

# A PARENTS GUIDE TO HELPING THEIR CHILD THROUGH THEIR APPRENTICESHIP



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# MY CHILD IS NOW AN APPRENTICE, WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

This is great news. Starting an apprenticeship means your child has just embarked upon a new career.

Typically, an apprenticeship, which combines on-the-job training, work and study, lasts three to four years.

While the news of your child becoming an apprentice is exciting, it's important that you know a bit about what to expect and how you can help your child through this phase of their working life.

For many apprentices the journey is a tough one, which is why the completion rate for Australian Apprentices is now below 50%. We want to make sure apprentices, employers and their support networks have as much information as possible to help them complete the journey successfully.

This guide is designed to help you help your child make the most of, and successfully get through their apprenticeship. It covers the following key areas:

- The facts about becoming an apprentice
- Starting an apprenticeship
- What you can expect to see in your child
- Teaching your child how to work with others
- Setting goals and boosting your child's motivation
- What else you can do



# THE FACTS ABOUT BECOMING AN APPRENTICE

## Your child is an apprentice, what does that mean?

If your child has become an apprentice, they have entered into a legal contract to work and study to develop the skills in a particular trade.

### Key tips to help your child start work

For most new apprentices, starting work can be hard for many reasons. Firstly, many apprentices start out directly from school and the transition to work is a tough one. Secondly, the experiences in the first six months of an apprenticeship may not meet expectations. Finally, younger apprentices may find working with older employers challenging. We'll expand on ways to overcome each of these challenges throughout this guide. However, it's important to note that remaining in work is an essential component of completing an apprenticeship, so you will need to help your child to develop good working behaviours early on in their journey if you want them to succeed.

Some of the biggest frustrations young apprentices have when they start their apprenticeships are to do with pay, the hours, the people they work with and the tasks they are given.

To help your child deal with these frustrations, it's important to talk openly with them about their experiences. It's also important to help them to be realistic in their expectations.

Below are six tips to help your child survive work from the beginning of their apprenticeship.

### 1. Be honest: Work is hard

Not one apprentice we've worked with thinks work is easy. Remind your apprentice that work can be hard, particularly in the first six months. Work can be physically, emotionally and mentally tough. Explain to your child that if they are finding work hard, that everything they are feeling is totally normal. Remind them that there will be times when they feel like giving up and there will be days when they don't want to go. Help them to focus on the bigger picture – the value of the trade and what they can do once they have finished their apprenticeship.

### 2. The pay debate: Teach them to budget their pay

Young apprentices may be frustrated with their low pay rates. This is something outside of their control and is only temporary. Teach your child how to budget their earnings. Where possible teach them to save at least 10% of their pay and if they need extra money encourage them to use their new skills on weekends to get more money.



# THE FACTS ABOUT BECOMING AN APPRENTICE (CONTINUED)

### 3. Help your child see the bigger picture:

It's important to remind your child that the journey they are on may feel like a long one, but it is indeed a short one. While many of their friends will still be at school, your child has started their career and there is a huge amount of value in sticking with the apprenticeship. If they complain that they can earn more money somewhere else, remind them about the great options they will have once they are fully qualified.

### 4. Ask them about their day: Get involved

One of the biggest frustrations for young apprentices is they feel they lack the opportunity to showcase their new abilities. Take an interest in what your child is doing. Ask them about what they have learned and get them to demonstrate if they can. Make an effort to have conversations with them about how they are finding the trade and their learning experiences.

### 5. Get to know their employer

One of the factors preventing apprentice completion is a lack of support from parents and support people. Get to know your child's employer. Introduce yourself and build a relationship with them so together you can give your child the best opportunity to learn and grow.

### 6. Do they have all the information they need?

It is important that you make sure your child feels prepared to start work. Starting an apprenticeship can be a daunting time. While they need to be accountable and responsible for work, they may need some help to ensure they have all the right information to make the best possible start.

Ensure your child knows the basics about their new role such as: hours, dress code, what they need to bring etc. If they don't have all of the information they need then help them find it. You might also want to share some of the experiences you had when starting your first job.





# KEY TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD START AT THEIR REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATION

Study at an RTO is a bit like school, with a focus on skills to become a qualified tradesperson. Study is an essential part of the apprenticeship, so it's important that your child is aware of this obligation. Here's five tips for helping your child start their training course on the right foot:

## **1. Know their timetable**

Find out when your child needs to be at their RTO and make sure their employer, yourself and your child are aware of this.

## **2. Plan transport for getting to and from the RTO**

Once you know your child knows their study schedule, help them to ensure they have the means to get to and from their RTO for each and every class. Remember: if they don't pass their course they won't finish their apprenticeship.

## **3. Get your child talking about their courses**

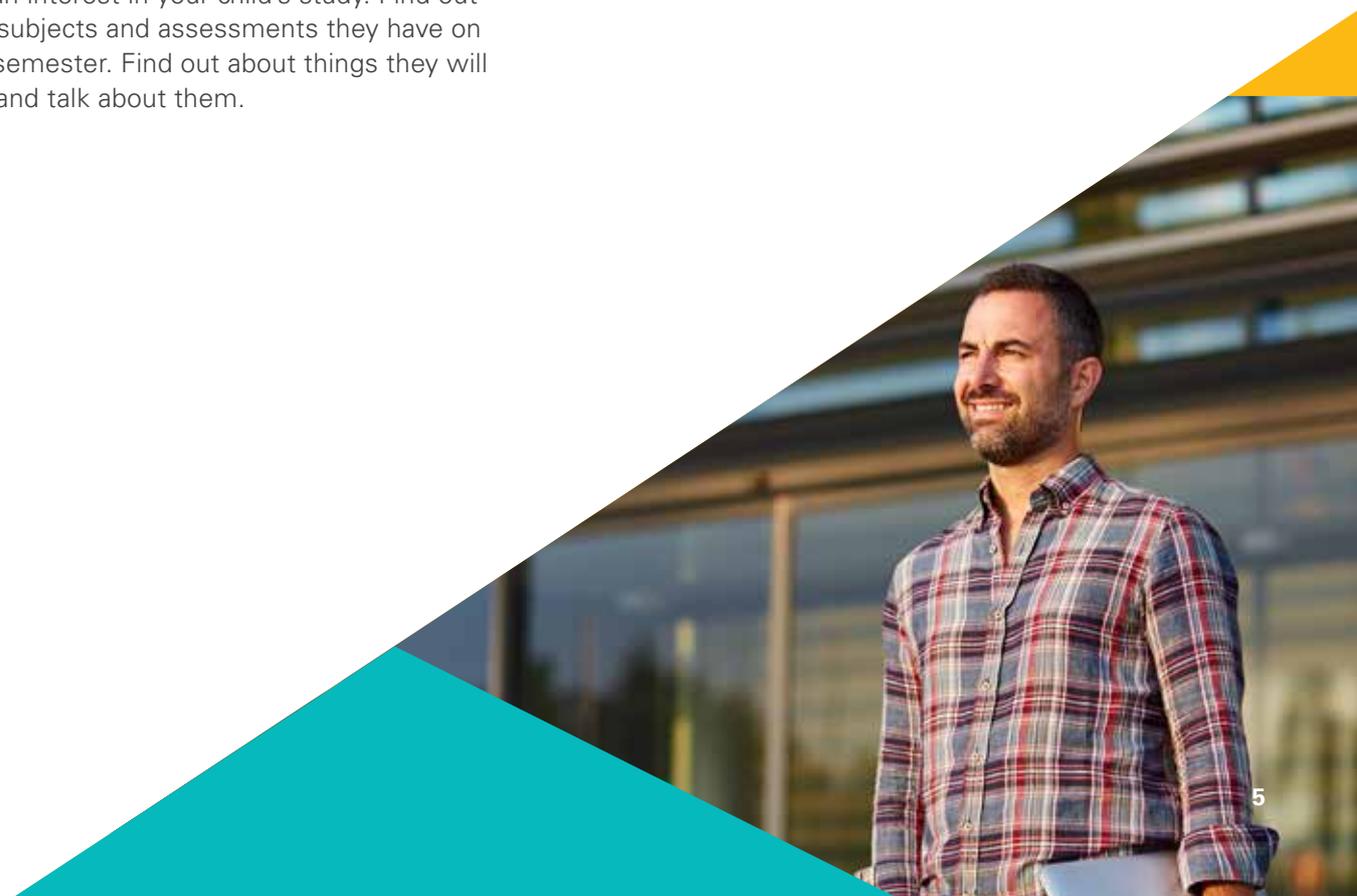
Take an interest in your child's study. Find out what subjects and assessments they have on each semester. Find out about things they will learn and talk about them.

## **4. Discover when exams and assignments are due**

Exam time is stressful when your child is at school and it can even be more stressful when they are studying at an RTO because of the need to balance work, study and performance. Find out how the semester runs and when exams are due so that you can be as supportive as possible during the more stressful times.

## **5. Reward your child for hard work**

It's easy to fall into the trap of constantly nagging our children about their study. As parents it's important to help your child get involved with study, but don't forget to reward them when they perform well. Whether you offer them a nice dinner, a movie or tickets to the footy - small rewards can go a long way in keeping a young person focussed and motivated.



# STARTING AN APPRENTICESHIP: WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE IN YOUR CHILD

**We all go through change. Some of us adapt to new situations quickly, while others may take a while to find their feet and thrive in a new setting. It doesn't matter how quickly you or your child move through change. What is important is that you know a bit about how your child will feel emotionally as they navigate their journey through an apprenticeship. This way you can help them make the best progress possible.**

Below is the change curve. This curve describes the emotions that your child will experience when they start their apprenticeship. Each one of us rides this wave of emotions when we go through a change. We all ride it at different speeds and feel the emotions at different intensities. But, whether it's starting a new job, or buying a house, whenever we experience a change we move through these phases. Below is an overview of what your child will experience as they begin their apprenticeship.



## The stages of change

### 1. Shock

This is the first stage, usually when you find out something new. In this stage you might find yourself saying, "wow, I can't believe it, I didn't expect this". For some, this might only last seconds, but for others they can remain shocked for a few days. When your child first finds out about their apprenticeship, give them as much praise and encouragement as possible during this stage.

### 2. Denial

Denial is the next stage. This often takes the form of "this can't be happening to me". It is often associated with the feeling that this is too good to be true. When your child is in denial it's a good time to remind them of the opportunities that lie ahead of them and what they need to do to make the most of them.

### 3. Anger

After the honeymoon and excitement phase is over, your child will start feeling a loss in confidence. They might have a bad day and then begin to question whether they can even do the job, or whether they have the skills to keep going.



# STARTING AN APPRENTICESHIP: WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE IN YOUR CHILD (CONTINUED)

## 4. Resignation

As we descend the change curve the loss of self-confidence, questioning and anger reaches the bottom and it's often at this point our apprentices walk away from their job. This stage is normally defined by an event. It could be criticism, feedback or even being delegated a bad task. This is a major turning point because even if we feel all these things, with mental toughness and the right attitude we can stick the situation out and slowly start to accept that this is just a stage, build some resilience and start to feel more hopeful about our position. Those that don't have the courage or confidence to stick things out will walk away.

When you see your child go through this it's a good time to sit them down and listen to them, let them explain how they are feeling and then let them know this is normal. Explain to them that tough situations will help build their resilience and that while they may seem like big issues now, they will be unimportant in years to come. Remind them of the value of completing their training and to focus on the bigger picture.

## 5. Acceptance

Once we move out of resignation and begin to accept our new reality, our productivity begins to increase and our attitude becomes more positive again. In this phase remind your child of the hard work they have gone through to get to this stage, and show your pride in them.

## 6. Commitment

The final stage is commitment. Here we begin to feel more committed, and slowly everything begins to look up. At this point keep checking in with your child, make sure they are still ok and keep the communication lines open.



# TEACHING YOUR CHILD HOW TO WORK WITH OTHERS

**One of the biggest complaints we hear from apprentices is the challenge they have in working with older “boring” people. Likewise, one of the biggest challenges in the workforce today is working across different generations. Below we identify some of the key characteristics of the three key generations in today’s workforce and tips on how they can work best together.**

## Generation Y:

- Born between 1982–2001.
- Perpetually connected, never without phones and heavily engaged in social networks.
- Multi-task which includes being online, working and watching TV all at once.
- Express individuality but feel it’s important to be part of a group.
- Sense of entitlement, optimistic and outspokenness – they’ve grown up in affluent times.
- Inability to take harsh criticism.

## Generation X:

- Born between 1961–1981.
- Admire being individualistic.
- Highly feedback driven.
- Promotion and money are important to them.
- Cool = right attitude.

## Baby Boomers:

- Born between 1946–1961.
- Rely on friends for information, more so than technology.
- Less reliant on technology such as phones and computers. Prefer to speak face-to-face.
- Most don’t use computers.
- Social standing is important.
- Value loyalty.
- Believe their job is for life.



# TEACHING YOUR CHILD HOW TO WORK WITH OTHERS (CONTINUED)

**Below are three key points about working with different generations:**

## **1. Each generation thinks they work harder than the others**

This is fact, not fiction. In a Government white paper on social trends it was reported that each generation believed they worked harder than others.

## **2. Each generation is a product of their upbringing**

There are huge generational differences as a result of how each generation was raised. Each generation had significant events and ways of living that shaped their lives. Whether that be world wars, the trend of starting part-time work at 14 or simply having both parents working, how we were raised significantly influences who we are.

When we apply this to Gen Y, we know that generation Y kids grew up in extremely affluent times. The Australian economy was, and is, in excellent shape, employment was booming and as a result, parents had money to spend on their kids. And they did.

## **Generation raised with computers**

It wasn't until Gen Y kids hit the education system that technology took off. So while most Gen X's remember school, their RTO or University as a mountain of paper assignments, Gen Y's are all technologically savvy.

To help your child build positive relationships across the generations in the workplace make sure they follow these four simple principles:

- Remind them that even if they know of a 'better' way of doing something, that sometimes when it comes to following instructions, things are as they are for a reason and sometimes they don't know the reason. It's important to respect the people supervising them and do as they are told.
- Explain that each generation has been raised differently and it's often because of the way they are raised that they behave the way they do.
- Explain that when working with older people, you usually need to earn their respect first.
- Explain that even if this is unfair, it's usually the way the working world works. They can earn respect by taking little actions such as turning up on time, making an effort to communicate with everyone and trying hard at work.
- Most people in the workplace don't use technology the way that Gen Y's do. Discuss with your child what is considered appropriate and not appropriate when it comes to using technology at work.

# SET GOALS AND BOOST YOUR CHILD'S MOTIVATION

**Whether it's a goal we kicked in sport or something we achieved personally, goals make us feel good. They give us something to strive towards, something to motivate us and make us feel hopeful and optimistic.**

Just like in sport, our apprentices are a bit like our benchwarmers. The businesses they work in need them, but they usually need to develop their skills first before they can become a star player. The challenge is that they are usually hungry to get out on the field, so it is important that they have the patience and drive to keep turning up and developing their skills. To keep this drive and momentum going, it is important your child has goals they can work towards.

For example, talk to your child about where they want to be in 12 months' time. What skills do they want to have established at work? What do they want to be in two and three years' time? Ask them to set goals around what they want in their career, how much money they want to have saved and even what holidays they want to take. All these things are goals and it's setting and sharing these goals that drives motivation and performance at work. When you're talking to your child about setting some goals, ask them questions around the SMART principle. This will make sure they've really thought about what they want to achieve and have identified ways to get there. For example:

## **S – Set a goal that is 'specific'**

For example, your apprentice needs to know specifically what it is they are working towards. For example "I want to buy a new snowboard"

## **M – The goal must be 'measurable'**

You must be able to measure the success of the goal. For example, you'll know if you've reached this goal because you have bought the snowboard.

## **A – The goal must be 'authentic'**

If the apprentice isn't motivated to reach the goal, or can't see the benefit of doing so, it's going to be hard to achieve. So spend time talking to your child about choosing a goal that is important to them.

## **R – The goal must be 'realistic'**

The goal can't be too hard or too easy. It has to be stretching but not too hard.

## **T – The goal must be 'timely'**

The goal must have a time frame. For example, "I want to buy a snow board in 12 months' time and will save each week to do so". To keep the momentum, keep talking about the goal with your child. When they have a bad day remind them that sticking with work will help them reach their goal. Also, when they have a good day remind them they are one step closer. Goals are designed to motivate people, boost their happiness and improve their performance. When the right goals are set, this always happens.

# WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

## Get into their shoes: A day in the life of...

Sometimes the best way to understand and work with others is to take some time out and think about 'a day in the life of'. The purpose of doing this is for you to start seeing things from others' perspectives. We all know that it is the job of the apprentice to at times do menial work for little pay. But even menial tasks can be made so much more purposeful if the meaning behind the job is discussed or if goals are set. Take 10 minutes now and put on the boots of your son/daughter the apprentice. Imagine their day from start to finish. You might want to write your thoughts down here...

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## Share your stories: What else could they know?

One of the best ways to help your child through their apprenticeship is by sharing stories. Talk to them about what they are experiencing and talk about how you've gone through similar things.

If possible, get your child to talk to friends or other former apprentices about their experiences. Sharing stories and experiences will help to validate what your child is experiencing.



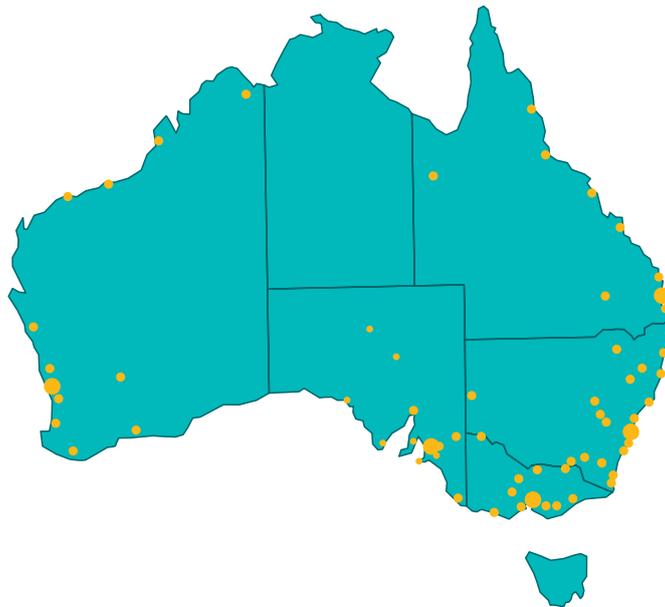


# A LOCAL TEAM, A NATIONAL SOLUTION

Apprenticeship Support Australia, powered by the Australian Chamber Movement, is contracted by the Australian Government to provide skills development advice and solutions for businesses across Australia.

We are committed to building a better Australia by promoting the participation in, and increasing the completion of, Vocational Education and Training programs, including apprenticeships and traineeships under the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network.

**Our services are funded by the Australian Government and are provided at no cost to your business.**



## **National Chamber Movement**

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