



# Supervising your apprentice or trainee

A guide for workplace supervisors

August 2021

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We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay respect to Country.

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# Leading the way

## Apprentices and trainees are our future.

Without expert guidance from today's professionals, the next generation won't have the knowledge and skills required to sustain industry and meet the demands of the future labour market.

Businesses both large and small have increased their bottom line and enjoyed sustainable growth by providing training to apprentices or trainees.

Many employers agree that taking on an apprentice or trainee goes beyond coaching your learner to gain the targeted skills your business needs.

Your learner will be committed to your company and its long-term goals because they know you're personally invested in their future.

As your business grows, your learner's positive attitude and innovative ideas will invigorate your workplace, boost worker morale and encourage existing staff to rethink old ways.

And, there's nothing more rewarding than helping people achieve their personal goals while working towards your business's goals.

Your influence as a supervisor can't be overstated.

The more support you can provide, the more likely your learner will succeed.

This guide is designed for new supervisors or supervisors looking to gain additional skills.

It's full of practical strategies to help you support your learner grow in your company, become a valuable employee, and ultimately, ensure the health and longevity of your business and industry.



**David Collins PSM**  
**Commissioner for**  
**Vocational Training**

# Apprenticeships and traineeships

## Apprenticeships and traineeships offer workers the opportunity to study, gain practical skills and earn an income while obtaining a nationally recognised qualification.

They can be undertaken by anyone of working age and can be completed full-time, part-time or while at school.

Your organisation will sign a formal Training Contract with your learner who will work and learn under your supervision.

Training Services NSW within the NSW Department of Education administers these contracts.

As part of this contract, you and your learner will choose a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to deliver the formal training.



You can choose from TAFE NSW, an adult or community education provider, a private provider or the learner's high school. In conjunction with the RTO, you'll decide whether your learner's formal training is undertaken in your workplace, in the classroom, online or as a combination of all three.

Your learner will then gain knowledge and develop new skills through a combination of hands-on workplace training and formal study.

After successfully completing their apprenticeship or traineeship, your learner will be issued with a nationally recognised qualification by the RTO and receive a Certificate of Proficiency from the Department of Education.

# Who is involved?



## Employer

The employer recruits an apprentice or trainee like they would any other staff member. Next, they contact an Apprenticeship Network Provider to arrange a Training Contract. As part of this contract, the employer must provide a safe workplace where quality training, practical instruction and learning can occur under relevant award wages and conditions.

The employer may also be a Group Training Organisation (GTO). A GTO recruits learners, pays their wages and places them with a host employer who conducts their workplace training.



## Apprentice or trainee

By signing the Training Contract, your learner agrees to carry out their obligations as your employee while receiving workplace training, engaging in formal training, completing tests and assessments, and obtaining a nationally recognised qualification.



## Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

The RTO delivers your learner's formal training so they can gain a nationally recognised qualification. As part of this process, they develop a Training Plan in consultation with you and your learner, provide you with training support, monitor progress, and assess your learner's competence. When all competencies have been achieved, they issue the qualification.



## Apprenticeship Network Provider (ANP)

ANPs suggest training delivery options, prepare the Training Contract, and explain everyone's rights and responsibilities. They will also advise of any incentives you're entitled to. (See: [www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au](http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au))



## Workplace supervisor

You! Your role is integral to your learner's success. As a coach and mentor, you'll show your learner how to do their job safely and correctly. Following the Training

Plan, you'll organise and record their workplace training, supervise them practising new skills until they're competent, ensure their safety, provide feedback and supply assessment evidence to the RTO.



## Training Services NSW

We're responsible for managing apprenticeships and traineeships in New South Wales. We approve your Training Contract's application and ensure everyone carries out their responsibilities. We also provide free supervisor training, information about apprenticeships and traineeships, advice regarding the Training Contract, mediation and dispute resolution services and referral to other support services and agencies. On successful completion of the apprenticeship or traineeship, we issue a Certificate of Proficiency to your learner.



## Support Services

Professional services are available from a range of government, not-for-profit and private

providers. These include advice on industrial matters such as your responsibility towards your learner when it comes to wages, working conditions and safety, mentoring and counselling services for your learner, and information on financial assistance for your learner. Ask your ANP or Training Services NSW for more information.



## School

If you supervise a school-based learner, their apprenticeship or traineeship will form part of their HSC. Your learner's school will endorse the Training Contract and will help facilitate employment and training as part of the school's curriculum.

This includes facilitating communication between all parties, monitoring your learner's progress and wellbeing via regular catch up sessions, and keeping track of their attendance at your workplace. The school may also deliver formal training.



# Your learner's role

**Your learner must make every effort to gain the skills and industry knowledge they need to successfully complete their apprenticeship or traineeship.**

This includes following your instructions (within the law), following workplace policies and procedures and contributing to a safe and supportive workplace.

They also need to undertake the training and assessment outlined in their Training Plan.

This includes studying for their qualification, receiving hands-on training in your workplace and participating in formal training delivered by their RTO.

Over time, they'll need to show they can do their job competently and consistently to the standard of performance expected in your industry.

## Successful apprentices and trainees:

- Arrive at work alert with their required tools
- Follow instructions and ask questions so they can grow their skills
- Take responsibility
- Discuss and resolve concerns
- Contribute to creating a safe and supportive workplace
- Attend formal study delivered by their RTO
- Complete assignments and assessments
- View their apprenticeship or traineeship as a career instead of 'a job for now.'



# Your role as a supervisor

**Effective supervision is critical to your learner's success.**

As a workplace supervisor, you're a role model and coach for your learner. They'll look to you for guidance, support and motivation.

Through daily contact, you can respond to your learner's needs, ensure policies and procedures are being followed, teach safe working practises, address problems, improve productivity, and increase workplace satisfaction.

The level of supervision required for your learner depends on:

- The degree of risk involved in doing certain tasks
- Your learner's age, skills, knowledge, and experience
- New or recently modified technology or machinery
- Your learner's language difficulties, cultural differences or physical limitations.

Key to your role is helping your learner understand how their formal study translates to the workplace.

You should show them how to use equipment safely and offer practical hands-on instruction in all tasks in the Training Plan.

Apprentices and trainees are paid training wages because their schedule includes time for formal training and study. You must release your learner during paid work hours to attend formal training or for study for a minimum of three hours a week.

Once the apprenticeship or traineeship is underway, schedule regular meetings so you can check your learner's progress against the Training Plan and ensure they're getting enough opportunities to practice their new skills at work.

You'll also need to meet regularly with your RTO to provide assessment evidence, stay up-to-date with formal training, sign off competencies and schedule any additional workplace training.

# Workplace induction

## First impressions count.

A good workplace induction communicates what's expected of your learner and what they can expect from you.

This will help them settle in quickly, accelerate their proficiency and reduce staff turnover. They're less likely to underperform, make mistakes and lose interest.

Your induction checklist:

- Describe your business, its values, and how your learner fits into the big picture
- Discuss your role, explain their job description
- Discuss ground rules. These may include mobile phone use, workplace dress and behaviour, policies on bullying, drugs and alcohol, and the best way to communicate when they're sick or running late

- Outline their terms of employment including the Training Contract, pay conditions, leave provisions, and hours of work, overtime and break times
- Take them on a workplace tour. Explain who's who and introduce key staff
- Go through their Training Plan Proposal, schedule progress meetings and set goals
- Provide information about grievance procedures including who to go to for support
- Schedule Workplace Health and Safety training

If possible, get a former apprentice or trainee to be their 'support buddy.'



# Duty of care and safety

## What is a duty of care?

Young learners are vulnerable. They experience more workplace injuries than any other age group. They need additional guidance because they lack work experience and may not know how to protect themselves physically and psychologically from injury.

That is why there are additional duty of care responsibilities and obligations to workers under the age of 18.

You must take reasonable care to ensure your workplace and the people in it are safe from injury and health risks. If you identify a likely risk of harm, it is your legal obligation to address it. You should minimise or eliminate risk by providing support, instruction, training, and on-going adequate supervision. Your inaction is a breach of your duty of care.

## Make safety part of the conversation

Under Australian legislation, you are legally obliged to be aware of the range of hazards in your workplace and apply measures to ensure people are not injured or made ill because of their work.

You must:

- Ensure work environments, systems of work, machinery, chemicals, and equipment are safe and properly used, stored and maintained
- Provide required personal protective equipment and ensure it is used
- Explain safe work practices, safety hazards and emergency procedures
- Provide training, instruction, and supervision by a qualified or experienced worker
- Ensure supervisors are aware of their responsibilities concerning young learners
- Ensure your learner isn't exposed to inappropriate behaviours, sexually explicit or inappropriate material. See: [kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au).

# Bullying and harassment

**Workplace bullying and harassment can happen to anyone. It involves a more powerful person or group of people oppressing a less powerful person or group, often because they're different.**

Bullying and harassment are unreasonable behaviours that cause humiliation, offence, intimidation or distress, and affect an employee's ability to work.

It can occur through verbal or physical abuse, psychological standover tactics, practical jokes or initiation, put downs, sexual misconduct, email, texts or on social media.

Workers who experience bullying can suffer anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, ill health, and even commit suicide.

That's why workplace bullying and harassment are against the law.

Many victims won't speak up because they think it's 'workplace culture' and they'll be called a 'trouble maker.'

Failure to take action to prevent or respond to workplace bullying and harassment can result in breaches of equal opportunity, Work Health and Safety and anti-discrimination laws.

See: [safeworkaustralia.gov.au/bullying](https://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/bullying)

## How can you recognise and address workplace bullying?

- Look for changes in your learner's behaviour
- If you notice absences, low morale or requests to do jobs with different people, encourage your learner to talk
- Publish a zero tolerance policy
- Organise ongoing conflict management training
- Take complaints seriously.

# Mental health

**It's possible you may supervise a learner who is experiencing a mental health condition – it's more common than you think.**

Most people can effectively manage their mental health without it affecting their work. But there may be times when your learner requires support and reasonable adjustments at work to help them get and stay well.

An unhealthy work environment or incident can also create or exacerbate mental health conditions.

Speak to your worker regularly. You may notice differences in your learner's behaviour including:

- Appearing restless and tense
- Having difficulty meeting reasonable deadlines

- Quality of work suffering
- Tardiness
- Becoming overwhelmed or upset easily
- Avoiding colleagues.

If your learner agrees that they are struggling with their mental health, refer them to a GP for proper diagnosis and care. It's important to understand that you have a legal obligation to support them to remain at or return to work when they're ready.

More info:

- [headsup.org.au](https://headsup.org.au)
- **Lifeline: 13 11 14**
- [youthsafe.org](https://youthsafe.org)
- **Headspace: 1800 650 890**
- **Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511**
- **Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636.**



# The Training Plan

## The Training Plan is your learner's road map to success.

It describes the formal and workplace training and assessment your learner must complete to receive their qualification and be issued with their Certificate of Proficiency.

Like building blocks, each unit in the Training Plan sets out practical tasks and structured milestones that progressively increase your learner's skills.

## Developing the Training Plan

You must develop the Training Plan with your RTO and learner within 12 weeks of the apprenticeship or traineeship being approved.

The RTO will discuss the units of competency to be undertaken and the sequence in which they'll be delivered.

You can negotiate how, when, where, and by whom training and assessment will be delivered.

The RTO will also identify any additional learning needs (such as literacy and numeracy) and if your learner is able to apply for recognition of prior learning.

The RTO will ensure you all receive a copy of the signed Training Plan.

## The Training Plan in action

The Training Plan is a living document that should be frequently referred to, regularly discussed and routinely updated to reflect the current status of training.

Your learner must perform duties that map to the units of study they're undertaking in their formal training.

You'll need to create opportunities in your workplace for your learner to master these skills under your supervision.

You should discuss progress with your RTO at least every six months. If there are performance issues, this should be scheduled more regularly.

# Six steps to effective supervision and coaching



## Explain the 'big picture.'

People learn best when they know why something's important. Explain the task, its purpose and why it needs to be done in a certain way. Try and use real life examples.



## Take it step-by-step

Break the task down into chunks so your learner remembers what to do. Use clear and simple language and assume no prior knowledge. Ask your learner to repeat the instructions back to confirm understanding.



## Demonstrate

Carefully show your learner how to correctly do things.



## Practice makes it perfect

Allow time for your learner to practice their new skills. Spaced repetition of skills will build competence. Allow your learner to perform the task their own way provided the job is completed to standard. Watch, coach and be patient.



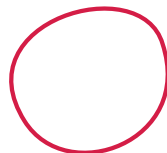
## Feedback

Ensure your feedback is positive first, and constructive second, then conclude with praise. View mistakes as positive as they create an opportunity for learning. Remember, what you say is only part of what's communicated. Your body language and tone of voice makes up 90% of your message.



## Advise

Ensure you advise your RTO and learner when competency has been achieved.





## Learning styles

**As a supervisor, you need to acknowledge that everyone learns differently.**

Some of us learn through observation, some through listening, some through hands-on practice and some through a blend of all three.

There's no right or wrong learning style, just a style that's right for your learner.

Taking time to discover your apprentice or trainee's learning styles can help you understand their motivators and stressors and how they differ from your own.

It will make training easier and more effective for you in the long run.

**Which of these categories do you relate to?**

Visual learners prefer diagrams, pictures, demonstrations, and films. They say, 'Show me' and 'Let's have a look at that'. They best perform a new task after reading instructions or watching someone do it while taking notes.



Auditory learners prefer words, sounds and music. They say, 'Tell me' and 'Let's talk it over.' They best perform a new task after listening to instructions or discussing a process.

Kinaesthetic learners prefer doing, moving, and hands-on experiences. They say, 'Let me try.' They best perform a new task role-playing or trying it out and learning as they go.

When you're aware of your own learning style, you can help your learner understand theirs and adapt your training accordingly.

To gain more practical tips on becoming a better workplace coach, enrol in a free supervisor workshop at Training Services NSW. For upcoming events visit: [www.training.nsw.gov.au/apprenticeships\\_traineeships\\_employers/self\\_help/supervisor\\_videos.html](http://www.training.nsw.gov.au/apprenticeships_traineeships_employers/self_help/supervisor_videos.html)

## Cultural diversity

Daily interactions can have subtle cultural distinctions. Knowledge of these can help you effectively manage learners from diverse backgrounds and avoid misunderstandings. Some general points to consider:

### Religious practices

Some religious practices will impact the workplace. For example, Muslims generally pray twice during a workday, this can easily be accommodated during meal breaks.

Muslims also observe a different calendar including events such as Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan. Try and support your learner's leave requests, as holy days will be important to them. If you can't, clearly communicate why and try for a compromise.

### Politeness

In various Asian and Middle Eastern countries, being indirect is the norm. These cultures take time to lead up to their point. Some Asian cultures are reluctant to give supervisors bad news. In many cultures, you're not allowed to initiate conversation with a superior.

### Gesture

Important variations across cultures include ways of pointing, shaking hands, making eye contact or bowing.

In Islam, physical contact between men and women isn't allowed (except for family). This means Muslims won't shake hands with the opposite sex – a difference that can be easily accommodated.

### Yes and No

In Australia, we're expected to mean 'yes' or 'no.' In other cultures, 'yes' may mean 'I hear what you say.' Some learners nod because they're reluctant to give a direct 'no' for fear of offending.

Discuss with your learner how to best to communicate without violating their cultural norms.

More info: [safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/diversity](http://safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/diversity)

# Understanding Aboriginal learners

Aboriginal people experience a diversity of cultures, languages and ways of life. Aboriginality is individual and personal. Make sure you talk to your learner to understand their needs. Some general points to consider:

## Kinship and Sorry Business

Aboriginal families extend beyond blood and marriage to include extended family. This kinship system defines Aboriginal people's connection to each other, to spirit and to country. The care of family members is often a shared responsibility.

'Sorry Business' is the grieving period following death. It's often commemorated with large community gatherings.

Aboriginal people experience significantly higher death rates than non-Aboriginal people across all ages for all major causes of death. The impact can be overwhelming.

Your learner may ask for time off at short notice to meet family obligations or attend Sorry Business.

How you can assist:

- Flexible work arrangements
- Special leave, carers leave, unpaid leave
- Additional cultural leave.

## Communication

Aboriginal people may communicate in these ways:

- Direct eye contact can be considered rude, disrespectful or aggressive. Avoiding eye contact doesn't mean your Aboriginal learner is disinterested or dishonest
- Silence creates space for Aboriginal people to listen, think, show respect, and respond. It shouldn't be confused with a lack of understanding or hearing
- Aboriginal people may feel 'shame' when they're singled out. Some feel shame if they're publicly praised. Approach your learner individually and ask them first.

We've employed Aboriginal staff in all regional centres who can offer further advice and tailored cultural support. More information: [training.nsw.gov.au](http://training.nsw.gov.au)

# Keeping things on track

## You play a key role in monitoring your learner's progress.

Issues could include:

- Poor standard of work
- Unsatisfactory progress in formal training
- Disregarding instructions
- Unsafe work practices
- Poor attendance, punctuality or presentation
- Excessive mobile phone/social media use
- Personality clashes with colleagues
- Breaches of workplace discipline.

The first thing you should do is talk to your learner.

Remain calm and be clear about what you want. If you have negative feedback, offer it in a constructive way and discuss the improvements you're looking for. Give your learner a chance to respond to criticism.

If issues can not be resolved, you may need to contact Training Services NSW.

You can speak to us confidentially about your learner's challenges. We may visit your workplace or arrange a meeting away from work to help resolve your issue.

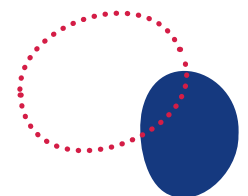
## What if the issue can't be resolved?

If your learner's position has become untenable or they want to leave, you can apply for cancellation of the Training Contract.

You and your learner must mutually consent to this.

A Training Services NSW officer can offer each of you confidential advice, monitor the issue through site visits or phone calls and provide mediation and dispute resolution services until you reach an agreement.

If an agreement can't be reached, the matter will be referred to the Commissioner for Vocational Training for resolution.





# Assessment

Your RTO carries out assessments by collecting evidence of your learner's skills and knowledge, comparing it to a set of industry-based standards and judging whether your learner meets them.

Your RTO assessor may meet with you and your learner to develop an assessment plan. Your assessor will explain:

- Evidence required for each unit of competency
- How you can gather this evidence
- When to expect assessment and monitoring visits
- How they'll deem your learner 'competent' or 'not yet competent'.

Your assessor is responsible for:

- Considering your learner's individual needs
- Setting written tests, assignments or practical tasks, assessing competencies
- Scheduling role plays to assess unusual scenarios
- Observing your learner in your workplace
- Requesting your learner demonstrate specific tasks

- Allowing you or your learner to challenge assessment results.

Your assessor may ask you to:

- Write a report about your learner's competence
- Supply recorded evidence, including photos and videos, showing how your learner has applied their skills
- Provide work records such as job cards, appointment books and procedure manuals.

## Record keeping checklist:

- Training Plan
- Records of your RTO's visits to your workplace and activities undertaken
- Evidence of tasks your learner has completed at work (photos, videos)
- Results of workplace training undertaken by your learner with the RTO
- You learner's workbook/ record of training supplied by the RTO
- The Industrial Award or Workplace Agreement
- Record of time worked and wages paid

# Completion

## Apprenticeships and traineeships are approved for a nominal term based on how long it should take a learner to gain the required skills. This is detailed in your Training Contract.

In order to be awarded their Certificate of Proficiency, your learner must successfully complete all the units of competency detailed in the Training Plan that make up their qualification.

Every time you sign off a competency, you are confirming you've seen your learner complete a task in your workplace over a period of time, separated by feedback, further learning, and practice.

You sign off a competency when you have complete confidence in your learner's ability to work unsupervised to industry standard in a variety of situations.

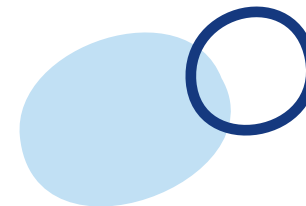
## What is an employer endorsement of competence?

The RTO must obtain your endorsement of your learner's competence before they issue the qualification.

You or your manager is required to sign off to confirm that:

- Your learner is competent to industry standards
- You support the RTO issuing their qualification
- You may be obliged to pay your learner a higher award rate after the qualification is issued
- Your learner can complete their apprenticeship or traineeship before the nominal completion date or continue training up to the nominal completion date.

If you don't think your learner is performing to industry standards, do not sign off. Discuss areas for improvement with your learner and contact your RTO to create an action plan. If you can't resolve this with your RTO, contact Training Services NSW.



## How we can help

**Training Services NSW is the regulator of apprenticeships and traineeships in NSW. Our advice is free and impartial.**

Our officers have extensive experience advising learners and employers and are skilled in mediation and dispute resolution.

More often than not, we've dealt with the issue you're facing and have a range of solutions to support you or your learner.

We provide:

- Advice on how to be a better supervisor
- Information about your legal responsibilities
- Free supervisor training
- Site visits or phone calls to ensure your learner is making progress
- Dispute resolution
- Advice on the cancellation, suspension or transfer of an apprenticeship or a traineeship
- Information about professional support services.

Supervisors often come to us when the relationship with their learner has already broken down. At this point it can be too late. Get us involved as soon as possible.

If you're a new supervisor, we can meet with you and your learner from the outset and explain everything you can do to set yourselves up for success.

Seeking our advice shows your learner how much you value them and that you're committed to their learning journey.

Visit [training.nsw.gov.au](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au), call **13 28 11** or find your nearest Training Services NSW centre at the back of this booklet.



## Resources

### Key websites

Training Services NSW: **13 28 11**, [training.nsw.gov.au](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au)

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships: [sbatinnsw.info](https://www.sbatinnsw.info)

Apprenticeship Network Provider: [australianapprenticeships.gov.au](https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au)

### Useful links

Get the most out of your learner by gaining practical and effective supervising skills at our free 'Supervising your Apprentice or Trainee' workshops. Find upcoming workshops under the 'Quick Links' column at [training.nsw.gov.au](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au)

Explore the Supervising your Apprentice or Trainee video series to find ways to improve outcomes for your learner, and ultimately, your business. [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2F2F6C83984B2766](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2F2F6C83984B2766)

Information on workplace laws for employers of workers: [industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au](https://www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au)

Information on national employment standards and modern awards: [fairwork.gov.au](https://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Information on safety and risk management: **13 10 50**, [www.safework.nsw.gov.au](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au)

NSW Anti-discrimination board: **1800 670 812** or **02 9268 5544**, [www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au](https://www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au)

Smart and Skilled – NSW Government funded training: **13 28 11**, [smartandskilled.nsw.gov.au](https://www.smartandskilled.nsw.gov.au)

# Training Services NSW regional centres

## Hunter and Central Coast

Ph: (02) 4926 7300

TS.Newcastle@det.nsw.edu.au

## Illawarra and South East NSW

Ph: (02) 4240 3700

TS.Wollongong@det.nsw.edu.au

## Riverina

Ph: (02) 6937 7600

TS.WaggaWagga@det.nsw.edu.au

## New England

Ph: (02) 6763 3055

TS.Tamworth@det.nsw.edu.au

## Western NSW

Ph: (02) 6363 9800

TS.Orange@det.nsw.edu.au

## Western Sydney and Blue Mountains

Ph: (02) 9204 7400

TS.Parramatta@det.nsw.edu.au

## Central and Northern Sydney

Ph: (02) 9242 1700

TS.Chatswood@det.nsw.edu.au

## North Coast and Mid North Coast

Ph: (02) 6629 7900

TS.Lismore@det.nsw.edu.au

## Southern and South Western Sydney


Ph: (02) 8707 9600

TS.Bankstown@det.nsw.edu.au

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We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.

## Say hello

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