The morning shift

A choose your own adventure resource for young workers

Start your adventure
So glad the lunch rush is over! That was epic!

From the kitchen you can hear the last guests in the café finishing up their meals and the clinks and clanks of dirty coffee cups and plates being stacked in the dishwasher.

You started at this café almost six months ago and you absolutely love it. The crew are fun, the hours are great and, well, you are pretty good at it too.

The morning shift is just about over so it’s time to get stuck into the changeover. That means making sure all the prep work is done for the afternoon shift to come in.

Even though you know the tasks off by heart, you get the changeover checklist from the folder and get started.

The first job is to prep enough tomatoes for the afternoon team to make it through the rest of the day. You get a box of fresh tomatoes from the fridge and take the knife down from the magnetic strip on the back wall. As you go to cut through the first tomato the knife doesn’t even pierce the skin.

This knife is seriously blunt.

House rules mean only the chef can sharpen knives. What do you do?

1. You are a bit intimidated and don’t like to disturb the chef. You use blunt knives at home sometimes – it should be all right and just get started. (Turn to page 2)

2. You head off to find the chef. (Turn to page 3)
Impacts on your career
• You are unable to work for at least six weeks.
• There is no way to tell how the limited movement in your thumb will affect your ability to perform certain tasks in the future.

Impacts on your life
• For the first two weeks you are basically house bound. You probably wouldn’t want to be seen in public with that massive bandage around your arm anyway.
• No physical activity for a minimum of six weeks - which means no nights out dancing with friends!

The blunt knife is really struggling to cut through the skin of the tomato. To compensate, you push down a little harder on the knife. As you pull the knife back, it slips and plunges straight into the webbing between your thumb and index finger.

OMG! You immediately let go of the knife and scream. **Ahhhhh!!!** Within seconds your left hand is covered in blood and you know it’s deep.

Jamie, the chef, comes running over and immediately wraps your hand tightly in a towel. Tears are running down your face and your hand is shaking like crazy.

‘You are going to be all right. Just breathe deeply. We’ll get you to the hospital and get you fixed up,’ Jamie says. It all happens so quickly.

Within half an hour you are sitting with a doctor. ‘The wound needed 22 stitches, and here are antibiotics to stop infection.’

There is a bit of numbness in your thumb, but they did use a local anesthetic.

Two weeks later, the wound is fully closed but the thumb has not regained full feeling. After a visit to the doctor’s office there is more bad news.

‘One of the nerves you hit hasn’t recovered as we expected. With a lot of physiotherapy and daily exercises, you should gain most of the feeling back, but it is unlikely to ever be 100 per cent.’
Jamie is the chef on shift this morning and is still finishing the last orders for lunch.

Can you give me a hand Chef? This knife is really blunt.

Chef replies, ‘I’ll just be a minute.’

By the time you get back to your prep bench Chef is right behind you and happy to sharpen the knife. He’s going a hundred miles an hour and you can tell by watching that it’s a task that he’s had loads of experience with.

‘Did you know it’s more dangerous to use a blunt knife than it is a sharp one? I’ve seen a lot of workers make that mistake and end up almost taking their thumb off!’ Jamie says and hands you the knife.

You still feel a little shy asking for help, but you always learn something.

Thanks Chef. Yeah, I know. A blunt knife can do some serious damage.

With the knife now nice and sharp you can safely and easily finish prepping the tomatoes.

Your supervisor comes over to let you know one of the other workers, Jules, is going to finish the changeover.

‘A delivery of new stock has come in and I’d like you to get it put away in the stock room,’ she says and points to a pile of boxes. ‘Use the trolley and once you’ve done that, you can clock off.’

Sweet! Early knock off here I come!

You are about to make some space in the stock room when you notice a puddle of water on the floor outside the fridge. Do you:

1. **grab the mop and clean it up?** (Turn to page 4)

2. **carry on? You didn’t spill it and Jules will do it as part of changeover.** (Turn to page 5)

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Mopping only takes you a minute and now you can get this stock moved. You have just got to move these boxes and you are done.

The boss did say to use the trolley but these boxes are not particularly heavy. You decide to:

1. carry them into the store room. You’re strong enough and if you get this done you will be out of here for the day!  
   (Turn to page 6)

2. find the trolley to load the boxes onto.  
   (Turn to page 7)

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While you are walking over to the stock, your foot slips making your heart jump and oddly it feels like slow motion as you watch, the floor getting closer and closer. You try and get your arms out in front of you but there is no use.

You hit the floor and there is an intense pain through your right arm, all the way up to your shoulder. You hear a noise, just like a carrot snapping. Instinctively, you cradle your arm, but you don’t even have to look at it to know your wrist is broken. It hurts so much you can’t even cry.

There are people at your side, yelling instructions but you can’t focus. You wish they would just be quiet.

It seems like no time before the ambulance officers are there and asking you a hundred questions. I just want this pain to stop! You snap back.

They get you into the ambulance and off to hospital. X-rays confirm what you already suspected. Your wrist is broken in two places.

Your arm is put in plaster and secured tightly with a sling.

With the help of the doctors, the pain has subsided and they let you go home. Sitting in the quiet of the car as your Mum is driving home, you start crying,

**Why didn't I just clean up that stupid puddle!**

**Impacts on your career**
- The doctor has said at least six weeks off work while you are in the sling. You are going to miss the Responsible Service of Alcohol training and the next one isn’t for six months. You won’t get to serve behind the bar for ages!

**Impacts on your life**
- You were supposed to head to the beach tomorrow with the girls. It’s the last trip of the summer and now you’re going to miss it.
- Next weekend was your first attempt at passing the practical drivers’ test. According to the doctor, now you will have to wait at least two months and rely on Mum or friends to drive you around.

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You stack three boxes up in your arms and head into the storeroom. The boxes are a little heavier than you thought and as you try to negotiate your way towards the shelves you need to juggle them a bit to keep balanced. Out of nowhere a pain shoots up your back and takes your breath away.

It feels like someone has stuck a knife through your lower spine. The boxes fly out of your hands and crash on the floor as Jules runs in to see what’s going on.

The pain is so bad you can hardly talk, but you manage a squeak, My back! She calls an ambulance.

When paramedics arrive it takes an eternity to get onto the stretcher.

‘Don’t rush it love, we can take as long as you need.’

How embarrassing you think to yourself.

After hours of tests, x-rays and waiting around the doctor gives you the diagnosis. ‘You have a serious sprain in your lower back. We'll need to keep you in overnight for observation followed by a minimum of two weeks bed rest. I'll give you some medication to reduce the pain and swelling.’

At the moment, all you can think of is the fact that you have your touch footy finals this weekend and you’re going to miss everything!

**Impacts on your career**
- The doctor has given you at least two weeks off work. That means no shifts and no money.
- A note that you were injured after not following your supervisor’s instructions gets put on your work file.

**Impacts on your life**
- You miss touch footy finals and can’t even watch from the sidelines.
- Bed rest is seriously boring.
- All the physio and follow up appointments are a pain for you, but they are also a strain on family members who need to drive you around.

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The trolley is the best. Not only is it safer than carrying all those boxes, it's easier.

There is no need to work up a sweat at the end of the shift.

It may have taken an extra couple of minutes, but that doesn’t matter. You get that great feeling when you put the last of the boxes away and you have a couple of days off to look forward to!

**Woo hoo!! See ya Jules!**

You clock off and don't even bother changing out of your work clothes because your friend is out front ready to pick you up.

It's time to head home for a nap. You have a big night ahead. You're off to see your fave band! You bought tickets three months ago and the day is finally here!
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For young workers

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Health and safety information for young workers

Young worker injuries and fatalities
Bullying, fatigue, stress, violence
Slips, trips and falls
Hazardous manual tasks
Health and safety in the retail industry

Laws and compliance
Resources and downloads

Telephone services

WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915
Young Workers Advisory Service 1800 232 000
Workplace rights hotline 1300 737 841

For more information on young workers visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au
or call WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915

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