch out for potential hazards Wear appropriate protective clothing
Workstations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position your chair, desk, screen and telephone to suit your needs Take regular breaks and exercise to avoid occupational overuse syndrome
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the manufacturers' instructions

Complying with anti-discrimination law

You should never discriminate against others in the workplace.

It's your employer's responsibility to provide a workplace free of discrimination. Your responsibility is to make sure you do not behave in a way that discriminates against others. For example, if you know that your co-workers' religion forbids them to enter a venue that serves alcohol, you shouldn't hold a work event in a pub or a club. Excluding your co-workers from the event would be a form of discrimination.

You should also avoid language that excludes, insults or perpetuates stereotypes. For example, an annual leave policy stating that 'mothers may wish to request leave during the school holidays' ignores the fact that fathers might also wish to care for their children during the holidays.

You should be conscious, too, of how you talk about your co-workers. It is often inappropriate, for example, to discuss or refer to another employee's physical appearance.

Being punctual, courteous, presentable and diligent

Attitude and appearances matter in the workplace.

Employees are expected to arrive on time, and to work the agreed number of hours. If you are stuck in traffic, your train is late, or you have a family emergency, it's considered basic courtesy to let your employer know. Contact your supervisor to explain why you are running late for work, and then take care to avoid it happening again.

If you are unwell, follow your organisation's procedures for advising that you will not attend work that day. Some employers may be happy with an email or text; others prefer a phone call. Make sure you understand your organisation's policy on absences from work, too. For example, you may need to know how many personal leave days you are allowed without presenting a medical certificate.

Employers also expect you to dress neatly and in a manner suited to your role; speak to co-workers, clients and others courteously; perform your tasks diligently; and cooperate with other members of your team.

Your attitude to work is reflected in your:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Punctuality ▪ Personal presentation ▪ Courtesy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diligence and initiative ▪ Teamwork |
|--|--|

Respecting confidentiality

Some information must be treated as confidential.

At work, you may have access to information such as clients' private details or records of the organisation's business transactions with suppliers. Most organisations work hard to establish relationships with clients, customers and suppliers and need to protect these relationships by making sure such information is kept confidential.

It is your responsibility never to reveal any personal or legally or commercially sensitive information. For example, staff who work in a company's human resources department may have access to files containing personal details about their co-workers. It would be unacceptable, and in some cases illegal, to reveal such details to people inside or outside the organisation.

In some workplaces, files cannot be removed from the worksite or copied or transferred from the organisation's servers. Employees can be fired or face disciplinary action if they fail to comply with such policies.

You can respect confidentiality by:

- Understanding what information is confidential and what can be shared with others
- Storing paper and electronic files safely
- Knowing and following the rules about removing files from the workplace
- Being discreet when talking to others about your work

Obeying lawful instructions

If an employer's instructions are lawful and reasonable, you are required to follow them.

When you agree to work for an employer, you also agree to follow the instructions and directions given to you in the workplace. As long as these requests are lawful and reasonable, you are required to follow them. You are within your rights to refuse an order to do something that you know is illegal or dangerous.

For example, John works as a waiter. During a quiet shift, his manager asks him to clean the customer toilets. As this is a lawful and reasonable request, John should comply with it, even though cleaning toilets isn't part of his job description.

Lan works in a warehouse. She is not licensed to drive a forklift. Lan's supervisor asks her to help pick orders using a forklift, as several people are off sick and they are running behind schedule. As this is an unlawful request, Lan should refuse it.

Employer's rights

Like employees, employers also have rights.

Employers have rights, including the right to expect reasonable work performance from their staff and the right to hire and dismiss workers, providing they follow proper procedures.

In some situations, employers have the right to dismiss a worker immediately – for example, if a worker commits a criminal offence, causes an incident through negligence or carelessness, or reveals confidential information about the company. A worker can also be dismissed if they underperform (do not do their job properly) over an extended period, despite counselling and guidance from their supervisor.

You won't automatically lose your job if you cause a minor incident at work, but it is important to know that your employer does have the right under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) to dismiss you for any breach of your responsibilities.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Which of the following behaviours can be labelled as bullying? Tick all that apply.

- Verbal abuse
- Excluding or isolating employees
- Constant criticism or insults
- Constructive feedback about work performance
- Setting impossible deadlines

Question 2

Draw a line to match each term with its definition.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| » Award | » Minimum terms and conditions to which all employees are entitled |
| » Anti-discrimination legislation | » A group of workers seeking better pay and conditions |
| » Employee rights | » A set of laws that forbid employees being disadvantaged due to personal characteristics |
| » Union | » A document outlining employees' minimum pay rates and conditions |

Question 3

List three employee responsibilities under workplace laws.



1C Complying with duty-of-care obligations and organisational objectives

All organisations should have clear duty-of-care policies, and communicate their objectives, standards and values to employees.

Duty of care is the legal obligation to take all reasonable steps to avoid causing harm or injury to a person. Your employer has a duty of care towards you, and you have a duty of care towards your co-workers and anyone else you deal with in the course of your work, such as clients or suppliers.

As an employee, you are also obliged to act in accordance with your organisation's objectives, standards and values, whatever these might be, and to follow its code of conduct.

Work health and safety (WHS) legislation

Both federal and state governments work to create safe workplaces.

WHS legislation is designed to protect the health, safety and welfare of all people at work. You therefore need to be aware of and know how to access current WHS legislation and other WHS documentation relevant to your specific workplace, occupation and industry. This documentation includes regulations, codes of practice and your organisation's health and safety policies and procedures.

Keeping up to date with this information is essential. One of the most significant changes in recent times has been the national workplace health and safety reforms that resulted in the development of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth), model regulations and codes of practice. These reforms are designed to improve national work health and safety by simplifying the system and making laws more consistent across Australia.

The following provides the name of the health and safety legislation and the regulator responsible for its implementation in each state and territory, as at the time of publication.

The Commonwealth act is the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth). The Commonwealth WHS regulator is Comcare.

Region	Information
Australian Capital Territory	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)</i> WHS regulator: WorkSafe ACT
New South Wales	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)</i> WHS regulator: WorkCover NSW
Northern Territory	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (National Uniform Legislation) (NT)</i> WHS regulator: NT WorkSafe
Queensland	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</i> WHS regulator: WorkCover Queensland
South Australia	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)</i> WHS regulator: SafeWork SA
Tasmania	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas.)</i> WHS regulator: WorkSafe Tasmania
Victoria	<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic.)</i> WHS regulator: WorkSafe Victoria
Western Australia	<i>Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)</i> WHS regulator: WorkSafe WA

Duty of care

Duty of care is the legal obligation to protect others from harm.

In a workplace, everyone has a duty of care towards others. You must take all reasonable steps to minimise risks to others' health and safety, but your duty of care goes beyond complying with WHS legislation. For example, it might mean helping out if a colleague's workload is too heavy, intervening to stop bullying, or reporting sexual harassment to the human resources department.

Your duty of care depends to some extent on your role. For example, if you are supervising a new employee, you must make sure that their workstation is safe, and that they are able to learn and develop their skills at a reasonable pace. You wouldn't give them the same tasks or deadlines as someone who has been in the workplace for many years, and you'd set aside time to answer questions, provide assistance and check their work. This is all part of a supervisor meeting their duty of care towards a new member of staff.

As an employee, you also have a duty of care towards others who visit your workplace, including clients, customers, suppliers and members of the public. That might involve making sure they have signed into the visitor's book at reception, for example, and that they know where the emergency exits are.

Objectives, standards and values

Your work and conduct should clearly reflect your organisation's objectives, standards and values.

Successful organisations don't just float along expecting success to find them. They have a clear plan in place that outlines both their short-term and long-term objectives and the standards by which they'll measure their performance. This plan is shaped by the values that drive the organisation and its staff every day.

As an employee, your work and your everyday conduct is expected to support and promote the organisation's objectives, meet the standards it has set, and reflect its values – so you need to know what these objectives, standards and values are.

Some organisations make this information readily available: you might find it on a poster at reception or in meeting rooms, for example, or in induction kits for new employees. At other organisations, you may have to ask questions or do some research to establish what short- and long-term goals everyone is working towards, how performance is measured, and what staff believe their collective values are. The organisation's strategic or business plan may be a useful source of information about its goals, and its code of conduct will tell you a lot about its values.

Short-term objectives

An employee's short-term goals help an organisation reach its long-term goals.

Short-term objectives are goals that an organisation and its staff have to reach by the end of a specific day, week or month. Sometimes these goals must be reached daily or weekly: for example, to meet a yearly sales target, first you must meet your daily and weekly sales targets. By fulfilling your regular duties and completing your daily, weekly and monthly tasks on time, and to the best of your ability, you can help the organisation achieve its long-term objectives.

To help staff achieve short-term goals, an employer may offer an incentive program. For one-off projects with short-term deadlines, employers may give staff extra training, temporarily transfer employees between departments to better utilise their skills or hire contractors.

The following are examples of different businesses' short-term goals.

Caterer	Retail shop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare 180 meals Deliver meals by 5pm Prepare the venue for the evening's function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train new employee to use the register Get new stock onto the shelves before midday Post staff roster for next week by COB
Mechanic	Plumbing business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a working drill within an hour Rebalance the wheels on 4 Range Rovers by lunchtime Pay creditors' invoices by COB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform new worker induction before lunchtime Finish 2 jobs by 5pm Find a better tool supplier by the end of the week

Long-term objectives

An organisation's long-term objectives are achieved over months, years or even decades.

Reading an organisation's strategic plan is a good way to find out about its long-term goals, particularly if the plan includes a mission statement or vision for the future. The strategic plan gives employees and others a clear understanding of what the organisation is all about, its objectives and future direction. It is the basis from which all other plans, policies and procedures are developed.

Managers are responsible for setting long-term objectives, deciding how they can be achieved and guiding the organisation towards them. As an employee, it is your responsibility to work with colleagues to achieve these objectives. This might mean consistently achieving your regular short-term goals on schedule, or taking part in longer-term projects designed to achieve specific outcomes. The following are examples of long-term goals an organisation might pursue:

- Developing a new product or service
- Expanding its customer or client base
- Increasing its market share
- Expanding into new markets
- Opening new offices or branches
- Increasing its profits

Standards

Performance is measured against an organisation's standards.

Assessing performance against predetermined standards allows a business to pinpoint its strengths and weaknesses, and then make informed staffing or training decisions. For example, if a business's inventory and customer service departments are meeting performance standards but its marketing department is not, the marketing staff may need further training, or perhaps the department needs additional staff or resources.

Employees often undergo a formal annual performance review, but the performance of individual employees, teams and departments is usually assessed both formally and informally over the course of the year. It is your job to meet the standards set for you. If you fail to meet these standards, it's your supervisor's job to help you to identify the problem and work with you to improve your performance.

Below are examples of how different areas in a business can be measured against performance standards.

Customer service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer surveys measuring how satisfied customers are with products and services Monitoring the frequency of customer complaints
Product quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality assurance checks Monitoring return rates for defective products
Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring customer engagement with the organisation's social media campaigns Monitoring sales numbers following the launch of advertising campaigns
Employee satisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee surveys measuring how happy and engaged employees are Monitoring employee retention rates

Values

Employees' conduct and work practices should reflect an organisation's values.

Until recently, corporate responsibility meant nothing more than diligently complying with all legal and administrative requirements. Today, it means something more: organisations are now expected to be 'ethical', or socially responsible, and are held accountable for their actions. For example, many consumers now demand to know details of a company's supply chain before buying their products, refusing to support a business that profits from sweatshop labour.

The way a company does business is an expression of its values. There are some values, such as honesty and integrity, that should be fundamental to every organisation. Other values are specific to the individual organisation. Some companies may value innovation, for example, and focus on research and development. Others may value community, or sustainability, and offer products and services that help to promote these ideals. These values provide a framework for all of a company's decisions and actions.

An organisation's values also convey to people both inside and outside the organisation what it stands for. As an employee, you are expected to reflect these values in the way you do your work and in your interactions with other people, including co-workers, customers and suppliers. In some cases, this may extend beyond the workplace and into your private life. For example, some companies have strict rules about what employees can post to their personal social media accounts and make this a condition of their employment. If you post content or opinions at odds with the company's values, it may result in disciplinary action.

Questions a values-based organisation may ask itself

- Do we treat our employees respectfully?
- Does our marketing treat everyone with dignity?
- Do our products damage the environment?
- Does our organisation have any negative impact on animals or their habitats?
- Is our workplace free of discrimination and harassment?
- Are we financially exploiting customers or suppliers?

Codes of conduct

A code of conduct clearly states how employees should behave in the workplace.

An organisation's code of conduct tells employees how they are expected to behave at work. It may also warn them about behaviours that won't be tolerated.

It is often a condition of employment that new employees agree to follow the organisation's code of conduct after it has been explained to them. Following this, any breaches of the code can result in disciplinary action.

Below is an example of a company's code of conduct. It provides detailed explanations of the rules employees are expected to follow regarding intellectual property, public comment and social media.



Code of Conduct Policy

Intellectual property

All work, including ideas, concepts, creations and inventions, or other intellectual property rights produced by an employee in the course of their employment, is the property of BizOps. BizOps is entitled to any copyright or intellectual property rights from such work.

Public comment

An employee may not make statements or comments to the media or other external bodies regarding BizOps, its business dealings, financial status, clients or competitors unless directed or authorised to do so by BizOps. Such authorisation must come from the Chief Executive Director.

Public comment by any employee should not imply that the comment, although made in a private capacity, is in some way an official comment by BizOps.

Social media

BizOps respects the free speech rights of all of its employees, but remember that customers, colleagues and supervisors often have access to the online content posted on social media. Any use of social media must not harm the reputation of BizOps, its customers, its suppliers, its employees and its board members. Online activities must not interfere with job commitments.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Are the following statements correct? Tick all that apply.

- Corporate responsibility is limited to complying with all legal and administrative requirements.
- Only the employer has a duty of care.
- Long-term goals are day-to-day objectives.
- Everyone in Australia must comply with WHS legislation.
- Strategic plans set out an organisation's long-term goals.

Question 2

Tick all the statements that are examples of employers fulfilling their duty of care.

- Providing a workplace free of discrimination
- Selling products that are profitable
- Ensuring hazards are identified
- Holding safety consultation meetings
- Considering employees' medical needs

Question 3

Draw a line to match each example of a workplace performance standard to its definition.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| » Employee surveys | » A way of measuring how satisfied customers are with a product or service |
| » Product returns | » Data that shows how long employees remain with an organisation |
| » Customer surveys | » The number of products that customers return |
| » Employee retention rates | » A way of measuring how happy employees are |

Question 4

A new employee joins a company but fails to comply with its code of conduct. Number each step from 1 to 4 in the order that they would take place.

- The business takes disciplinary action against the employee.
- The employee breaches the code of conduct.
- A supervisor explains the code of conduct to the new employee.
- The employee agrees to follow the code of conduct and signs an acknowledgment.

1D Determining the roles and responsibilities of staff

Knowing who does what in the workplace is vital to working as a team.

If there are more than just a few people in an organisation, it needs a formal structure, in which the individual positions exist to fulfil particular functions. When you first start work, you're often given a chart or diagram showing who is responsible for what, and who reports to whom. You need this information so that you can direct your questions to the appropriate person – such as the human resources manager or information technology officer – as you get to know the organisation.

Employees generally report to a supervisor or team leader, who oversees their day-to-day performance. The supervisor or team leader reports in turn to a more senior manager, responsible for a whole department or division. This senior manager may then report to either a chief executive officer or a board of directors, depending on the structure of the organisation.

Understanding an organisation's structure

Understanding where and how you fit in makes your job easier.

It is useful to have a good understanding of an organisation's structure, so that you know who reports to whom, and how each area or department fits with the others. Make sure you know who you report to, and who to ask for advice if that person is not available. Also, take the time to learn the names and titles of key people, such as the receptionist or office manager, the human resources manager and the managers of departments that work closely with your own.

As you are learning, keep asking yourself, 'Where do I fit in here?' If you can see how your own position fits into the bigger picture, you'll be well on your way to being an effective member of the team.

Things to remember:

- It takes time to get to know an organisation.
- Ask questions and take note of information you are given.
- Watch what other people do as they go about their work.
- Learn where documents are kept.
- Don't expect to understand all the policies, procedures and processes straightaway.

Understanding who does what in the workplace

Every staff member has a specific role

A workplace can have many departments, each with its own manager and numerous staff. The larger the organisation, the more difficult it is to understand exactly what your co-workers in other departments do. Learning what the different departments do and what individual employees' responsibilities are will help you to understand the bigger picture and how your work affects others.

Below are examples of some roles that exist at most organisations, and their responsibilities.

General manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overseeing all departments ▪ Pursuing the organisation's long-term vision ▪ Chairing meetings
Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Writing advertising copy ▪ Designing and producing marketing materials ▪ Managing social media accounts
Finance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administering the payroll ▪ Preparing financial reports ▪ Handling invoices
Human resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment and induction of new employees ▪ Organising training ▪ Conducting performance reviews

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Which of the following are examples of roles that commonly exist in a business environment?
Tick all that apply.

- General manager
- Marketing assistant
- Human resources officer
- Finance manager
- Plumber

Question 2

Which of the following tasks would marketing staff typically be responsible for? Tick all that apply.

- Approving financial expenditure
- Designing and producing marketing materials
- Responding to customer feedback on social media
- Writing advertising copy
- Doing market research

Question 3

Which of the following tasks would human resources staff typically be responsible for? Tick all that apply.

- Running induction sessions for new employees
- Conducting performance reviews
- Overseeing all departments
- Advertising vacant positions
- Organising training

1E Identifying the requirements of your own role

When you're part of a team, you need to know exactly what your role is.

An organisation is like a machine with lots of different parts that work together to achieve a common purpose. All the parts need to be working in sync, otherwise one small malfunction can bring the whole operation to a grinding halt. Organisations rely on well-trained staff working cooperatively to meet daily, weekly and monthly goals.

You have to understand your role in the wider organisation so you can contribute the skills and knowledge for which you were hired. You will be given specific duties or tasks to do, and others will rely on you to do them. For example, if you're the office receptionist, it's usually your job to answer the phone. Other employees rely on you to transfer their calls. If you don't, they might miss customer inquiries, which could result in lost sales.

A well-run organisation ensures that all employees know exactly what their role is and what tasks they are required to do. A staff that is performing well is a staff that has a clear understanding of what they must do and when they have to do it by.

Below are some ways organisations inform staff of their roles and the tasks for which they're responsible:

- Job descriptions
- Employment contracts
- Induction meetings
- Verbal and/or written instructions given by a manager

Checking that you understand your responsibilities

If you're not sure what you're supposed to be doing, you should always check.

Most people will admit that at some point in their working life they've been unsure of exactly what they had to do, or how to do it. It's always better to check than to keep working without fully understanding your task.

The easiest way to clarify what you should be doing is to ask your supervisor. Sometimes it's useful to ask your questions in an email; you can keep your supervisor's reply on file for future reference.

If your supervisor isn't available and you need an immediate response, try a co-worker. Some will be more willing to help than others, of course, but you have other options if you need them. These options include:

- checking your employment contract
- re-reading induction materials
- consulting the organisation's procedures manual
- checking your emails for any relevant information you've been sent
- scanning workplace noticeboards for memos
- reading machinery or equipment instruction manuals.

Changes to your role

As you gain skills and experience, your role may start to change.

Over time, as your role becomes more familiar and your skills develop, you may start to get through your work more quickly, leaving you free to take on other tasks. As you develop more experience, you may be given greater responsibilities, or even promoted to a new position. In other cases, your duties might change in response to the organisation's changing needs. If your role changes significantly, your employment contract should be updated to reflect those changes.

Because staff roles are constantly shifting, keeping employees informed is an ongoing process. Below are some ways organisations keep staff up to date with changes to their own responsibilities and those of their colleagues, so there is no misunderstanding.

- Verbal and/or written instructions given by a manager
- Acknowledgment at a performance review or in a one-on-one meeting
- Announcements at team, department or general staff meetings
- Company-wide emails or memorandums

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Which of the following are used to inform staff of their roles and responsibilities? Tick all that apply.

- Induction meetings
- Sales figures
- Performance figures
- Employment contracts
- Company-wide memorandums

Question 2

You're working as a receptionist and are unsure of how to transfer phone calls on the organisation's phone system. Could you use the following strategies to solve your problem? Tick all that apply.

- Leaving it for a colleague
- Asking a colleague
- Asking your manager
- Reading the phone system manual
- Checking your email for relevant information

Summary

- It is important that employees have a good understanding of an organisation's requirements and the responsibilities of their job
- Employees can find out about an organisation by reading its strategic plan and other key documents
- Employees have certain rights in the workplace, including the right to union representation, a safe and healthy workplace, and freedom from discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying
- Employers' responsibilities include honouring conditions of contracts and awards; providing a safe workplace; and ensuring there is no discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying
- Employees' responsibilities include the tasks outlined in their employment contract; complying with WHS and anti-discrimination legislation; being punctual, courteous presentable and diligent; respecting confidentiality; and obeying lawful instructions
- Employers have the right to expect reasonable work performance from their staff and the right to hire and dismiss workers, providing they follow proper procedures
- Employers have a duty of care towards their employees, and employees have a duty of care towards others in the workplace
- All employees should understand and comply with the objectives, standards and values of their organisation
- Codes of conduct are documents that outline the behaviours that organisations want their employees to display and forbid behaviours that are not tolerated
- Staff need to be able to distinguish between different staff roles within the organisation
- Employees need to know their own role and responsibilities, and be willing to find out if they don't know

Learning Checkpoint 1

Identify the business context

Part A

1. Which of the following are an employer's or senior manager's responsibility? Tick all that apply.

- Overseeing multiple departments
- Setting daily tasks for other managers
- Pursuing the organisation's long-term objectives
- Chairing monthly meetings
- Designing social media advertisements

2. Draw a line to match each term to its features.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| » Employee responsibilities | » Hiring and dismissing staff in accordance with the law |
| » Employer rights | » Providing a safe workplace and paying employees in accordance with the relevant award |
| » Employee rights | » Fulfilling the tasks outlined in a position description and obeying lawful orders |
| » Employer responsibilities | » Working in a safe environment, free of discrimination |

3. Draw a line to match each term to its definition.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| » Organisational objectives | » Predetermined standards that an organisation's performance must reach |
| » Organisational standards | » The beliefs that drive a business's objectives |
| » Organisational duty of care | » An organisation's short- and long-term goals |
| » Organisational values | » The responsibility of a business to ensure that the workplace is safe and free of discrimination and harassment |

4. Which conditions are likely to be included in a person's employment contract? Tick all that apply.

- Their salary or wages
- A brief history of the company
- The number of hours they must work
- A list of their duties

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

BizOps code of conduct

Drugs and alcohol

Employees must not come to work or operate any company equipment or vehicles when they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The consumption of alcohol on the BizOps premises or in the course of employment will not be tolerated. The only exception to this is during company-sponsored occasions that have the prior approval of the director. At these times, employees must ensure they drink in moderation, behave in a professional manner and do not engage in conduct that may risk their safety or the safety of others.

The use of any other illicit, recreational or non-prescription drugs is strictly prohibited on the BizOps premises or in the course of employment and is grounds for summary dismissal.

If an employee is taking prescribed drugs that may affect their ability to perform their duties, they may be asked to provide their manager with a medical certificate certifying their fitness to perform duties.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed on the BizOps premises, except in areas that have been clearly designated as smoking areas, where employees are expected to dispose of cigarette butts in the receptacles provided. At all BizOps functions and business activities away from the workplace, employees must adhere to the venue's requirements. Smoking in contravention of this policy will result in disciplinary action.

Dress standards

It is in the company's best interest to present a professional image to its clients and the public. Accordingly, employees are always expected to be suitably groomed, and their appearance must be clean and neat.

Corporate attire is required from Monday to Thursday. Smart casual attire may be worn on Fridays.

Job performance

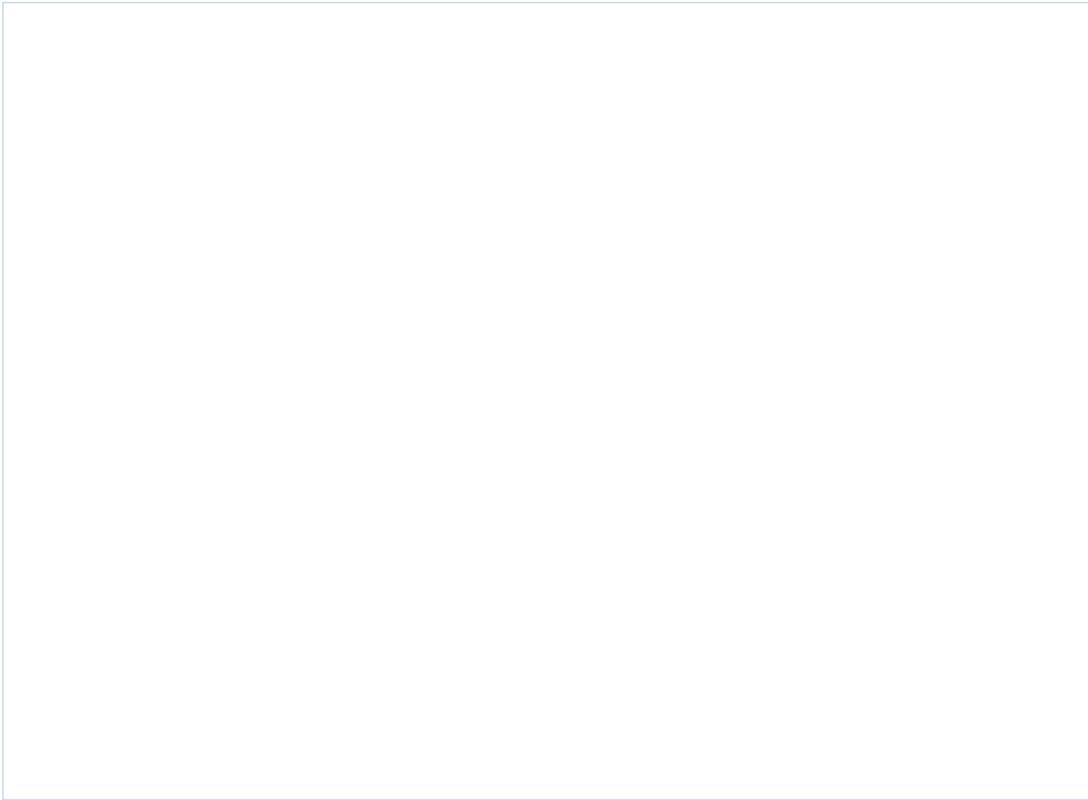
It is the responsibility of employees to perform the duties associated with their position diligently, conscientiously and to the best of their ability, and to work cooperatively with managers and colleagues.

1. Each term on the left is a clause in the above code of conduct. Draw a line to match each to its conduct requirement on the right.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| » Dress standards | » Employees must complete their duties to the best of their ability. |
| » Drugs and alcohol | » Smoking is only allowed in designated areas. |
| » Job performance | » Intoxication while on the job will not be tolerated. |
| » Smoking | » Employees must wear corporate attire from Monday to Thursday. |

2. Identify and describe a possible consequence for an employee if they do not follow the code of conduct?

3. Imagine you worked for the business in the above case study. Write an email to your manager confirming that you understand the code of conduct and agree to follow it.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the student to write their email response to the manager.



Topic 2 | Working in a team

- 2A Following requirements for a safe work environment
- 2B Working with others in a positive manner
- 2C Completing tasks according to workplace requirements
- 2D Clarifying instructions and responsibilities
- 2E Seeking assistance to resolve issues

2A Following requirements for a safe work environment

Every worker's health and safety should be protected while they are at work.

The work health and safety (WHS) principle exists all over the world; however, not every country has the laws to enforce it. In Australia, a range of Commonwealth, state and territory laws exist to uphold the principle of WHS, ensuring that employees' basic rights are preserved in the workplace.

These WHS laws provide protection for all Australian workers and place legal obligations on employers and other people within the supply chain.

All working environments involve some degree of risk. All employers are subject to laws that outline how to make a workplace safe so that workers and other people who visit it are not subjected to unnecessary harm.

Contributing to a safe workplace

Workplace safety is every employee's responsibility.

Senior managers, supervisors and employees have different roles in an organisation; however, everyone has a role to play to ensuring a safe workplace. Managers who value workers' health take safety seriously and encourage employees to find ways to improve workplace practices.

Workers are legally required to take all necessary steps to protect themselves and their co-workers, and to follow all reasonable instructions and policies of the employer.

Below are practical suggestions an employee can follow to contribute to workplace safety.

Workplace safety training

Registered training organisations (RTOs) offer courses on how to work safely, including the proper use of PPE, handling hazardous materials and managing a workplace safety program. You can do these courses on their own or as part of a certificate or diploma. If you enjoy your studies, you may wish to do further training and could eventually become the WHS representative at your workplace. In some circumstances, your employer will pay for this training.

Sharing your knowledge	Sharing knowledge and skills is a good way to help others and keep your workplace safe. When you first start a job, you may be given a coach or mentor to guide you in your work. Eventually, when you have more experience, you may take on this role yourself, modelling safe work practices and the correct use of equipment for new employees. Experienced workers helping others to 'skill up' is one way of making sure safe work practices become a habit for all staff. Spending time as a group talking about safety issues is another good way of improving safety in your team.
Listening to others	Listening skills are very important in a workplace, especially if you are new to a job. Pay attention to more experienced colleagues. Often, they will know how to work safely and can give you advice about a whole range of issues. Listen, learn and take the time to think about how you can use what you have been told in your daily work practices.
Watching for hazards and risks	Even an office can have safety hazards – people can trip on loose cords or fall over items left in walkways. There are many safety considerations when using a workstation: ergonomic chairs, computers at correct eye height, footstools, and regular breaks from keyboard work all help to keep you safe in the workplace. If you notice anything that could be a hazard or risk, report it to the WHS representative or someone senior to you. There is usually a form you can fill out and give to your supervisor, health and safety representative or maintenance person.
Reporting incidents and accidents	Most organisations have an official procedure for reporting incidents and accidents. Accidents must always be reported, but 'near misses' should be reported too. If they are not, there is a high risk that the same thing could happen again, this time with more serious consequences.
Following procedures	Organisations often have rules about how certain tasks are to be performed or how pieces of equipment are used. You may need to do some special training, or follow the instructions written by the manufacturer. Deciding not to follow the correct procedure can endanger you and those around you.

Safe work processes

Every workplace needs a system to evaluate if they are meeting safe workplace requirements.

Some violations of workplace safety requirements are easy to identify and fix, such as frayed carpeting or broken safety railings. Others, such as faulty refrigerators or ventilation units, may go unnoticed until they are checked. The presence of hazards, such as mould or asbestos, may also go unnoticed take some effort to remedy.

Different organisations will need different methods to determine that they are meeting safety requirements, but inspections must be regular. Tradespeople may need to check that tools or machinery and protective gear are operating correctly, while an office-based business would be more likely to focus on workstation ergonomics. Checking that staff are following safety procedures is also important; in a warehouse, for example, staff might need regular reminders about correct lifting technique or maximum weight limits when loading vehicles.

Below are examples of some different types of safety checks an organisation can use to evaluate and manage potential hazards effectively:

Hazard identification checks	Regularly moving through the workplace to inspect it for hazards is vital to maintaining workplace safety. The employee carrying out the inspection should take notes or fill in a form documenting every potential hazard, along with its location and the specific danger it poses. These records should be passed on to the appropriate member of staff for action and then kept on file for future reference.
Expert consultation	Experts trained in making workplaces safe can be hired to identify areas, facilities, fixtures and equipment that need attention.
Workplace safety meetings	Regular safety meetings can provide all employees with key information about potential hazards. Also, these meetings can be used to share information about hazards that managers would not ordinarily see in their role.
Testing and tagging of equipment	Electric tools and gas equipment can pose risks to workplace safety. Experts can be hired to test your equipment to ensure it's safe. This should be done regularly.

Practice Task 6

Case study

Gary has just started work at a small computer printer company, where he responds to customer questions. In his first week on the job he observes the following:

- Some overloaded power boards around the office are sparking
- Some workers aren't using appropriate PPE or following safety instructions when repairing printers
- There are unlicensed drivers delivering printers by car to customers
- He believes this is unsafe, but he hasn't worked for long in the industry so is doubting his judgement.

Question 1

Which of the following could Gary do to make the workplace safer? Tick all that apply.

- Report these hazards to his manager.
- Personally follow safety procedures.
- Share his knowledge of workplace safety with others.
- Say nothing because he is too inexperienced.
- Listen to and follow instructions from workers who are safe.

Question 2

What practices could Gary's employer adopt to make the workplace safer in future? Tick all that apply.

- Identify workplace hazards.
- Hold workplace safety meetings.
- Ensure all electrical equipment has been tested and tagged.
- Hire a safety expert to provide advice.
- Trust experienced employees to lead by example.

2B Work with others in a positive manner

All employees are expected to work well with others.

We spend a significant part of our lives at work, so a harmonious workplace is in everyone's best interest. Effective teamwork is only possible when staff communicate well and work collaboratively, making an effort to get along with each other.

As an employee, there are some simple ways you can make other staff feel welcome in the workplace and accepted by the team. For example, you could invite a new employee to join you for a coffee, or if someone seems to be taking a while to settle in, you could ask a few questions to get to know them better – making connections is an important part of establishing good working relationships. Going out of your way to include other workers in discussions and encouraging them to share their experiences makes them feel that their voices count.

Everyone at an organisation should feel like a valued member of the team, so being inclusive, both in our language and our work practices, is important. Employers and employees need to be aware of this, actively seeking to promote inclusion and avoid discrimination in the workplace.

Courteous communication

Clear, respectful communication helps everyone to do their jobs.

Basic courtesy can make teamwork much easier and also makes the workplace a more pleasant place to be. You should always speak to others with respect, being mindful not just of what you say but how you say it. Your tone should be polite and professional, and your language appropriate. The same rules apply when you are communicating in writing, whether you're leaving a note on a colleague's desk or sending a company-wide email. Context is important: sometimes it's okay to be casual, but it's best to take your cue from others, especially when you're new to an organisation.

Many workplaces have systems or procedures, formal or informal, designed to help co-workers communicate their needs. In an open-plan office, for example, you might need to book a meeting room to call a client, so you won't disrupt others working around you. If you share equipment with your co-workers, you might need to check tools in and out of a central store. Being diligent about following established procedures ensures that everyone has access to what they need when they need it.

Differences of opinion should also be expressed courteously and with respect, to preserve good relationships among the members of a team. It is best to resolve minor disagreements face to face, if possible, and not by email, as there is less room for misunderstanding. Most workplaces have formal procedures in place to handle more serious grievances.

Communicating courteously means:

- Showing respect for others through your choice of words and your tone
- Using established systems or procedures to communicate your needs
- Expressing disagreement calmly and politely

Working collaboratively

Few people truly work alone: most work with others at least some of the time.

When we collaborate, we work closely with other people, relying on them to support us as we do our jobs, and they rely on us to do the same.

Sometimes collaboration means working together directly on a project in a hands-on way, such as building a model or prototype. At other times, it means working alone on one part of a team project, such as writing copy for a catalogue that others will edit, lay out and proofread.

Working collaboratively means thinking about others' needs as well as your own, and respecting your colleagues' time, effort and contribution. Mutual courtesy and consideration are the key to successful collaboration.

Effective collaboration techniques

- Establish clear objectives and deadlines.
- Make sure that everyone has the information they need.
- Communicate your needs clearly, concisely and politely.
- Listen carefully when others explain what they need from you.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand.
- Consult others about decisions that will affect them.
- Keep others updated on your progress..
- Check in with others to make sure they are on track to get you what you need.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Be flexible, and open to others' opinions.
- Alert the team to potential problems as early as possible.
- Focus on finding solutions to problems, rather than attributing blame.

Using inclusive language

How we talk about each other at work is important.

An inclusive workplace is one in which all employees feel that they belong, and inclusive language plays a big part in achieving that goal. Using inclusive language doesn't mean 'walking on eggshells'; it just means communicating in a manner that shows respect for the people around you.

It's likely that your co-workers and clients will have a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, gender identities and sexual orientations, and the language you use should acknowledge that diversity. For example, unless you've heard a married colleague talk about their husband or wife, you should use the word 'partner' to refer to them. The gender-neutral term is inclusive because it doesn't make any assumptions about your colleague's sexuality.

You don't have to ignore differences, though, or pretend they don't exist. Inclusivity doesn't mean ignoring diversity, it means valuing it and acknowledging it as a strength. For example, it's okay to tell a team member that you appreciate their fluency in another language because it will help the company to expand its customer base.

It should go without saying that racist or sexist language is unacceptable in the workplace, along with any other language that may exclude others by alienating or offending them. Even if such language is used jokingly, it may still cause offence or hurt.

Avoiding discrimination

Everyone has the right to a workplace free from discrimination.

In Australia, it is illegal to discriminate against someone in the workplace based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, age, medical history, marital status, parental status, pregnancy, religion, political beliefs, trade union membership or any other individual characteristic that doesn't affect their ability to do their job in any way.

Before you can eradicate discrimination, though, you have to identify it. Direct discrimination is obvious – it may even happen openly, sometimes with the support of management. For example, if a company refuses to hire a candidate because they are gay, it is engaging in direct discrimination. But other forms of discrimination are indirect, and harder to recognise.

Sometimes discrimination is based on prejudice or preconceived ideas, whether these are conscious or unconscious. An advertisement in the window of a cafe seeking a 'waitress' is an example of unconscious discrimination. The use of gendered language encourages women to apply and discriminates against men, but the discrimination is most likely automatic and unthinking. An example of conscious discrimination would

be an interview panel choosing a male candidate over a female candidate, both in their late twenties, with similar qualifications and experience, because the woman 'might leave to start a family'. The members of such a panel are almost certainly aware that this is discrimination, and therefore illegal, yet they may still find it hard to see past their gendered assumptions about men, women, paid work and responsibility for childcare.

'Hidden' discrimination is the hardest to see because its results are difficult to measure. It's relatively easy to compare the number of women and men waiting tables in a restaurant or occupying senior management roles in a particular industry. It's not so easy to count the number of people with disabilities who've automatically been rejected for an entry-level role because no one took the time to think about how the workplace could be adjusted to accommodate their needs.

As an employee, it's your job to avoid discriminating against others in the workplace, and to take action if you observe discriminatory behaviours or work practices. You may be tempted to avoid dealing with the situation, and dismiss it as unimportant, telling yourself that, if left alone, the problem will go away. You may be frightened that if you speak up, you will become a target too. You must speak up, though – it's your legal responsibility to do so, as well as the right thing to do.

You could start by talking to the person responsible for the discrimination and explaining that discrimination is unacceptable in the workplace. If that's not enough to address the problem, you could encourage the victim to report the discrimination, and offer them your support. Depending on the situation, and your relationship to the employees involved, it may be necessary to report the issue to your supervisor or a human resources officer yourself.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Are these workplace occurrences examples of discrimination? Select yes or no.

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| a) Making jokes about a colleague's cultural background. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Not hiring applicants on the basis of their gender. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Not giving an employee a promotion on the basis of their gender. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Terminating an employee unable to perform expected tasks. | » Yes | » No |
| e) Making comments about an employee's sexuality. | » Yes | » No |

Question 2

What methods can be used to communicate positively at work? Tick all that apply.

- Avoiding all references to employee diversity
- Using inclusive language
- Discussing difference positively
- Going out of your way to include other workers in discussions
- Encouraging colleagues to share experiences

Question 3

List five characteristics that should not be discussed in a discriminatory manner.

2C Complete tasks according to workplace requirements

All employees are expected to complete tasks on time and to the appropriate standard.

In every work environment you will find that tasks are allocated by someone more senior than you. Whatever your role, if you want to be a team player, be sure to perform in such a way that your co-workers know they can rely on you. If you say that the photocopying will be completed by the end of the day, make sure it is ready as promised. If you agree to attend a meeting, don't be late or cancel at the last minute. When you make any type of promise or commitment, keep it.

When you fulfil your commitments, it shows that you respect others. Being on time for a meeting, for instance, shows that you don't want to waste other people's time. Treat colleagues and customers as you would like to be treated yourself.

Sometimes you will find that you cannot complete tasks as agreed. In these cases, it is important to let your supervisor or team know what is happening. Be open about it, and keep people informed.

Types of organisational requirements

It's important to know the requirements before beginning a task.

Each organisation has its own standards. For example, employees at organisation A might be expected to process supplier invoices within five business days, while employees at organisation B are given 14 days. It's the same task, but each organisation has a different requirement.

Employees must have a good understanding of what the organisation's requirements are before starting a task. This is especially the case when you first join a new organisation. You need to know how long a task is expected to take, how often the task is to be performed and the cost to both the business and the customer.

Below, consider some possible organisational requirements.

Timing

- Tasks may have to be completed within a certain time frame.
- Some organisations are stricter about punctuality than others.
- Employees may have to take their lunchbreaks at a certain time.

Presentation

- Important presentations may be printed and bound in a certain way.
- Digital publications may be edited according to an organisational style guide.
- Certain staff may need to be sent copies of important documents and correspondence.

Finance

- Receipts for all purchases may need to be submitted.
- Takings may be counted and recorded at the end of every shift, every day or every week.
- Purchases using the organisation's credit account may need to be approved by a financial manager.

Customer service

- All customers may be greeted with a certain phrase.
- Other tasks may be paused when a customer enters the workplace.
- Employees may be required to recommend a certain brand of product when assisting customers.

Complying with an organisation's style

Many organisations require documents to be formatted in a specific way.

Organisations produce many documents: some for staff and some for external audiences, such as customers and suppliers. These documents are usually formatted in a certain style for clarity, and to convey a professional image, particularly those aimed at an external audience.

Some larger organisations produce long documents written by multiple authors. Such documents are usually drafted and edited according to strict guidelines, so that the final result is cohesive. If these guidelines are detailed and complex, they may be gathered together in a document or manual referred to as 'style guide':

A style guide may cover:

- the inclusion of business logos or slogans
- the formatting of title pages and contents lists
- the formatting of headings, subheadings, body text and quoted material
- preferred fonts
- sentence and paragraph length
- the use of gender-neutral terms and other inclusive language.

Writing for an audience

When writing workplace documents, you need to follow some basic rules.

When you write for an audience, you should follow basic conventions: your spelling, grammar and punctuation must be correct. You should also be aware of the standard formats used for business documents and their typical features. For example, a formal business letter should include both the sender and recipient's addresses, begin with a greeting and end with your signature. Following such conventions gives an impression of professionalism and authority.

No matter who you are writing for, your prose should be as clear as possible. The best way to write something is often the simplest way. Writing that is sloppy or hard to understand may result in mistakes, such as incorrect orders being placed. If you lose customers through carelessness, your colleagues may lose confidence in you.

Below are tips to improve the readability of your workplace documents.

Think about your audience

- Use language that your audience will understand.
- Include only the relevant information.
- Don't use technical terms unless you're sure the reader will know them.

Use clear, concise language

- Be plain and direct.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- Avoid 'big words' and complex phrasing.

Check your document prior to sending it off

- Use your computer's spellchecker to find typos and spelling mistakes.
- Read over your document to check that it makes sense and correct any remaining errors.
- Ask someone else to do a final proofread, as we have trouble spotting our own errors.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Which of the following would you consider to be examples of organisational requirements? Tick all that apply.

- Completing a task by a specific deadline
- Paying award wages
- Adhering to a staff dress code
- Having purchase orders signed by the finance manager
- Greeting customers within five seconds of their arrival at the reception desk

Question 2

Which of the following instructions would likely appear in an organisational style guide? Tick all that apply.

- A business logo must appear on the front page of every document.
- Language in official documents must be gender-neutral.
- Documents with multiple headings and subheadings must include a contents pages'
- You must greet visitors to the office by saying 'Good morning' or 'Good afternoon.'
- All writing must be concise and grammatically correct.

2D Clarifying instructions and responsibilities

If you're confused, ask for clarification.

When we are given instructions or explanations, especially verbally, there's a chance that we might misunderstand. If you're at all unsure, ask someone to clarify. When you do, you must listen carefully, think about what you are hearing and ask questions if you need to.

Sometimes managers assign work to employees with little or no direction about what is expected or how to complete the job. This results in frustration and incomplete or incorrectly completed jobs. Other times, you may be emailed a list of tasks and instructions, which may need more clarification.

You might need to ask questions about a task because:

- the information you were given is vague
- you weren't given enough time to take in the information
- excessive noise or other distractions prevented you from taking in the information
- the person who gave you the information wasn't really sure what they needed you to do
- the information was passed on by a third party who lacked a clear understanding of the task
- the person who gave you the information has poor communication skills or limited English.

Listening techniques

You can learn to be a better listener.

You weren't born with the ability to read or write. They are skills you had to learn. Listening – as opposed to merely hearing – is the same. It means really paying attention to what someone else is saying. It's a skill you have to learn and practise to get better at.

Being a good listener has many benefits in the workplace: when you understand what to do and grasp all the details, you can complete your tasks to a higher standard. You'll also save time and be more productive, because you won't have to repeat tasks over and over to fix your mistakes.

How to listen effectively

- Avoid distractions, such as noise from televisions, radios or other people.
- Take time to listen – let the other person know that you have the time to hear them speak.
- Listen fully – don't interrupt.
- Avoid judging the person.
- Watch body language – sometimes what people are saying is totally opposite to what their body is saying.
- Concentrate on what is being said.
- Take notes.
- Ask questions.
- Clarify and summarise what has been said.

Clarify information

Choosing how to question is essential to getting a helpful response.

When someone gives you instructions, summarise what they've told you and repeat it back to them, to confirm that you've understood what they're asking you to do. If you've misunderstood, it gives them the chance to clarify.

You may need to ask questions if you're not sure. Don't just assume your supervisor has given you all the information you need to do a job. We all make mistakes, and they might have left out something important. Keep asking questions until you fully understand what you're being asked to do.

In some instances – when working on a long-term project, for example, or when there are significant costs involved – it is worth asking your supervisor or manager to confirm what they want you to do in an email or a detailed written brief, so that it is absolutely clear, and so you have a record you can refer back to if you need it.

When to seek verbal clarification	When to seek written clarification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When your question requires a yes/no answer ▪ When you don't need a detailed response ▪ When you need a response immediately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When a task or project involves multiple steps ▪ When a plan or action needs formal approval ▪ When negotiating terms

Open and closed questioning

There are two main types of questions that you can use: open and closed.

Here is more information about open and closed questions:

Open	<p>Open questions invite an extended answer. They provide an opportunity for discussion and reflection. Open questions often begin with 'what', 'why' and 'how'.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What should I do now? ▪ What would happen if we received more funding? ▪ How do I process this information? ▪ Could you please describe how to do this?
Closed	<p>Closed questions are answered with a single word or short phrase. They are quick and easy to answer and keep you in control of a conversation.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are you happy working here? ▪ Would you like me to help you with that? ▪ Is this what you said? ▪ If I deliver this now, can you sign for it?

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Are the following examples of open-ended questions? Tick all that apply.

- 'Hi, how can I help you?'
- 'What is the manager's name?'
- 'Which areas do you think we need to review?'
- 'Was he on time this morning?'
- 'How would skills training help this business?'

Question 2

Draw a line to match each term to its definition.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| » Body language | » When someone explains something to you face to face or over the phone |
| » Written clarification | » Methods used to improve your understanding of verbal information |
| » Verbal clarification | » When someone explains something to you in a letter, email or text |
| » Listening techniques | » Messages conveyed by people's facial expressions, postures and hand movements |

2E Seeking assistance to resolve issues

Everyone experiences some difficulties in their working life.

During your working life you will inevitably encounter many difficulties. Some will be within your control, but others will not. Either way, it's important to let your supervisor know as soon as possible. It's their job to help you find a solution. If you don't admit that you're having trouble, you might miss deadlines and let people down. If the problem persists, you will fall further behind and become increasingly stressed. It could eventually have a major effect on your productivity and working relationships.

It takes courage and honesty to ask for help, but there will always be people willing to assist you. There is a saying, 'A problem shared is a problem halved.' In other words, your colleagues and supervisor cannot offer you their support, or the benefit of their experience and problem-solving skills, if you don't ask.

People may find it hard to ask for help because they:

- fear people may think them weak or too dependent on others
- don't want others to think they are incompetent
- feel they should be able to handle their workload
- find it hard to approach their supervisor.

Types of difficulties

Our problems at work are surprisingly similar.

No matter what kind of work you do, you're likely to encounter the same difficulties. Though the particulars may be different, the fundamental issues most of us deal with at work are very similar. A heavy workload and tight schedules are common problems. A lack of resources to do your job is another. Feeling powerless to influence decisions that affect you is a frequent frustration, as is conflict with co-workers.

There is no denying that these problems can make it harder to get your job done, and they can make it difficult to maintain a positive attitude, too. Honesty, clear communication and flexibility can definitely help, and so can advice from more experienced co-workers.

Managing your workload

If you can't make a deadline, let your manager know as soon as possible.

We all have good intentions about delivering work on time. With good time management and organisational skills, this is achievable.

However, sometimes events outside your control prevent you delivering what you have promised. Supplier delays, staff illness, poor communication, equipment breakdowns and numerous other factors can put you behind schedule.

As soon as you realise that you cannot provide what has been promised, inform your supervisor or team leader immediately, so they can help work out a solution. For example, they may be able to extend a deadline, or offer a customer an alternative product.

Dealing with others' decisions

Sometimes you don't have any say in decisions that affect your work.

Having responsibility without authority is a major frustration in most workplaces. We all want to do the best job possible – in fact our continued employment often depends on it – so this lack of control can be stressful.

For example, imagine that you need to send a document to a client for approval. The schedule is tight, and you don't have time to send a hard copy in the post – but you don't have the software you need to create a PDF to the client's specifications, and you don't have the authority to buy it. You ask the IT manager to purchase the software, but your department's IT budget for the year has already been spent, and the IT manager rejects your request.

In this particular situation, you could start by asking your co-workers for suggestions. One of them may have the software you need and be willing to create the PDF for you. If your co-workers can't help, your next step is to talk to your supervisor. Your supervisor may talk to the IT manager and ask them to authorise the purchase, or perhaps allow you to extend the deadline.

When you don't have the authority to solve a problem yourself, confirm in writing how your supervisor or manager wants you to handle it. If you can't complete a task on time and to the required standard as a result, you may be asked to explain what happened, and it's useful to have a record of any instructions you were given.

If others' decisions affect your ongoing performance at work, you should:

- be clear about the parameters of your job and refer problems to those with the authority to solve them
- ask colleagues how they have dealt with similar problems in the past
- speak to your supervisor about possible solutions and confirm their advice in writing
- contact a union representative if you are concerned about the impact on your continued employment.

Issues with colleagues

Disagreements between staff members are an everyday part of life at work.

Professional disagreements are a frequent occurrence in most workplaces. For example, the members of a team may disagree about the best way to handle customer inquiries, or which accounting software would best serve the company's needs. Such disagreements can be helpful, as they often lead to a discussion of pros and cons, and ultimately to better ways of working.

Personal disagreements are also common. They often arise where team members have different personalities or temperaments. Some people like to chat while they work, for example, while others find conversation distracting. A good supervisor will be aware of such issues within a team and take steps to resolve them before they develop into conflict. If handled well, this process can actually bring a team closer, making members more sensitive to each other's needs, and improving both morale and performance.

When disagreements are not resolved, they may lead to direct conflict. This can affect the performance of the individuals involved and distract their co-workers too. If people take sides, the whole team can be drawn in, badly damaging morale – and if conflict occurs in view of clients or customers, the organisation's reputation may suffer.

It's always best to resolve disagreements in a friendly, non-confrontational way if you can, without involving others, before the situation becomes too serious. The best outcome is a win-win solution that everyone agrees to. If that's not possible, though, you should ask your supervisor or human resources officer for help.

Escalating issues to team leaders

Sometimes it's necessary to involve your supervisor or manager.

Escalating an issue means taking it to someone higher up in the organisational structure. This is the next step when staff members can't resolve problems or disagreements independently. Taking this step doesn't necessarily mean that anyone is at fault; some issues are complex and can't be resolved without the help of more experienced staff.

When employees' performance is affected or workplace safety is endangered, that's the trigger to escalate an issue to your supervisor or manager.

The following are examples of issues that should be escalated to management without delay:

Physical safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A worker has been physically injured or is likely to be. ▪ A hazard posing a major threat to health and safety is identified. ▪ An employee has threatened or engaged in violence.
Negative impact on work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff are unable to complete tasks. ▪ Staff are completing tasks at a much slower rate. ▪ The quality of employees' work is declining.
Bullying/harassment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attendance is falling. ▪ Employees' mental health is suffering. ▪ An official complaint is lodged.

Practice Task 10

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Isaac works at a marketing company that designs advertisements for social media. Technology in this industry is changing all the time, and Isaac feels he has been left behind. His company uses outdated technology and old versions of software, which means his advertisements aren't as effective as the work produced by other companies. He has lost two clients already because his work didn't meet their expectations, and he fears he may lose more. He could easily download an upgraded version of the software he needs, but he'd have to use the company credit card and doesn't have the authority to do so.

To make matters worse, Isaac sits near members of another team who are under a lot of pressure. They are short-staffed, because several staff members have left due to bullying, and they are working on an important campaign with a heavy workload and tight deadlines. The tension has led to ongoing conflict, all of which plays out next to Isaac's workstation, distracting him from his work and making it hard for him to meet his own deadlines. One of the team members has recently confided to Isaac that she is receiving anonymous emails criticising her performance at work and making personal comments that have left her feeling unsafe. Isaac is concerned but doesn't know what to do to help her.

Question 1

Isaac doesn't have the authority to purchase the software he needs. Which of the following strategies could he use to solve this problem? Tick all that apply.

- Ask his co-workers for suggestions.
- Discuss the problem with his manager
- Use the company credit card to purchase the software, hoping that management won't mind when they see how it improves customer satisfaction.
- Contact his union representative, if he feels his job is at risk due to factors beyond his control.

Question 2

Which of the following 'triggers' should prompt Isaac to escalate the problems in the workplace to his manager? Tick all that apply.

- He is distracted from his work by his co-workers' conflict.
- Staff are being bullied.
- His colleague is being harassed and feels unsafe.
- Staff's work-life balance has been disrupted.

Summary

- Creating a safe working environment is the responsibility of every employee
- A variety of strategies, including regular meetings, safety audits and hazard identification, are needed to create safe work environments
- Completing tasks on time, to the required standard, is a necessity in any workplace, and a way to show respect and consideration for others
- Difficulties can arise at any time, but most organisations have systems in place to deal with them, so you should always seek support if you need it
- To avoid misunderstandings in the workplace, it is important to listen effectively, and to ask questions if you don't understand what you have to do
- Discrimination in the workplace, whether direct or indirect, is against the law
- Respect should be the bedrock of communication within the workplace
- Many organisations have style guides which should be followed when producing workplace documents
- You should contact management when problems at work are affecting staff welfare or productivity
- To be an effective communicator at work, you need to develop good listening skills and use questioning techniques

Learning Checkpoint 2

Working in a team

Part A

1. Which of the following statements are true? Tick all that apply.

- An organisational style guide is a collection of formatting guidelines.
- Meeting deadlines is essential to working in a team.
- Sexist jokes are a form of discrimination.
- Workers very rarely collaborate in the workplace.
- If a hazard in the workplace causes an injury, the issue should be escalated to a team leader.

2. Draw a line to match each term to its definition.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| » Workplace safety meetings | » Hiring a workplace safety expert to identify safety issues that need to be rectified |
| » Testing and tagging of equipment | » Moving through a workplace recording details about hazards |
| » Hazard identification checks | » Managers and workers gathering to discuss safety issues |
| » Expert consultation | » Having electrical and gas equipment checked to make sure they are safe |

3. Will the following behaviours help employees to work as a team? Tick all that apply.

- Using inclusive language
- Following an organisation's style guide
- Working independently
- Asking open-ended questions
- Meeting deadlines

Part B

Case study

Read this excerpt from ABC Accounting's WHS policy and answer the questions that follow.

ABC Accounting WHS Policy

This policy is designed to ensure the safety of everyone at ABC Accounting.

- There is a hazard register at reception; any employee who identifies a hazard must fill in the register and immediately contact the safety supervisor to provide details.
- If an employee suffers a physical injury, contact a manager immediately.
- All tasks requiring the moving of any furniture, computer equipment or cabling must be carried out by designated maintenance personnel.
- Please ensure safety posters in the office and warehouse remain in place; these posters have translations at the bottom so that all staff can read them.

1. Which of the following practices that promote effective teamwork are described in ABC Accounting's WHS policy? Tick all that apply.
 - Making sure that all staff have access to safety information, including those who speak languages other than English
 - Relying on designated personnel to do heavy lifting, to avoid injuries to other team members
 - Escalating issues to management when an injury occurs, to prevent harm to other workers
 - Following organisational style guides
2. A colleague at ABC Accounting asks you to move computers and cabling around to prepare for a client meeting. You have read the WHS policy and know that only designated maintenance personnel are permitted to move computer equipment and cabling. Which of the following are appropriate ways to handle this request? Tick all that apply.
 - Ignoring the policy and helping your colleague prepare for the meeting
 - Asking your manager if you should agree to the request and getting their response in writing
 - Using non-discriminatory and respectful language when escalating the request
 - Using questioning and listening techniques where you prepare your questions prior to asking and note down instructions



Topic 3 | Developing effective work habits

- 3A Identifying work and personal priorities
- 3B Applying time-management strategies
- 3C Communicating issues to team leaders
- 3D Seeking feedback

3A Identifying work and personal priorities

Maintaining a healthy work–life balance is essential to being a productive employee.

In order to stay healthy and happy, it is essential to find a balance between your working life and your personal life. You may also be juggling study or family commitments. The right balance will change as your career progresses. It will differ if you are single or if you are raising children or nearing retirement.

We all have work priorities. The main two are:

- meeting work deadlines
- reaching performance targets.

A major personal priority is to ensure we have time to do what we enjoy outside of work, such as sport, exercise, recreation, socialising or spending time with family. This is known as achieving work–life balance.

Work–life balance allows workers to:

- rest and recover for the next working day
- remove negative situations from your life
- work smarter, not harder
- build and maintain supportive relationships with family, friends and co-workers.

With portable technology, such as laptops and smartphones, it is easier to bring work home and work longer hours. Australian workers are working harder and longer while trying to balance the care of children and ageing parents, not to mention having some time for themselves. We call these ‘competing priorities’.

If not dealt with, competing priorities can cause stress-related illnesses and loss of productivity in the workplace.

Personal priority initiatives in organisations

Many organisations now make employees’ work–life balance a priority

Work–life balance initiatives help employees to be productive and healthy in their work and personal lives.

Some organisations are now aware of the benefits of a balanced lifestyle and actively seek to provide employees with greater flexibility in how they work. Work–life balance initiatives can change an organisation’s culture. Employers gain a competitive business edge by attracting and retaining healthy, productive employees.

Work–life balance initiatives may take many forms.

Flexible working arrangements
<p>Traditional working hours require employees to work from nine to five, Monday to Friday, typically putting in a 40-hour week. Under flexible working arrangements, an employee may opt to start at 7.30 am so that they can finish work earlier and pick their children up from school. Another employee may work nine hours one day and seven hours the next so they can attend a class or appointment.</p>
Job sharing
<p>Job sharing involves the sharing of one full-time job between two people. It is becoming increasingly popular, as it provides flexibility for employees while supporting the business of the employer. Good communication skills and well-defined work practices are essential to make job sharing a success.</p>
Working from home
<p>Many organisations are now seeing the merit in allowing employees to work from home. Employees have the opportunity to work using technology and only attend the workplace when meetings are required.</p>
Health-related programs
<p>Some organisations promote good health among their employees by offering personal training, meditation, massages, weight-loss programs and courses to help them stop smoking.</p>

The benefits of work–life balance programs

Both employer and employee benefit from the right work–life balance.

Maintaining a satisfactory work–life balance provides benefits to both employees and employers. There are financial benefits, but there are others, too, including better mental health and greater engagement at work.

Benefits for the employer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved staff retention rates. ▪ Less sick leave ▪ Less stress-related illness. ▪ Better work cooperation. ▪ Increased motivation and productivity. ▪ Greater ability to meet customer demands through flexible working arrangements.

Benefits for the employee

- Improved personal and work relationships.
- Increased job satisfaction.
- Less stress.
- Improved health.
- More time to pursue recreational activities, such as exercise.
- More opportunities to spend time with children and family.
- More time to pursue areas of interest such as study, travel and hobbies.

Tips for developing a good work–life balance

A healthy balance between work, leisure and family benefits all members of an organisation.

All individuals and their workplaces are responsible for creating work–life balance.

You can't control all of the factors that affect your work–life balance, but you can control some of them.

Here are some ways you can help yourself when it comes to developing a good work–life balance.

Seek support from your employer	Most organisations have policies to help you achieve a better work–life balance. Employers recognise that it is better for the organisation to have fully functional, productive and healthy employees. If you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed, talk with your supervisor, manager or human resources contact to ask for support.
Schedule regular breaks throughout the day	Taking regular 10-minute breaks will energise you and increase your productivity. Take a short walk around the office or outside.
Take your annual holidays	Holidays are important: they allow you to rest and enjoy time away from the workplace. After a holiday, you return to work feeling refreshed.
Create a healthy lifestyle	Make a realistic plan to eat better, take regular exercise, reduce your alcohol intake, quit smoking, or pursue a hobby or interest. Spend more time with your family and friends.

Practice Task 11

Question 1

Draw a line to match each term to its definition.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| » Performance targets | » Completing tasks by a time specified by your manager |
| » Work-life balance | » Having working hours outside traditional arrangements |
| » Meeting deadlines | » Having time both to complete your work requirements and have recreational time |
| » Flexible working arrangements | » Standards of work quality you must reach |

Question 2

Which of the following are benefits of employees having a healthy work-life balance? Tick all that apply.

- Improved staff retention rates
- Better marketing advertisements
- Increased productivity
- Increased employee engagement
- Greater collaboration between staff

3B Applying time-management strategies

Time management is skill and must be learned and refined.

Time management is a learned skill that can be developed and mastered over time. It is something we must learn, otherwise life can become very busy and chaotic. Poor time management affects your work–life balance.

Poor time managers are always busy – they never have enough hours in a day to do what they need or want to, leading to more stress.

‘Work smarter, not harder’ is a common saying. It means that working hard and being effective are two different things. It is our results that show how effectively we have used our time.

Effects of being a poor time manager

Mismanaging time will have a negative effect on your productivity and the success of your organisation.

If you are a poor time manager, you may find that you have to work longer and longer hours to catch up. This becomes overwhelming, resulting in procrastination. Procrastination is avoiding a task that needs to be done – postponing until tomorrow what can be done today.

Often, we try to disguise the fact that we’re avoiding a task by busying ourselves with other things that may be interesting, and even useful, but don’t get us closer to our goal. Overcoming procrastination usually involves having good time management skills.

Effective time managers work efficiently and effectively, not wasting time on unnecessary things.

What is time management?

Time management means using the available time in the most efficient way possible

Everything we do takes time. Some of these events and activities are externally controlled and some are internally controlled. Examples of externally controlled activities include getting to work by a particular time and attending meetings. Internally controlled activities may involve chatting online or talking on the phone.

To be a good time manager, it is important to focus on what you want to do and actively make time to achieve these goals. It is also about setting priorities and taking full responsibility for your use or abuse of your time.

Many of us do not know how we use our time. All we are sure of is that time disappears very quickly. Have you ever considered what you do every day?

Effective time management involves:

- setting priorities
- taking charge of situations
- experimenting to find the best way to make use of time
- changing habits or activities that waste time
- avoiding distractions and interruptions
- being disciplined in following your time-management strategies.

Managing your time effectively

Using the appropriate time management strategies can make you a more efficient employee

Before you can manage your time effectively, you need to know what you do every day. Once you step back and analyse your habits, finding strengths and weakness becomes easier. Here are some ways to effectively manage your time. Even if these aren't weaknesses of your time management skills, these strategies can be adapted to your existing strengths:

Goal	Description
Set realistic goals and timelines	Don't set out to achieve the impossible. For example, attempting to work a 40-hour week while studying full time is not achievable. Effective time managers set daily and weekly goals that are achievable.
Define your priorities	Successful time management begins with planning. Some people create lists of the tasks that must be achieved that day or that week. The list is a reminder of what must be achieved and should be updated every day.
Avoid distractions and interruptions	Become aware of your 'time wasters'. For example, surfing the internet or texting friends are time wasters. If you are inclined to waste time, you need to understand why you procrastinate. If something needs to be done, do it. Don't let anything distract you.

Goal	Description
Group similar activities	If you have a number of phone calls to make over a week, try to group them into one block of time. You can also do this when sending and responding to emails, attending meetings and reading mail. For example, you may allocate Tuesday morning for making contact with clients and Wednesday morning to reading mail.
Learn to say no	Have you ever heard the saying, 'If you want something done, give it to the busiest person'? Some people just keep taking on more and more work. They can end up becoming burned out and ineffective. If you find that you have too many tasks to complete, with tight time lines, talk with your supervisor. Work should be shared evenly between the members of a team.

Practice Task 12

Question 1

Felicia is the general manager of a large company. She checks her itinerary at the beginning of every day to decide which tasks need her attention. In what order should she do the following tasks? Number the most important item with a 1 and then go down the list.

- Decide on the type of paper to use in the copy machine.
- Pay for a personal Netflix subscription.
- Attend a safety crisis meeting.
- Put a job advertisement online for a new receptionist.
- Hire a new safety consultant.
- Choose soft drink varieties for the drink machine.

Question 2

List three time-management techniques.



3C Communicating issues to team leaders

Organisations should have processes in place to effectively manage the workload of employees.

One challenge for organisations is to ensure employees have the optimal workload. If workers don't have enough to do, they are not being productive. If they are overburdened with tasks, they will not have time to do their work to the appropriate standard.

Successful organisations have policies and systems that make sure workers have enough to keep them engaged and highly productive but not enough to overwhelm them. The benefits for employees are that they can be productive while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Employers benefit by having happy, engaged employees doing high-quality work.

Below are some principles that underpin effective workload management policies:

All staffing and workload decisions take into account the work-life balance of employees.

Tasks are allocated according to the skills and experience of employees.

Safe workplaces reduce workloads.

Workloads are recorded and monitored by workplace managers.

Management is transparent when communicating with staff about peaks and troughs in their workload.

Staff have easy access to dispute resolution processes.

Common workload issues

A workload imbalance can have consequences for employees and employers.

There are three main types of workload issue: too much work, too little work and inconsistent work. All can harm both an employee's mental health and their performance, meaning that these issues have consequences for employers, too.

Workload issue	Implications for employees	Implications for employers
Too much work	Staff have to start rushing or working longer hours to complete tasks. Standards drop as morale declines.	Staff illness increases due to overwork. Replacements for absent workers have to be found, or extra work allocated to the remaining staff.

Workload issue	Implications for employees	Implications for employers
Too little work	Workers become disengaged. If wages depend on the number of tasks completed, morale declines.	Managers have to deal with frustrated employees who want more work.
Inconsistent work	Workers become frustrated as work can vary from very quiet to very busy.	It is difficult to manage rosters when work is inconsistent.

Communicating workload issues

Workload issues should be communicated to a manager.

There are four main ways to communicate problems with your workload: scheduling a meeting with your manager, raising the issue in a meeting such as a performance review, sending records of your workload to your manager, and asking a union representative to deal with the issue on your behalf. The method you choose will depend on your circumstances.

Schedule a face-to-face meeting with your manager
Open and transparent conversation about your problems can be the most effective way to deal with them. You can discuss the impacts of your workload issues on your work-life balance and immediately answer any follow-up questions your manager may have.
Raise the issue in a formal meeting such as a performance review
Discussing workload issues in a performance review allows you to contextualise your issues in relation to other aspects of your job. Formal records of the meeting will be kept. You can always request a performance review if you feel it is overdue.
Send your manager records of your workload
Records might include time sheets or logbooks that detail the amount of work you have completed and/or the amount of time you've spent travelling. Having accurate records may convince your manager to alter your workload.
Contact a union representative
This option is available to union members. If your manager has ignored issues with your workload, you have the right to contact a union representative, who can tell you whether your workload violates the award or agreement you work under and represent you in discussions with your manager.

Effective communication techniques

When communicating issues to team leaders, you will need to use effective communication techniques

In its simplest form, effective communication is about sharing useful information in a way that the other person can understand.

Good communication is vital in resolving issues as quickly as possible.

Here are a range of communication techniques you can practise when engaging with team leaders about work-related issues.

- Providing brief, specific information
- Giving the team leader enough time to take in the information and ask questions
- Avoiding jargon and complicated terms
- Using language that the team leader will understand
- Using a suitable pace, not too fast and not too slow
- Asking for feedback to check you've been understood

Practice Task 13

Question 1

Which of the following communication techniques should you use when speaking to team leaders? Tick all that apply.

- Avoiding jargon or complicated phrases
- Asking for feedback to check you've been understood
- Providing brief, specific information
- Only using written communication
- Giving them enough time to take in the information and ask questions

Question 2

Draw a line to match each term to its definition.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| » Optimal workload | » Stress and overexertion from trying to get so much completed in limited time |
| » Inconsistent workload | » Lack of engagement due to not having enough to do |
| » Too much work | » A workload that challenges the employee but doesn't overextend them |
| » Too little work | » Periods of a large amount of work followed by smaller workloads |

3D Seeking feedback

All constructive feedback is useful and can be used to improve your future performance.

Many employees have been on the receiving end of harsh words from a manager. Venting anger and frustration can have immediate results, but genuine feedback is constructive. It is not emotional, but thoughtful and considered, and more likely to inspire a long-term improvement in the employee's performance.

Useful feedback can reinforce good habits or correct bad ones. It opens up a two-way conversation between a manager and an employee and can be used to clarify any lingering issues.

Types of feedback

There are various types of feedback that can help you understand your performance and areas for improvement.

Deciding how useful feedback is depends on the type of feedback you receive and who you receive it from. If the feedback is measured and supported by evidence, you can factor it into your work decisions.

The usefulness of feedback also depends on your occupation. A manager of a marketing company that has a lot of interactions with customers should analyse customer feedback data very closely.

Below is a discussion of types of feedback, who it can be delivered by and how this feedback can be useful.

Type of feedback	Who is this feedback delivered by	How can this feedback be useful
Customer survey data	Customers	It can provide information on your sales skills and how effective you are at developing a rapport with customers.
Performance reviews	Your manager	It gives an overall assessment of how you're performing. The review offers a chance for you to clarify any issues you have questions about.

Type of feedback	Who is this feedback delivered by	How can this feedback be useful
Colleague feedback	Those you work with daily	In jobs with reduced contact with customers, your colleagues are able to give you the most accurate appraisal of your performance.
Sales figures	A general manager or financial manager	Sales figures are unbiased and put a dollar value on employees' performance, where relevant.

How to act on feedback

For feedback to be useful, you must act on it.

The purpose of seeking feedback is to gather information that will help you to do your job better. Once you've determined that it's constructive, the next step is to act on it.

Below is a process that will help you use constructive feedback:

Step 1: Analyse the feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even constructive feedback may include details that can be ignored or questioned. Clarify any issues with your manager and settle on the parts of the feedback you believe are useful.
Step 2: Set objectives based on feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set clear, measurable goals based on the feedback. These goals don't have to be based on fixing negatives about your performance, they can be about improving positive aspects of your performance.
Step 3: Find a way to measure your achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way you measure your progress should be concrete. For example, you might decide that you'll have hit your goal when you achieve a certain sales figure.
Step 4: Review whether you've achieved your objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After a predetermined amount of time, review whether or not you've achieved your objectives.

Practice Task 14

Question 1

Which of the following statements are true? Tick all that apply.

- Feedback is useful when delivered calmly and with evidence.
- Feedback from customers is useless.
- Constructive feedback should always be acted on.
- Sales figures can be biased.
- Performance reviews are opportunities for discussion of constructive feedback.

Question 2

In what order would you follow these four steps when acting on constructive feedback?
Number each step from 1 to 4.

- Review objectives to determine if they have been met.
- Set objectives based on feedback.
- Analyse constructive feedback.
- Establish measurements that will determine if objectives have been met.

Summary

- Maintaining a healthy balance between work and life priorities is essential to workplace productivity.
- Managing your time can be achieved via a range of strategies.
- Workload issues can harm employee performance and should be discussed with a manager.
- Feedback about work performance can come from a variety of sources.
- Constructive feedback can be used to improve employee performance and should be acted on.
- Communication with team leaders about workload issues should be brief and specific.
- Poor time management strategies can result in poor work performance.
- An optimal workload allows an employee to complete their allocated tasks while having time for recreation.
- Too little work or inconsistent work can result in disengaged employees.
- Meeting deadlines and performance standards are your main work priorities.

Learning Checkpoint 3

Developing effective work habits

Part A

1. Which of the following statements relate to maintaining a good balance between work and personal priorities? Tick all that apply.

- Take your annual holidays to mentally refresh yourself.
- Work until all tasks are completed.
- Manage your time to complete all work tasks you've been allocated.
- Set aside time to spend with friends and family.
- Give yourself enough productive time at work to meet performance standards.

2. Draw a line to match each term to its definition.

- | | |
|---|--|
| » Grouping similar activities | » Removing things from the workplace that will take your focus from your tasks |
| » Learning to say no | » Establishing deadlines that you can meet without overexerting yourself |
| » Avoiding distractions | » Completing similar activities at the same time to manage time |
| » Setting realistic goals and timelines | » Refusing a work task or deadline because it is unreasonable |

3. Which of the following statements are correct? Tick all that apply.

- You must contact a manager or supervisor immediately when employees' safety is in danger.
- Managers should never be interrupted when they are busy, no matter what the issue is.
- Providing records of time worked as evidence of workload issues is an effective communication technique.
- Face-to-face meetings with your manager can generate immediate answers you need.
- It is important to choose the right forum in which to raise issues.

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Michelle works at A1 Telemarketing as an office manager. Her duties include allocating tasks to reception staff, dealing with customer questions and making sales. She has asked her human resources manager for feedback and received the following information.

Feedback 1	98% of customers found Michelle pleasant to talk to, but only 24% believed she provided clear, accurate responses to their questions.
Feedback 2	Since Michelle started in her role a year ago, sales have dipped by 14%.
Feedback 3	Since Michelle became office manager, reception staff have reported higher levels of engagement at work, and retention rates in her team have improved.
Feedback 4	Michelle's manager says she should focus on improving the clarity and accuracy of her responses to customer questions. Her performance in this area will be reviewed in a year.

1. Draw a line to match each piece of feedback that Michelle has sought to its definition.

» Feedback 4

» Customer reviews

» Feedback 3

» Sales figures

» Feedback 1

» Performance reviews

» Feedback 2

» Colleague surveys

2. What should Michelle do to act on the feedback she has received? Tick all that apply.

- Make it her objective to improve her responses to customer questions.
- Disregard the feedback as unconstructive.
- Analyse the different parts of the feedback for common themes.
- In a year's time, look at her customer reviews to find out if the clarity and accuracy of her responses to customer questions has improved.
- Devise strategies to achieve her objective.