

Supervising apprentices and trainees: Supervisor fact sheet

Supervision in the workplace is essential for apprentices or trainees to become competent in their chosen trade or vocation, and to work safely, confidently and effectively.

Employers are required to provide supervision that enables the apprentice to safely attain the standards of skill and knowledge required for their qualification.

As a supervisor, you are also responsible for the safety of the apprentice or trainee, as well as supporting them to gain skills.

What is supervision?

Supervision is the oversight and coordination of on-the-job training provided to an apprentice or trainee engaged under a Training Contract.

Apprentices and trainees need varying levels and types of supervision as they acquire skills and gain confidence in the workplace.

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF WORKPLACE SUPERVISION:

Direct supervision – Direct supervision is the default type of supervision and must be maintained during the training of a particular skill until the apprentice or trainee has demonstrated competence in that skill and can perform that skill safely. Further information on when to use different types of supervision is provided in the Supervision Guidance Note.

Indirect supervision – Intermittent monitoring and oversight of the apprentice or trainee at a frequency assessed as safe and appropriate for them at the time. Supervisor stays near the apprentice or trainee.

Broad supervision – The supervisor is not always near the learner. Provides for quality checking of completed tasks and supervision of overall performance.

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Some apprentices or trainees will be in greater need of direct supervision and others less so. The time required to progress from direct supervision to indirect and broad supervision will vary from worker to worker.

What does a supervisor do?

A supervisor acts as a role model and coach for apprentices and trainees and plays an important role in building a positive workplace culture that motivates, inspires and contributes to the success of a business.

A supervisor must have appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skill and be a fit and proper person to supervise the training.

The employer remains responsible for the quality of the on-the-job training and for ensuring the people they nominate as supervisors are suitable and appropriate to oversee and coordinate the training of an apprentice or trainee.

This fact sheet contains information from Apprenticeships Victoria's Supervision Guidance Note, which can be found on the Apprenticeships Victoria website: www.apprenticeships.vic.gov.au.



What is effective supervision?

Effective workplace supervision is critical to your apprentice or trainee's success.

THERE ARE 7 STEPS TO EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION:



1. Explain the big picture

- People learn best when they understand context and why doing something in a certain way is important.
- Explain the task, its purpose and any key requirements before you begin, including any safety considerations.



2. Take it step-by-step

- Break down the task into manageable chunks or components.
- Use clear, simple language and assume no prior knowledge. Ask your learner to repeat the instructions to confirm understanding.
- If appropriate, you may refer to any written procedures, diagrams, signs or flow charts that are used or available in the workplace that summarise the steps involved, highlight safety issues and provide visual cues.



3. Demonstrate

- Carefully show your learner how to correctly do the task and what an acceptable standard or outcome looks like.
- Ask the learner if they are clear about what will be assessed by the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and how they should seek information from the RTO if they are unsure.



4. Practice makes perfect

- Allow time for your learner to practice their new skills. Spaced repetition of skills will build competence. Watch, coach and be patient.
- Provided safety is not compromised and the job is ultimately completed to standard, there may be different ways to perform the task. Effective supervisors may allow their learner to perform the task in their own way, where appropriate.
- Be prepared for skills to build over time.



5. Provide feedback

- Ensure your feedback is provided in a positive and constructive manner, even if mistakes are made along the way.
- Never belittle or ridicule your apprentice or trainee – and remember what you say is only a small part of what is communicated. Your body language and tone of voice send a powerful message to the learner and also to others in the workplace.



6. Advise

- Make sure to advise the learner of their progress in a positive and constructive way.
- Advise the RTO of your view of the learner's progress when requested to confirm competency. Update your own supervision records accordingly.



7. Engage with the learner

- Ask what specifically is being done at the RTO so there can be, where possible, consistent learning and reinforcement of the skills and knowledge learned on and off the job.