

A young woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink waitress uniform with a white collar and a white headband, is smiling and looking to her right. She is holding a black tray with two glasses of iced soda with straws. The background is a blurred green outdoor setting.

# PART-TIME *rules*

Some rules are NOT meant to be broken! Here are the ones you need to know before scoring an after-school job.

## CALLING IN SICK

**What's OK:** Everyone's bound to feel under the weather at some stage and your boss (and colleagues) would rather you stayed home than spread your germs around the workplace. Career coach Greg Dixon (**careerbuilders.com.au**) says if you know you're too sick to go to work, get in touch with your boss ASAP – not after you should have clocked on. "Always ring, even if texting is more convenient," he explains. "It looks like you're not trying to get out of the conversation and shows you've put in some effort." If they don't answer, a voicemail message is fine, just make sure your boss knows they're welcome to call you back if need be.

**What's not OK:** Apart from the "no texting in sick" rule, lay off Facebook and Insta for the day too. "It's definitely not a good idea to post pics of you enjoying your sick day on social media because chances are you're friends with someone at work and you'll lose your boss's trust," says Greg. Also, don't forget you can be asked for proof that you were sick so never tell a porky. "You might need to hand in a medical certificate, so make sure you get one from your doctor."

## GETTING PAID

**What's OK:** Before you start your job, you should know exactly how much you'll be getting paid. Don't be afraid to ask 'cos you want to make sure you don't get ripped off. "The best way to check you're being paid the right amount is to head to **fairwork.gov.au** and click on the 'Awards' tab," says Emma Bradford, assistant director at the Fair Work Ombudsman. An award is a legal document that outlines the minimum wages for an industry. "You must be paid for all the hours you work, including any trial shifts, late nights, public holidays and weekends," adds Emma. "Check what breaks you're entitled to. Most employees get an unpaid 30-minute break for every five hours of work."

**What's not OK:** "You should never have your pay docked for any reason, unless it's required by law or you've agreed to it in writing. If you're under 18, your parents have to agree to it too," says Emma. That means if you make a mistake, like forgetting to add something to a customer's bill, your boss can't take it out of your wages. "If your pay gets docked for any reason, bring it up with

your manager and politely ask them to fix it up," Emma suggests. "If you're still having trouble resolving the issue, contact Fair Work for free advice."

## YOUR UNIFORM

**What's OK:** There are no specific laws saying what you can and can't wear to work. "Some people wear sandwich boards or chicken suits at work and that's totally normal for their job description," says Emma. "Each workplace will have its own dress code and uniform policy, so make sure you're comfortable with it before you start at your job."

**What's not OK:** Recently, a popular Australian retail chain asked their employees to wear badges with "I Love Sex" printed on them. Not exactly something most of us would like to walk around wearing! The employees complained to Fair Work and the badges were removed. Emma says this is a good example of an employee's right to refuse to wear anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or discriminated against. "If you're asked to wear something because you're a girl or because of your ethnicity, that should set off alarm bells to signal that you're heading into iffy uniform territory," she explains. "If you feel uncomfortable, talk to your boss about your issues, or call Fair Work and they'll fill you in on your rights."

## NEW JOB CHECKLIST

Employment lawyer Phil Hayward from Haywards Solicitors (**haywards.com.au**) says this list of tips will get you off to a good start:

- Complete and hand in a tax file number declaration form and superannuation form (your employer should provide these forms).
- Keep a diary of your work hours to check against your pay slip.
- File your pay slips and anything else work-related in a safe place, so you have a record of everything in case you ever need it.
- Don't ever sign anything that you don't agree with.
- Fill out the Fair Work employment checklist to make sure you've got all the info necessary to start your new job. Go to **fairwork.gov.au** and search "my employment checklist".

## THE SERIOUS STUFF

### WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

According to a recent study\* 33 percent of women have been sexually harassed at work, with young women being the most vulnerable demographic. Sam, a 16-year-old employee, experienced this when a co-worker started commenting on her "nice legs". This behaviour is inappropriate. "He would say things that would make me go bright red in front of customers. Eventually it got too much, so I quit," says Sam. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, Sam's experience is a classic case of sexual harassment, which is defined as any unwelcome behaviour that makes a person feel uncomfortable, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment includes inappropriate touching or hugging, rude jokes or text messages, and hanging offensive posters. So while a comment might not seem like a big deal, if it makes you feel uncomfortable, say something!

### WHAT IS WORKPLACE BULLYING EXACTLY?

According to WorkCover NSW, bullying is defined as any activity that's unwanted, inappropriate, aggressive or unreasonable. It can be done verbally, physically or in writing. Each state has its own WorkCover organisation to deal with bullying, so check out your state's WorkCover website for more info.

### SO WHAT IF IT HAPPENS TO ME?

Psychologist Elizabeth Seeley-Wait (**thechildrenspsychologyclinic.com.au**) gives us tips on how to handle bullying or harassment sites:

- Tell the offender how their behaviour makes you feel and ask them to stop.
- Document all conversations you have with the offender. Jot down dates and specifics about each incident, and keep your notes filed as a record.
- Set up a meeting with your boss and take the notes you've made. Your employer should make moves to deal according to their workplace policy.
- Contact WorkCover, Fair Work Australia or the Australian Human Rights Commission (1300 856 419). For more support, head to **ReachOut.com**.