Australian workplaces are different from workplaces in many other countries.

This guide explains how we do things in Australian workplaces. We hope it will help you prepare for work in Western Australia.

The most important thing to remember is:

If you are unsure, watch, listen and ask.
A guide for migrants who wish to enter the Western Australian workforce

English is the language of all workplace communication in Australia.

You must learn to read, write and speak some English to work well in Australian workplaces.

This will help you:
• understand and follow spoken instructions;
• read and follow safety signs and instructions;
• write notes and messages;
• understand your rights and responsibilities; and
• make friends at work.

Most Australian workplaces are less formal than workplaces in other countries.

For example, most people use first names. This often surprises people from other countries. You will probably need time to understand this. That’s OK. Remember:

If you are unsure, watch, listen and ask.

In Australia, men and women, young and old, people with disabilities and people from different countries all work together. This is normal.

In Western Australia, everyone has the same rights. Employers and employees must obey the laws about discrimination and equal opportunity.

For example, nobody may discriminate against another person because of their sex, age, race, colour, culture, religion, pregnancy, disability, marital status, political beliefs, family responsibilities, or sexual orientation.

Sexual or racial harassment is also illegal.

The Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission can give you advice on these matters.

Everyone must treat you with respect.
You must treat everyone with respect.

It is also normal to be friendly to everyone.
• Make eye contact when you talk to someone.
• Generally, don’t touch other people.
• Shake hands firmly when you meet someone new. If you are not comfortable shaking hands, nod your head and smile. Say that you are pleased to meet the person.

Generally, religious practices are not part of the working day. If you wish to practise your religion at work, discuss with your employer.

In Australia, many bosses have an ‘open door policy’—that is, they want employees to speak to them about problems or other work issues. In Australia, this is normal.

Australians often shorten words—for example, they may say ‘footsy’, not ‘football’. They often use slang. Ask a friendly workmate to repeat and explain the words you don’t understand. The radio and television will help you, too.

Many Australians also use swear words in normal conversations. Some people think swearing is rude, but most Australians are not offended. You will need time to understand this. If you are offended, simply ask the person to stop. That’s OK.

Remember: swearing is never acceptable in formal situations, like meetings and interviews.
If you have a new problem, ask yourself—’Can I fix this myself or do I need help?’

If you know you can do it yourself, fix it.

If you are unsure, ask for help.

**Employers value teamwork. They want employees who can cooperate and work in teams.**

Other workers will ask you to help them especially if something must be done quickly. Employers like employees who are always ready to help.

Most people will be happy to help you, if you ask.

Many workplaces have social events such as barbecues or special lunches. These help build good relationships between everyone.

Workplaces also celebrate workers’ birthdays or when someone is leaving. Everyone gives a little money to buy the person a present. This is normal.

If someone asks you to ‘bring a plate’ to a social event bring a plate of food to share with everyone.

Often, there are alcoholic drinks at social events. It’s OK to drink juice or soft drinks, if you prefer.

**Employers value employees who can solve problems in their everyday work.**

On your first day most workplaces will explain:

- your job;
- safety and health issues; and
- who to ask for help with problems.

**Remember:**

*If you are unsure, watch, listen and ask.*
Employers value employees who manage themselves.

It is not good to be late. Always do things on time. Be at work on time and attend meetings on time.

If you will be late for work, telephone or send a message to your employer or manager.

Apologise, explain why and say when you will arrive.

Employers value employees who continue to learn new skills.

People who work in Australia are expected to upgrade their work skills all the time.

Always try to improve the way you work and improve your work skills.

Sometimes you need to attend training courses outside of work.

Sometimes, you can do new learning at work. Ask your manager or employer about this.

It is important to work hard to improve your skills.

Employers value employees who understand technology – machines, tools and techniques.

Workplaces use technology—machines, tools and techniques—to make or do things at work. For example:

- cash registers, coffee machines;
- computers, printers and photocopiers; and
- vehicles, cranes and hoists.

Often, workplaces will train you to use these machines. Sometimes, you need to know how to use the technology before you can get a job. Most job advertisements explain this.

Remember, not all workplaces in Australia are the same. So, if you are unsure, watch, listen and ask.
This leaflet is based on the booklet Employability skills and workplace culture in Australia. It has been deliberately written in very simple English to help migrants whose English proficiency is still developing.

This material is available on request in appropriate alternative formats including Braille, audio recording and computer disk.

For more information visit trainingwa.wa.gov.au