

GETTING INTO THE TRADES

Resume Notes & Tips for Apprentices and Career Changers

Employers get plenty of applications from people who "want to get into a trade". The ones who get a call back show they have already taken steps on their own. Tick off as many of these as you can before applying.

1. White Card (Construction Induction Card)

- **Legally required** to work on any construction site in Australia. No White Card, no site access.
- About one day (6 hours), usually \$100–\$200. Some councils and youth services run it free, so ask first. Bring valid photo ID.
- **Victoria:** must be done **face-to-face** with a WorkSafe Victoria approved provider. Online courses are not accepted. Other states differ, so check your state regulator.
- Recognised in every state. List it on your resume with the state and card number.

2. Pre-apprenticeship (if there is one for your trade)

- A short TAFE course (Certificate II, usually 3–6 months). **Many employers prefer applicants who have done one.** It shows commitment, basic tool and safety skills, and that you can handle trade school.
- **Victoria:** Free TAFE covers pre-apprenticeships in building and construction, electrotechnology, plumbing, engineering, automotive and more. Material fees still apply. Other states offer Fee-Free or subsidised TAFE places.

3. Driver licence – manual if you can

- Sites start early (6:30–7am), change often and can be outside public transport. Apprentices also do supply runs.
- **Many work utes and trucks are manual.** In several states, passing your test in an automatic puts an automatic-only condition on your P plates, which can stop you driving the work vehicle. Check with your state road authority (e.g. VicRoads).
- No licence yet? Say so honestly and explain how you will get to work on time.

4. The right clothing and PPE

- **Minimum:** steel or composite cap safety boots (AS/NZS 2210.3), long work pants, long-sleeve hi-vis shirt.
- **Good to have:** hard hat, safety glasses, earplugs, gloves, sunscreen, brim hat and a big water bottle.
- Turn up to trial days and site visits in clean work gear. Sneakers can get you sent home.

5. Extra tickets that help

First Aid & CPR (HLTAID011/HLTAID009), Working at Heights, EWP (Yellow Card), Forklift, Test and Tag, Working with Children Check. Only do the ones that suit your trade.

Writing your resume

- **One page is ideal**, two at most. Keep it clear, honest and easy to scan.
- **Put licences and tickets near the top.** White Card, licence and pre-apprenticeship are what trade employers look for first.
- **Back up every claim with proof:** "Reliable – never missed a shift in 2 years" beats "Reliable".
- **Tailor the career objective** to name the trade and company each time.
- Use a professional email, set up a clear voicemail, and answer unknown numbers politely. Employers call.
- No photo, age or marital status needed. Get someone to proofread, then save it as a PDF, e.g. "Jordan Smith – Resume.pdf".

Changing careers?

- **Sell your transferable skills.** Hospitality = working fast under pressure and early starts. Warehousing = manual handling, forklift, reading orders. Retail = customer service. Labouring = site experience and tool use.
- Adult apprentices cost more in wages, so show what you bring: maturity, reliability, licence and car, and a clear plan to finish.
- Government incentives may be available for apprentices and employers in priority trades. Check apprenticeships.gov.au before quoting figures.

Cover letter – keep it to 4 short paragraphs

1. **Opening:** the apprenticeship you want, how you heard about it, and a one-line hook about you.
2. **Why this trade and company:** a genuine reason, the steps you have already taken, and something specific about the business.
3. **What you bring:** two or three strengths with proof, plus your licence and transport.
4. **Close:** offer a trial day, give your number and say when you will follow up.

Address it to a real person. Call the business and ask who to send it to.

Finding work and trial days

- **Look beyond job ads:** Group Training Organisations, Apprenticeship Connect Australia providers, your TAFE teachers, industry associations and word of mouth.
- **Call small businesses directly** mid-morning: "Hi, I'm [name]. I'm looking for a [trade] apprenticeship. I've got my White Card and a manual licence and I'm happy to do a trial day. Could I send you my resume?"
- **Trial days:** arrive early in full gear with lunch and water, keep your phone away, ask questions and keep busy. Unpaid trials should only be as long as needed to show your skills (see fairwork.gov.au).
- **Follow up** once after a week. If you miss out, ask for feedback and whether you can check back later.

Created by Howzit Enterprises. This guide was developed with advice from people experienced in human resources, trade employers and businesses. AI was used to help research and prepare this guide. Information is current as of September 2026 and is general guidance only. Rules, courses, fees and incentives change and differ between states, so always check with the relevant official organisation.

[YOUR FULL NAME]

[Mobile] | [Email] | [Suburb, State]

CAREER OBJECTIVE

[2–3 sentences: the apprenticeship you want, with which company, and what you offer. E.g. "Reliable and hands-on [school leaver / career changer] seeking a [trade] apprenticeship with [Company Name]..."]

LICENCES & TICKETS

- Construction Induction (White Card) – [State], No. [number]
- Driver licence – [Full / Provisional], [manual / automatic], [own reliable vehicle]
- [First Aid HLTAID011 – Month Year] [Other tickets]

TRADE TRAINING

[Course name, e.g. Certificate II in Building and Construction (Pre-apprenticeship)] [Year]

[Training provider, Campus]

- [Key thing you learned, built or tools you used safely]

WORK EXPERIENCE

[Job Title] – [Employer] [Month Year] – [Month Year]

[Suburb, State] | [Full-time / Part-time / Casual]

- [What you did – start with an action word: Operated, Assisted, Built, Maintained]
- [Something that shows reliability, safety or trust]

[Job Title] – [Employer] [Month Year] – [Month Year]

[Suburb, State] | [Full-time / Part-time / Casual]

- [What you did]

KEY SKILLS

- [Skill + proof, e.g. "Safe use of hand and power tools – drills, saws, grinders"]
- [Skill + proof, e.g. "Punctual and reliable – never late in 2 years at [Employer]"]
- [Skill + proof, e.g. "Good with numbers – measuring and calculating materials"]

EDUCATION

[Highest level, e.g. VCE / HSC / QCE / Year 10] – [School name] [Year]

[Relevant subjects: Maths, Design & Technology, Woodwork, Metalwork, Systems Engineering]

REFEREES

[Referee name] – [Job title], [Company] | [Phone]

[Referee name] – [Job title], [Company] | [Phone]

JORDAN SMITH

0400 000 000 | jordan.smith@email.com | Sunshine, VIC

ABOUT ME

I finished Year 12 last year and have just completed my electrical pre-apprenticeship. I've wanted to be a sparky since I helped my uncle rewire his shed, and I'm now looking for a first-year apprenticeship where I can learn the trade properly and see it through to getting my licence.

LICENCES & TICKETS

- White Card (Construction Induction) – VIC, No. 0000000
- P plate driver licence (manual) – I have my own car and can get to any site
- First Aid (HLTAID011) and CPR (HLTAID009) – March 2026
- Working at Heights (RIIWHS204E) – April 2026

TRADE TRAINING

Certificate II in Electrotechnology (Pre-vocational)

Feb – Jun 2026

Victoria University, Sunshine Campus | Completed with all units competent

- Basic electrical theory, AS/NZS 3000 introduction, safe isolation and workshop procedures
- Practical wiring and basic installation using drills, cable strippers, crimpers and multimeters

WORK EXPERIENCE

Trade Counter Assistant – Sunshine Electrical Wholesale

Jul 2026 – Present

Sunshine, VIC | Casual, around 20 hours a week

- Pick and pack orders for electricians, so I'm learning cable sizes, fittings and what gear gets used on the job
- Open up at 6:30am and take phone orders from tradies

Kitchen Hand – The Corner Café

Feb 2024 – Jun 2026

Footscray, VIC | Casual, weekends

- Worked 6am weekend starts for over two years and never missed a shift

Work Experience – ABC Electrical Services

2 weeks, 2025

Sunshine, VIC | Through school

- Helped the team on house jobs: pulling cable, carrying gear and cleaning up at the end of the day

SKILLS

- Good with numbers – I enjoyed Maths and Physics and I'm confident measuring and working things out
- Reliable – I turn up early and I've never been late to a shift
- Good with my hands – I work on my own car and built my own gaming PC

EDUCATION

Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) – Sunshine College

2025

Year 12 completed. Subjects included General Maths, Physics, Systems Engineering and VET Electrotechnology.

INTERESTS

Local footy (I play for Sunshine Heights), working on my car, and fishing with my dad.

REFEREES

Dave Nguyen – Licensed Electrician, ABC Electrical Services | 0400 222 222

Maria Lopez – Owner, The Corner Café | 0400 111 111

JORDAN SMITH

0400 000 000 | jordan.smith@email.com | Sunshine, VIC

29 September 2026

Mark Thompson
Director
Brightline Electrical
Sunshine West, VIC

Re: First-Year Electrical Apprenticeship

Dear Mark,

I saw your ad on SEEK for a first-year electrical apprentice and I'd really like to be considered. I finished Year 12 at Sunshine College last year, and in June I completed my Certificate II in Electrotechnology pre-apprenticeship at Victoria University.

I got into electrical work a couple of years ago when I helped my uncle, who's a sparky, rewire his shed. I liked that you had to think it through and get it right, and my two weeks of work experience with ABC Electrical Services made me sure this was what I wanted to do. Since then I've done my White Card, First Aid and Working at Heights, and I've started working at an electrical wholesaler, where I'm learning the gear electricians use every day. A few of your customers come through our counter and they always speak well of your team, which is a big part of why I'm applying to you.

I'm reliable and I take my work seriously. I worked 6am weekend shifts at a café for over two years without missing one. I enjoyed Maths and Physics at school, so I'm looking forward to trade school rather than dreading it. I also drive a manual and have my own car, so early starts and supply runs aren't a problem.

Thanks for taking the time to read my application. I'd be happy to come in for a trial day or meet you on site whenever suits you. You can reach me on 0400 000 000, and I'll give you a call next Tuesday to follow up.

Kind regards,

Jordan Smith