

# Occupations and Workplaces

## Teachers

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## What does a teacher do?

A teacher is a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, prepares lesson plans, and educates students at all levels. Their general tasks may include to:

- Prepare lesson plans, teach students, assign homework, grade tests, and documents progress.
- Carry out the supervisory duties and instructional programs as assigned by the principal.
- Co-operate with the principal and other teachers to establish and maintain a safe environment in the classroom or at the workplace, as well as use consistent disciplinary practices.
- Assist the principal in maintaining co-operation with the community.
- Participate in meetings with students' parents or guardians.

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## What are some health and safety issues for teachers?

There are several potential health and safety hazards associated with teacher's duties, including:

### Biological hazards

- Risk of exposure to blood and infection from others or items.
- Risk of biological hazards such as bacterial, fungi, viruses and other infectious agents such as [hepatitis B](#), [hepatitis C](#), [coronavirus](#), etc.

- Exposure to [mould](#).

#### Chemical hazards

- Injuries from contact with laboratory chemicals, cleaning solutions, plants, or animals.
- Exposure to fumes (e.g., [welding](#)) in technical shops.
- Exposure to gases (e.g., carbon monoxide).
- Handling of flammable, reactive, explosive, or corrosive products, especially in the laboratory.

#### Ergonomic risks

- [Sitting](#) for long hours.
- Standing, bending, stretching and [lifting](#).
- [Repetitive Motion injuries \(RMIs\)](#), including [carpal tunnel syndrome](#).
- [Inadequate lighting](#) (glare, low levels, etc.) which may cause workers to adopt awkward postures.

#### Physical hazards

- [Indoor air quality](#).
- [Noise](#).
- [Temperature](#) (heat and cold stress).
- Exposure to materials such as [asbestos](#) in older buildings.

#### Psychosocial hazards

- Risk for [workplace violence](#) and [bullying](#).
- Working with students who require accommodations or assistance.
- [Internet harassment](#).
- [Workplace stress](#).
- [Fatigue](#).

#### Safety hazards

- Exposure to [moving parts](#) in technical shops.
- [Electrical hazards](#).
- [Fire](#) hazards.
- [Working alone](#).

- Situations that require appropriate [personal protective equipment](#).
  - [Slips, trips, and falls](#).
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## What are some preventive measures for a teacher?

### Biological hazards

- Treat all body substances such as blood and bodily fluids as potentially infectious – use safe work practices for [infection control](#) when cleaning these substances.
- During situations such as the [covid-19 pandemic](#), follow the guidance from your employer, local public health authority, or government.
- [Wash hands](#) regularly, especially before and after working with students and other co-workers to prevent infection.
- Consider immunization against [Hepatitis A](#), Hepatitis B, [influenza](#), MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), and others as appropriate.

### Chemical Hazards

- Follow your training in [WHMIS](#) and safe handling of hazardous products.
- Read and understand the information on the [safety data sheets](#).
- Follow safe work practices.
- Safely store and dispose of products.
- Use a [less harmful product](#) where possible.

### Physical hazards

- Report indoor air quality concerns to your employer, including if you suspect the ventilation system is not working properly.
- Report when there are issues with the lighting in your work area or classroom.
- Ask for assistance in reducing noise levels.

### Psychosocial hazards

- Follow the workplace's workplace violence prevention policy and program.
- Know how to recognize warning signs of workplace violence, and how to report incidents.
- Know and follow any student safety plans that are in place, as appropriate.

### Safety

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- Inspect tools and equipment and make sure they are in good condition. Clean all equipment after each use.
  - Make sure all [sharp equipment](#) is disposed of in a safe manner.
  - [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces.
  - Wear appropriate footwear and keep walking surfaces clean.
  - When necessary, wear appropriate [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#), including appropriate [respirators](#), [masks](#), eye [protection](#), and [gloves](#).
  - Follow [electrical safety](#) measures.
  - Follow precautions for fire safety, including the use of [fire extinguishers](#).
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## What are some good general safe work practices?

Teachers should consider the following safe work practices:

- Practice good [hand washing](#) techniques.
- Practice safe lifting techniques.
- Work safely with equipment, tools, and ladders.
- Follow SDS recommendations when working with products.
- Properly select, use, maintain and store [PPE](#), where appropriate.
- Understand the risks of fatigue.
- Follow your school or organization's prevention policies about violence (general).
- Know what to do when [working alone](#) (general information).

All workers should:

- follow the school's or organization's safety rules.
  - know about WHMIS and SDSs.
  - know your [hazard reporting](#) procedures.
  - follow good [housekeeping](#) procedures.
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