

# Side Hustles, Freelancing & Gig Work: **What Students Should Know Before Starting**



University life often sees students taking on part-time work for a variety of reasons—whether to support themselves financially, gain exposure, or build experience relevant to their future careers.

Today, side hustles and part-time opportunities are more accessible than ever. From freelance work to content creation and flexible part-time roles, students today have more options to explore while balancing their studies. However, these opportunities also come with responsibilities that may often be overlooked.

Before jumping into any form of part-time work or side hustle yourself, it is important to be aware of both the opportunities and challenges that come with it. Here are a few things every student should know before getting started!

## 1. What Do You Want Out Of It?

Before applying for jobs or starting a freelance gig, take a moment to ask yourself one important question: **Why do I want to do this?**

Different types of work offer different benefits and challenges. When you know what you want to gain from the experience, you can make better decisions that align with your long-term goals instead of simply taking the first job available.

If your goal is to...	Then you may want to...	Why?
Earn <b>quick and stable income</b>	Consider part-time retail or café jobs	These jobs are often more straightforward, offer consistent working hours and provide more stable income.
<b>Build experience</b> related to your future career	Explore freelancing opportunities such as graphic design, writing, tutoring or social media management	These opportunities help you build practical skills, strengthen your portfolio and expand your professional network through clients and collaborators.
<b>Gain exposure</b> to a specific industry or corporate environment	Consider internships related to your field of study	Internships help you learn about how the industry works, develop professional skills and give you valuable experience that may strengthen your future job applications.
Explore <b>entrepreneurship</b>	Start a small online business or sell digital products	This allows you to learn business basics such as marketing, customer service, budgeting and managing operations while experimenting with your own ideas.

## 2. Understanding the Basics of Employment

Before accepting any job or freelance project, make sure you fully **understand your contract**. This includes things such as your responsibilities, working hours, payment amount and methods, leave policies, notice periods and social contributions.

**Never sign anything you do not fully understand** and don't be afraid to ask questions or seek clarification before agreeing to any employment contract. Even freelance work should ideally include written agreements—whether in the form of email chains or text confirmations—to help avoid misunderstandings later on.

Remember that working comes with financial responsibilities and realities! For those interested in freelancing, income can be inconsistent, with some months being busier than others. Learning [basic financial habits](#) such as budgeting, saving and tracking your income can help you manage this more effectively.

You may also come across terms such as [Employee Provident Fund \(EPF\)](#) and [Social Security Organisation \(SOCSO\)](#). Understanding what these are can help you become more confident and financially prepared as you transition into working life.

### 3. The Challenges of Balancing Work and Studies

One of the biggest challenges of having a side hustle is balancing work alongside academic responsibilities. Long shifts, tight deadlines and inconsistent schedules can leave students feeling physically and mentally exhausted, especially during busy academic periods such as assignments, presentations and exams. Over time, this can lead to [burnout](#), stress and difficulty maintaining a healthy balance between academics, work and personal life.

This is why learning basic [time management and boundary-setting skills](#) is important. Having a clear schedule, planning your workload realistically and knowing when to step back can help you manage both your studies and work commitments more sustainably.

Productivity should not come at the expense of your wellbeing. While earning extra income or gaining experience can be valuable, maintaining your physical health, mental wellbeing and academic performance should always remain a priority.

### 4. It's Okay to Start Small

You may feel pressured to immediately turn your side hustle into something highly profitable or successful, especially after seeing others share their achievements online. However, remember that everyone's circumstances, schedules and capacities are different.

Some students may only be able to work during semester breaks, while others may prefer occasional freelance projects instead of long-term commitments. What matters most is finding a balance that is realistic and sustainable for you.



Today, there are many platforms that make it easier to explore flexible part-time work or freelance opportunities based on their skills and availability. Students may take on delivery or ride-hailing jobs through platforms such as Grab or Foodpanda, or offer freelance services or part-time jobs through platforms like [Kabel.my](https://www.kabel.my), [Ezgig.my](https://www.ezgig.my), [Indeed.my](https://www.indeed.my) and [MauKerja.com](https://www.maukerja.com). Those with creative or entrepreneurial interests may also choose to sell products or promote services through social media or e-commerce platforms.

Now that you have this to guide you, we hope you feel more prepared and confident in exploring part-time work!

## Resources

1. <https://solidgigs.com/blog/how-to-freelance-as-a-student-advice/>
2. <https://wearehomesforstudents.com/blog/a-guide-to-the-best-student-side-hustles-that-really-make-money>
3. <https://studyskills.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/2025/02/26/1044/>