



# Module: Understanding Employment Basics

This module covers building a foundational understanding of employment, including exploring personal views on employment, understanding employment standards, and knowing workplace rights.

# About CanWork BC

CanWork BC aims to make it easier for youth with disabilities ages to 15 to 30 years old to find and keep employment. There are a series of tools and resources for youth, employers, service providers, educators, and caregivers.

CanAssist at the University of Victoria, with the support of the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, wrote the Provincial Employment Strategy for Youth with Disabilities (ESYD). This strategy informed the tools and resources.

## The Youth Tool

The CanWork BC youth tool is available as an interactive online platform at [portal.canworkbc.ca](https://portal.canworkbc.ca) and through PDF workbooks such as this one. There are five dimensions of content available.

For the full PDF workbook content and accompanying facilitator guides, as well as other CanWork BC tools and resources, go to [canworkbc.ca](https://canworkbc.ca).

# Introduction

This module has three sections to help you build your understanding of employment navigation. You'll explore:

- How work fits into your life and why it's important.
- The many benefits of having a job.
- Different views on employment and how they shape your career journey.

Each section will take around 15-30 minutes to complete, and you're welcome to take breaks in between.

Each section has activities that connect employment navigation to your own life to make sure this is useful for you. Be prepared to think about and record your answers in whatever way works best. That could be writing your answers in this workbook or using a different format that works for you like voice recording or typing in a notes app.

At the end of the module, you'll have the chance to put what you've learned into practice with reflection questions. Let's get started!

# Section 1: Exploring Views on Employment

Understanding the reasons for working can help you make better decisions about your future. Knowing why work matters in your life can motivate you to pursue meaningful opportunities and help you grow as a person.

**In this section, we'll cover:**

- How work fits into your life and why it's important.
- The many benefits of having a job.
- Different views on employment and how they shape your career journey.

By the end of this section, you'll have a better understanding of why work matters to you and how to approach your career path with confidence.

## Engage and Explore

### Reasons for Working

People work for many reasons and understanding your reasons can help you find the right job. It's important to remember that your reasons for working can change over time and may be different from others.

Here are some common reasons:

- **Financial stability:** Most people work to earn money to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and clothing. Think about how much you need to support your lifestyle.
- **Personal fulfillment:** Many individuals find joy in what they do. Working in a job that aligns with your passions can make you feel satisfied and proud.
- **Social interaction:** Work can be a great way to meet new people and build relationships. If you enjoy teamwork or making friends, consider jobs that offer social opportunities.
- **Skill development:** A job can help you learn new skills and gain experience. This is especially important if you want to grow in your career or explore different types of work.

## Benefits of Employment

Having a job comes with many benefits. Here are some key advantages to consider:

- **Financial independence:** Earning money allows you to choose how to spend and save.
- **Health insurance and benefits:** Many employers offer health insurance and other benefits, like paid time off or retirement plans, which can improve your quality of life.

- **A sense of purpose:** Working can give you a sense of purpose and routine. It helps you feel productive and can improve your self-esteem.
- **Networking opportunities:** A job can help you connect with others in your industry, which may lead to new and exciting future opportunities

## Personal Views on Work

Your personal views on work play an important role in shaping your career choices and overall job satisfaction. Knowing how you see work can help you choose a career that matches what is important to you.

- **Cultural and personal influences:** Your background, including your culture, gender, and family, shapes your view of work. Think about how these factors influence your career goals and work-life balance. For example, some cultures may prioritize family over individual career goals.
- **What work means to you:** Consider what work means to you. Is it only about earning a paycheck, or does it hold deeper meaning in your life? Knowing the value you place on work can guide your decisions in finding a fulfilling job.
- **Looking back on past jobs:** Reflect on your feelings about your current or past jobs. Think about the parts you enjoyed and those you found challenging. This evaluation can provide

valuable insights into the types of roles that may bring you joy and fulfillment in the future.

### **Tips For Making Your Work Purposeful**

- **Identify your values:** Understand what is most important to you in a job, whether it's helping others, being creative, or having job security. Know that your values might be different from others and that's okay.
- **Explore different areas:** Be open to trying different jobs or internships. Each experience can teach you something valuable about what you enjoy and what you don't.
- **Engage in conversations:** Discuss your thoughts and experiences with friends, family, or mentors. Their insights and advice can offer different perspectives and help clarify your views.
- **Set goals for your career:** Consider what you want to achieve in your professional life. Setting short-term and long-term goals can help you stay motivated and focused on your career journey.

# Make it Personal

## Exploring Your Beliefs About Work

Reflect on your thoughts, beliefs, and experiences related to work and employment. Writing down your answers can help you understand your career goals better. You can write your responses on paper or type them in a document, whichever works best for you.

Below are some questions to guide your reflection. Take your time and think about your answers.

### 1. What does work mean to you?

Think about how you define work in your life. Is it just a way to earn a paycheck, or does it have a deeper meaning for you?

- ***For example, "For me, work is a way to contribute to my community and feel a sense of accomplishment."***



## 2. What values do you want in a job?

Consider what matters most to you in a work environment. Do you value creativity, teamwork, job security, or helping others?

- *For example, "I value a supportive work culture where teamwork is encouraged, and everyone can share ideas."*

## 3. How have past jobs shaped your views on work?

Reflect on your previous job experiences. What did you like or dislike, and how did those experiences change how you think about work?

- *For example, "In my last job, I appreciated the flexibility but felt overwhelmed by my manager's lack of communication."*

#### 4. What are your career goals?

Think about your short-term and long-term career goals. How do your values and experiences influence these goals?

- *For example, "I hope to find a job where I can use my design skills to create products that help people."*

#### 5. What kind of work-life balance do you like to have?

Consider how much time you want to dedicate to work versus personal life. What does a balanced life look like for you?

- *For example, "I want a job that allows me to work from home a few days a week so I can spend more time with my family."*

## Section 2: Understanding Employment Standards

Understanding workplace standards means knowing the rules for fair pay, safe conditions, and reasonable work hours. It helps you feel confident, protects your rights, and helps you make informed career decisions in a supportive environment.

### **In this section, we'll cover:**

- Different types of jobs and what a fair salary means.
- What a safe workplace looks like.
- Where to get help if workplace standards aren't being met.

By the end of this section, you'll have a better understanding of your rights in the workplace and how to make sure you're treated fairly in any job you pursue.

## Engage and Explore

### **Types of Work**

Choosing the right type of work can greatly impact your career satisfaction. Whether you're starting or changing careers, knowing your options can help you make better decisions.

Let's look at some common types of work you might consider in British Columbia. Each type has benefits and challenges. For a full

list of job types, you can visit the WorkBC site at [workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers/types-employment-bc](https://workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers/types-employment-bc).

- **Full-time work:** This usually means working 30 hours or more each week at your primary job.
  - Advantages: You often have job security, a steady income, benefits, and a sense of belonging to a team.
  - Disadvantages: There can be less flexibility and control over your schedule.
- **Part-time work:** Part-time jobs usually involve working fewer than 30 hours a week.
  - Advantages: You may have job security and some benefits, along with better work-life balance.
  - Disadvantages: Your schedule might change weekly, making it hard to coordinate with other jobs.
- **Contract work:** In contract work, you are hired for a specific period to complete a job.
  - Advantages: You can experience different types of work and have more independence and flexibility.
  - Disadvantages: There may be gaps between contracts, leading to unpredictable income and no benefits.
- **On-call work:** On-call work means you work only when needed, often with little notice.

- Advantages: You can stay active in the workforce and maintain your skills. This may lead to more regular work.
- Disadvantages: Your income can be unpredictable, and it may be hard to schedule other commitments.
- **Telecommuting:** Telecommuting means working from home or another location instead of the employer's office.
  - Advantages: You can set your schedule, avoid traveling to work, and have fewer interruptions.
  - Disadvantages: It can be challenging to stay focused at home, and you might feel less connected to coworkers.

## Fair Wages

Fair wages make sure you're paid fairly for your work. Your employer should pay you at least **twice a month**, with no more than 16 days between payments. Check out some of the key rules about pay below to better understand your rights.

- **Minimum pay**

As of June 2024, the minimum wage in BC is \$17.40 per hour. You should earn at least this much for any job you do. Check the BC Employment Standards site for updates:

  - [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/wages/minimum-wage](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/wages/minimum-wage)

- **Overtime pay**

You might get paid extra for working more than your regular hours. How much extra you get paid depends on your job and work agreement. Check out the BC Employment Standards site for more information:

- [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/hours/overtime-pay](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/hours/overtime-pay)

- **Statutory holiday pay**

You may be eligible for pay on statutory holidays such as Canada Day and Labour Day. Whether or not you qualify, how much you get paid, and if you work on those days depends on your job and work agreement. Check out the BC Employment Standards site for more information:

- [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/statutory-holidays/qualify-for-statutory-holiday-pay](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/statutory-holidays/qualify-for-statutory-holiday-pay)

## **Workplace Safety**

Every job should provide a safe environment for both employers and employees. In British Columbia, WorkSafeBC creates rules to keep workers safe at their jobs. Workers can report any unsafe conditions, injuries, or illnesses they experience on the job.

- **Reporting Unsafe Work**

- *Step 1:* If your workplace feels unsafe, report it to your employer or supervisor right away.

- *Step 2:* If the issue isn't fixed or you still feel unsafe, report it online through the link below or by phone at 604-276-3100.
    - [worksafebc.com/en/claims/report-workplace-injury-illness](https://worksafebc.com/en/claims/report-workplace-injury-illness)
  - You have the right to refuse unsafe work until it's made safe. Workers are protected from punishment or discrimination for refusing unsafe work.
- **Reporting Workplace Injury or Disease**
    - *Step 1:* Tell your employer or supervision as soon as possible if you're hurt or sick because of your job.
    - *Step 2:* Report your workplace-related injury or disease online as soon as possible:
      - [worksafebc.com/en/claims/report-workplace-injury-illness](https://worksafebc.com/en/claims/report-workplace-injury-illness)
    - You may be eligible for wage-loss benefits if you miss work. This coverage helps you during recovery by providing compensation for lost income.

## Getting Help

If you're having issues such as unfair pay, mistreatment, or other workplace concerns, start by talking to your employer. If the problem isn't solved and you need more help, contact:

- [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/contact-us](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/contact-us)

- [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/complaint-process/submit-a-complaint](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/complaint-process/submit-a-complaint)

## **Make it Personal**

### **Employment Standards Scenarios**

In this activity, you will explore three different scenarios related to employment standards.

Read each scenario and take a moment to think about how you would respond. Write down the possible outcomes based on the action you think you could take. If you need help check out the example answers at the end of the section.

#### **Scenario 1**

Imagine you accidentally cut your hand while preparing food in the kitchen. What action would you take? What do you think would happen as a result?



## Scenario 2

Imagine you've been working part-time at a café for a few months. You check your pay stubs and realize your hourly wage is below the minimum wage in BC. What would you do? What do you think would happen as a result?

### Scenario 3

Imagine you're asked to lift a heavy box that you know is beyond your physical limits. What would you do? What do you think would happen?

## Employment Standards Scenarios Example Answers

### Scenario 1

- **What you could do:** You inform your employer about the injury and follow their instructions to report it to WorkSafeBC.
- **What might happen:** Your employer helps you file a report, and you receive medical care and information on how to claim wage-loss benefits while you recover.

### Scenario 2

- **What you could do:** You decide to talk to your manager about the pay problem.
- **What might happen:** Your manager admits there was a mistake and fixes your pay to meet the minimum wage. If your manager refuses to correct the issue, you can report the issue to the Government of BC to get the pay you deserve:
  - [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/complaint-process/submit-a-complaint](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/complaint-process/submit-a-complaint)

### Scenario 3

- **What you could do:** You politely refuse to lift the box, explaining your concern about potential injury.

- **What might happen:** Your supervisor respects your decision and arranges for another employee to help so that you don't put yourself at risk.

## Section 3: Defining Employment Rights

Employment rights are legal protections that ensure fair treatment at work. They help protect you from discrimination and unsafe conditions. Knowing your rights boosts your confidence, helps you recognize unfair treatment, and guides you on what to do if your rights are not respected, giving you peace of mind.

**In this section, we'll cover:**

- Your right to reasonable accommodations.
- Protection against discrimination.
- Where to go for additional help if your rights are not respected

By the end of this section, you'll have a better understanding of your employment rights, how to protect them, and where to look for help if necessary.

### Engage and Explore

#### Right to Reasonable Accommodations

Your right to reasonable accommodations means employers must adjust your work if you have a disability or need extra support.

Employers should offer these accommodations if they don't create too much difficulty for them. Look at the key points below to understand how to navigate this right effectively.

- **Collaborate with your employer**

Work with your employer and union (if applicable) to find the right accommodation. Share the key details about your needs.

- **Accept reasonable options**

The accommodation offered might be different from what you wanted, but if it helps you do your job, it is considered reasonable.

- **Communicate openly**

Keep in touch with your employer about your accommodation needs. If your situation changes (like new job duties or technology), let them know if your current accommodation needs to be updated.

- **Know your rights**

It's normal to feel unsure about asking for accommodations because of worries about how others might see you. Remember, asking for accommodations is your right and does not affect your abilities or performance.

## **Protection Against Unfair Treatment**

You should not face unfair treatment at work, such as discrimination based on race, gender, disability, or other personal traits. Let's explore how to recognize unfair treatment when it happens and what to do if you experience it.

- **How to spot unfair treatment**
  - **Unequal treatment:** This is being treated differently from coworkers without a job-related reason. For example, it could be unfair treatment if your coworkers get more training opportunities than you.
  - **Harassment:** This is unwanted behavior related to your identity that makes the workplace uncomfortable. For example, if someone usually makes jokes about your sexual orientation this can create a hostile work environment.
- **What to do if treated unfairly**
  - **Document everything:** Keep a written record of incidents you believe are unfair or discriminatory. Note the dates, times, and details of what happened.
  - **Report it:** Talk to your supervisor or a Human Resources representative about the issue.
  - **Seek support:** Contact organizations for advice on workers' rights. For example, the BC Human Rights Clinic provides free legal services to people facing workplace discrimination and can help you understand your rights. Learn more:
    - [bchrc.net/](https://bchrc.net/)

## Understanding Equal Pay

Employers are not allowed to pay different wages based on factors such as gender, race, or disability. This is protected under the BC Human Rights Code in BC. Learn more:

- [bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00\\_96210\\_01#section12](https://bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96210_01#section12)

Here are some key steps to ensure you're being paid fairly:

- **Research salaries:** Check the salary for similar jobs in your area to understand what others in the same role are being paid.
- **Ask for fair pay:** When negotiating your salary, be clear about your skills and experience. Refer to what others in similar positions earn to make sure you receive a fair wage.

### Where to Find Help and Support

If you feel your employment rights aren't being respected, here are some key resources in British Columbia:

- **BC Human Rights Code:** Protects your right to fair treatment.
  - [bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96210\\_01](https://bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96210_01)
- **BC Human Rights Clinic:** Offers free **legal advice** on workplace discrimination.
  - [bchrc.net](https://bchrc.net)
- **Human Rights Tribunal:** Allows you to file a complaint if you've faced discrimination.
  - [bchrt.bc.ca](https://bchrt.bc.ca)



# Make it Personal

## Employment Rights Scenarios

Now that you've learned about your employment rights, let's look at some real-life situations to help you understand how to apply them. In this activity, you will explore different workplace issues.

Read each scenario and think about how you would respond. Based on the actions you think you would take, write down possible outcomes. If you need help check out the example answers at the end of the section.

### Scenario 1

A coworker repeatedly jokes about your accent, making you uncomfortable at work. What would you do? What do you think would happen?

## Scenario 2

You notice a coworker is getting more training opportunities, even though you have similar roles. You feel this is unfair. What would you do? What do you think would happen?

### Scenario 3

You've talked to your manager about not being chosen for promotions, but your male coworkers keep getting promoted. You start to wonder if this is because you are a woman. What would you do? What do you think would happen?

## Employment Rights Scenarios Example Answers

### Scenario 1

- **What you could do:** You politely tell your coworker how the jokes make you feel and ask them to stop. If they continue, you document the incidents and speak to your manager.
- **What might happen:** Your coworker stops the jokes after your conversation. If they didn't, your manager would address the issue, ensuring a more comfortable work environment for you.

### Scenario 2

- **What you could do:** You talk to your manager, asking for more training opportunities and explaining how you feel left out.
- **What might happen:** Your manager agrees to provide equal training opportunities and reviews the training process for fairness.

### Scenario 3

- **What you could do:** You check the BC Human Rights Code to see if this is discrimination.
  - [bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00\\_96210\\_01#section13](https://bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96210_01#section13)
- If you're still unsure, you contact the BC Human Rights Clinic for legal advice.
  - [bchrc.net](https://bchrc.net)

- **What might happen:** If you find out that you're experiencing discrimination, the clinic helps you understand how to file a complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal, giving you a way to address the issue.
  - [bchrt.bc.ca](https://bchrt.bc.ca)

## Reflect and Connect

Great work! We've covered a lot in this module including:

- Understand why work is important and how it aligns with your values and goals.
- Learn about key employment standards, like fair wages and workplace safety.
- Identify your employment rights, including accommodations and protection against discrimination.

Take a moment to think about the questions below and how they relate to your experiences. Think of this as a reflective journal for yourself, which you can refer to later.

Happy reflecting!

**Which type of work would make you happiest? Why?**

**How would you handle a situation where you believe you were not paid correctly?**

**How can you ensure your safety at work every day?**

**Have you ever experienced or witnessed unfair treatment at work? How did you handle it?**

**What specific accommodations do you think would help you perform better at work?**



# Keep Going

There is so much more to learn! Access the full CanWork BC content and learn more about the program at **[canworkbc.ca](https://canworkbc.ca)**.

Canada



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

This program is funded by the Government of Canada  
and the Province of British Columbia.