

Teaching

These are the most common injuries to teachers* based on accepted workers' compensation claims.

*Information is for teachers, teacher aides and lecturers in the education sector.

Neck

Low impact repetitive movement, voice strain

11%

Back

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from handling, lifting carrying and bending down to pick up things

16%

Knee

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from kneeling and walking, or from falling or tripping on poor or uneven ground surfaces

10%

Ankle

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from falling or tripping on poor or uneven ground surfaces

9%

8%

Psychological system

Anxiety, depression, work-related stress from work pressures

5%

Shoulder

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from handling, lifting or carrying objects

8%

Hand, fingers and thumb

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from repeated movements or from falling or tripping on poor or uneven ground surfaces

5%

Foot and toes

Muscle and tendon sprains and strains from falling or tripping on poor or uneven ground surfaces

Source: Queensland Employee Injury Database. Data current as at July 2010 and is subject to change over time. Based on accepted workers' compensation claims, excluding commuting claims, between 2000-01 and 2008-09.

Health and safety tips

Employers should undertake a risk management process in order to protect workers by preventing or minimising the risk of injuries in their workplace. Below are some health and safety tips to reduce the risk of injury in teaching. Employers should work with their employees to ensure the most effective solutions are put in place.

Manual tasks	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For work involving hard physical effort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position items as close as possible to where work is done to reduce the physical force needed to lift, carry, move, hold or restrain items. Provide, use and maintain assistive devices such as trolleys, to minimise effort. Make sure flooring is smooth or does not impede the use of wheeled equipment. Purchase smaller and lighter equipment, or divide equipment in to smaller loads (e.g. in smaller boxes for storage and transport). For work involving awkward working positions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise bending and over reaching by storing frequently used items between hip and shoulder height. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in a straight, forward facing position with arms close to the body, not reaching away or overhead. Vary position frequently and don't stand, sit, kneel or squat for long periods. Use a suitable stepladder to hang objects and displays. For work that is highly repetitive or done for long periods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vary work duties periodically or vary working positions (e.g. alternate between standing and sitting activities). Change work practices or obtain equipment to avoid repetitive, prolonged tasks. Make sure all workers have received clear instructions and have been trained to perform the task safely.
Slips, trips and falls	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure working areas are kept clear and tidy. Make sure walkways are adequately lit and clear of clutter. Clean up contaminants and spills on the floor promptly. Ensure regular and adequate cleaning of floors. Maintain indoor floor surfaces in a good order, free from holes or curled carpet edges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain ground condition in outdoor areas (e.g. fill potholes, highlight cracked or raised concrete with paint until it can be repaired). Make sure footwear is suitable for the type of work and work environment (e.g. rooms, gyms, sports grounds, excursions).
Occupational stress	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to improve consultation and communication at work. Provide staff support to do their work (e.g. mentoring, employee assistance program). Provide clearly defined work roles and reporting structures, particularly through times of change. Recognise and reward workers for individual, as well as team accomplishments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement an effective process to replace teachers on leave, professional development etc. Involve staff in decisions about their work and provide opportunities to have as much input and control. Implement issue resolution (grievance) processes for staff and parents. Give staff, parents and students clear information about the school's expectations including enrolment, discipline and transfer procedures.
Occupational violence	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use design or engineering measures to change the physical characteristics of the workplace to reduce the risk. For example, provide secure retreat spaces for workers and students such as for 'lock downs'. Put control measures in place to manage any specific risks associated with students with challenging behaviours, including behaviour management strategies to manage occupational violence from students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change the systems of work or work practices to help reduce risks. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> train workers in aggressive behaviour management, including the recognition and diffusion of potentially volatile situations ensure sufficient number of appropriately trained workers provide for emergency communication provide support systems to workers who report or witness occupational violence regularly and clearly tell the school community that violence in any form will not be tolerated.
Equipment	
Activities/instructions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure lighting is adequate and computer screens are glare-free. Inspect equipment regularly and maintain these in good condition. Repair or dispose of equipment that is damaged or no longer safe to use. Train workers in safe use of equipment and make sure students are properly supervised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure equipment such as guillotines or bandsaws are properly guarded, and guards are in place during use. Make sure shelving is secure and not overloaded. Make sure equipment, such as televisions are secure and will not topple over.