

Student Attendance

Do I have to go to school?

Yes. Victoria school is compulsory until you turn 17.

Missing one day a fortnight is the same as missing 4 whole weeks of school a year.

From Foundation to Year 12 that adds up to 1.5 years of school.

Apart from this, school is better when you attend. Your friends and your teachers notice that you're away and wonder if you're OK.

Why is important that I go to school every day?

Right now, being at school is your most important job. You're building habits that you'll take into adulthood.

While it might not seem obvious, when you come to school you are learning about more than just Maths and English. You're learning all sorts of skills like working in teams and meeting deadlines that will help when you're an adult.

If you can't show up to school every day, how will you learn to show up for work?

Being at school every day also means you are involved in your own learning, interacting with other students and teachers and are a part of environment that is motivating and stimulating.

You can get help from your teachers and friends and won't have to rely on trying to learn things in your own time.

There is also a lot of evidence that shows that young people who attend school more frequently have better outcomes after school too.

This means they earn more money, have better job prospects, are less likely to misuse drugs and alcohol and are generally healthier.

Do I need to let school know if I'm going to be away?

Yes. Your parents need to notify the school of your absence as soon as they can within three days of your absence. If they know you are going to be away, they should try to tell the school before the day or days you are away. The school then decides if the absence is approved or not according to their attendance policy.

If you aren't at school, and the school hasn't heard from your parents, they now have to try and contact them as soon as possible on the day that you're away.

If you're away from school too much and don't have a reasonable excuse like a serious illness, your parents can also get in trouble.

Many schools have their own attendance requirements as well. This means you might pass a subject academically but fail it if you've missed too many classes. This is especially the case with VCE and VCAL.

You need to find out what your school's attendance policy is so you aren't unintentionally getting into trouble.

Are there any good reasons to be away from school?

Basically, no. Unless you are so sick you can't get out of bed or there is an event like a funeral, you should be at school. Every day you are away is a day of classes and social connection you miss out on.

Even medical and health appointments should be made either before or after school or during the school holidays. This includes family holidays. Your parents are encouraged not to plan holidays during the term but to organise these during the school holidays.

If you do have to be away for some reason, your parents need to contact the school and let them know what's going on. Depending on the situation, the school might provide schoolwork for you to complete.

If I'm not at school, what do I miss out on?

You miss out on all the big stuff – class discussions and all the interaction that happens in a classroom, the chance to get help from teachers and the opportunity to practice skills and gain knowledge. Being away means you miss out on the content altogether or that you need to catch up in your time. If all of that isn't enough to convince you to be at school every day, being away also means you also miss out hanging out with your friends. Being away from school a lot can be lonely. It has a big impact on relationships and social connections. Believe it or not, everyone wants you at school and it really is better when you attend.

What if I'm having problems getting to school?

Sometimes getting to school can be about having a good routine. If you find yourself running late or missing school because you're disorganised, try:

- Having a set time to go to bed
- Being really disciplined with technology – turn it off or better yet, leave it out of your room altogether. You can catch up on all the chat and the latest episode of whatever you're watching later on
- Packing your bag the night before
- Having a set time for breakfast
- Planning to meet up with a friend so you can travel to school together.

Sometimes though it can be hard to get to school. You might feel overwhelmed by the work or things might be tough with your friends. Maybe you really dislike a teacher or things at home aren't great. Perhaps you're feeling down or anxious and don't even really know why. Whatever the situation is, staying away from school isn't the answer. There are lots of people who want to help. Try talking to:

- Your parents or another adult family member
- A trusted teacher
- Your year level coordinator
- Wellbeing Coordinator or the school counsellor
- Another trusted adult like your coach