# WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE RETAIL TRADE INDUSTRY MODULE

This module is about the Retail Trade Industry. It has been prepared to support teachers develop lessons for students with disabilities who will be undertaking work experience in this industry. The module provides information on occupational health and safety for this industry.

While undertaking work experience, students learn primarily through observing and assisting with simple tasks. They **must NOT** undertake activities that require extensive training or experience, or expose them, or others in the workplace, to unreasonable risks to health and safety.

Before commencing preparation of students with disabilities for work experience, teachers should review the Occupational Health and Safety requirements as outlined in the Work Experience Manual for Victorian Secondary Schools.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/work/wemanualrev.pdf>

## Key messages:

* Work experience is about observing the world of work in action.
* Students on work experience must be under supervision at all times.
* Students must complete A Job Well Done modules before undertaking work experience.

## General Information

The Retail Trade industry is responsible for the sale of goods to customers for personal use and household use. Places where you can buy goods include:

* supermarkets
* department stores
* small business
* shopping centres.

Examples of goods are groceries, food items, furniture, clothing and cars.

The Retail Trade industry provides 11% of employment in Australia[[1]](#footnote-1).

Work can be full-time, part-time and casual. Casual work means working only when needed by the employer.

## Jobs in the Retail Trade Industry

* Checkout operators and office cashiers
* Food trades assistants
* Shelf fillers
* Petrol station attendants
* Nursery sales
* Pastry cooks and bakers
* Butchers
* Florists
* Sales assistant
* Delivery drivers
* Motor Vehicle sales people
* Pharmacists and Pharmacy sales assistant
* Models and sales demonstrators.

**Further information on the types of occupations in this industry can be found on Job Outlook -** <https://joboutlook.gov.au/Default.aspx>

## What can students do to stay safe at work in the Retail Trade industry?

Injuries can happen in the Retail Trade industry if adequate care is not taken. Students must follow work instructions safely and do not put themselves or others at risk.

To stay safe students with disabilities must:

* be under supervision at all times
* have proper training before undertaking simple tasks
* speak to their supervisor if they are unsure about how to perform a task safely
* have clear instructions about safety procedures
* be familiar with what do in an emergency.

## Lifting and Moving Items (Manual Handling)

Students must follow safe procedures when they are lifting and moving items. Manual handling is work that involves carrying, pushing, pulling, lifting, or moving something. Examples of these tasks in the Retail Trade industry are lifting boxes, putting items on shelves, packing and unpacking stock, hanging clothing on racks, moving trolleys, and cleaning floors or shelves.

To stay safe students need to:

* have clear instructions from their supervisor on how to be safe at work and how to follow these instructions
* know the correct lifting procedure
* know how to use a trolley to move large items
* know how to split large loads into smaller loads and not carry everything at one time.
* take rest breaks to prevent muscle strain and feeling tired
* know how to speak to their supervisor if they are unsure of how to do a simple task safely.

## Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are very common injuries in the Retail Trade industry. Most injuries can happen when there is a slippery floor in a kitchen, food preparation area, laundry and any areas where liquids can spill.

To stay safe students need to:

* follow all safety instructions and ask their supervisor if they are unsure of how to do a simple task
* wear shoes which are comfortable, have rubber non-slip soles and are in good condition
* let their supervisor know straight away if there is a spill on the floor.

## Fatigue

Fatigue (feeling very tired) can affect how people work. It can make workers less focused, slow them down or even cause them to fall asleep. A person can suffer from fatigue in the Retail Trade industry if they must stand up for a long time.

To be safe students need to:

* Take regular rest breaks during the work day and sit down when they can
* Wear comfortable shoes
* Make sure they have a good night’s sleep
* Tell their supervisor if they feel very tired and cannot work.

## Machinery and Equipment

Students undertaking work experience **MUST NOT** use machinery or equipment as outlined in the Work Experience Manual. Please note that the list in the manual is not exhaustive and students must **never** use any machinery or equipment that:

* pose an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the student, or
* require extensive training or experience to use safely.

There are many types of equipment and machinery used in the Retail Trade industry including:

* wrapping and packing machines
* carton crushers
* sharp equipment such as scissors, knives and box cutters
* bread slicers
* ovens
* fryers
* dough mixing machines.

To stay safe students need to:

* follow all safety instructions and ask their supervisor if they are unsure of how to do simple tasks.

## Electricity

Students undertaking work experience **MUST NOT** be asked to do any electrical work or repairs while on work experience.

The equipment used in the Retail Trade industry is operated by electricity. Examples of electrical equipment include:

* kitchen appliances
* cleaning equipment
* air conditioners
* cash registers
* computers
* light fittings
* wall socket outlets switches.

Note – Students are permitted to use computers.

Damaged electrical cords, faulty equipment, stretched cords and water leaking onto electrical equipment can be very unsafe. Injuries from damaged electrical equipment can be very serious.

To stay safe students need to:

* always follow clear instructions from their supervisor
* make sure they do not use machinery or tools, computers are permitted
* know how to speak to their supervisor if they are unsure about a simple task.

## Noise

In the Retail Trade industry noise can come from equipment such as kitchen fans and appliances, or the surroundings such as building work nearby, road traffic or machinery if the workplace is in an area with many factories.

Loud noises in the workplace can cause partial hearing loss, tinnitus which means ringing in the ears, or permanent hearing loss.

To stay safe students need to:

* follow all safety instructions and ask their supervisor if they are unsure of how to do a simple task
* know how to tell their supervisor if noise from the workplace is too loud for them
* wear protective hearing equipment if required by their supervisor to complete simple tasks.

## Cash handling and Opening and Closing procedures

Cash handling means money is exchanged for goods in the workplace. In the Retail Trade industry this could be in a restaurant, a supermarket, department store, or petrol station and people pay for what they buy at the cash register.

The requirements regarding cash handling for students on work experience is outlined in the Work Experience Manual (See Prohibited Activities, page 36).

Opening and closing retail stores are part of a Retail Managers duties. Students on work experience are **not** expected to open and close retail outlets.

To stay safe students need to know that:

* ***usually*** supervisors handle cash, credit cards or money transactions
* ***only*** supervisors open and close accommodation and service outlets.

## What should the supervisor do to make the workplace safe for students?

The Occupational Health and Safety Act is a written law to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and other people at work. The employer is responsible for the safety of all employees and must provide a high standard of health and safety at their workplace.

To make the workplace safe, employers must:

* be aware of the laws and regulations and follow these laws to protect their employees
* supervise work experience students, or have another qualified employee supervise work experience students at all times
* provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This is any equipment used or worn to keep employees safe in the workplace. PPE includes safety shoes, earplugs, goggles, hard hats, high visibility clothing, face masks, gloves and sunscreen
* provide training for the simple tasks students undertake while on work experience.

### More information on the Retail Trade industry is located at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/students/beyond/Pages/retailmodule.aspx>

### Invest Victoria

<http://www.invest.vic.gov.au/opportunities/retail>

### Department of Industry Innovation and Science

<https://www.business.gov.au/Planning/Templates-and-tools/Industry-factsheets/Retail-and-Wholesale-Trade-Industry-Fact-Sheets>

### safe@work

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/students/beyond/Pages/swguide.aspx?Redirect=1>

### Workplace Learning Toolbox

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/work/Pages/teachers.aspx#link39>

1. <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/IndustryInformation/RetailTrade> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)