

# PLASTICS PROCESSING MACHINE OPERATOR

ALSO KNOWN AS: **PLASTIC EXTRUSION MACHINE OPERATOR** **PLASTIC COMPOUNDING AND RECLAMATION MACHINE OPERATOR**  
**PLASTICS PRODUCTION MACHINE OPERATOR** **REINFORCED PLASTIC AND COMPOSITE PRODUCTION WORKER**

## SHAPE THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING AS A PLASTICS PROCESSING MACHINE OPERATOR.

In this vital role, you'll be at the heart of producing a wide range of plastic products that are essential to our daily lives. From extrusion and injection moulding to compounding and recycling, your expertise will be crucial in bringing innovative designs to life while promoting sustainability in the plastics industry.

### KEY SKILLS

Skills which may benefit anyone considering a job as a plastics processing machine operator include:

- ✔ Analytical skills
- ✔ Communication skills
- ✔ Problem solving
- ✔ Safety conscious
- ✔ Technical proficiency

### CAREER PROGRESSION

In this role, you may have the opportunity to progress to other positions. Career progression opportunities include:

- Plastic Fabricator and Welder
- Polymer Processing Technician
- Belt Splicer
- Process Plant Manager

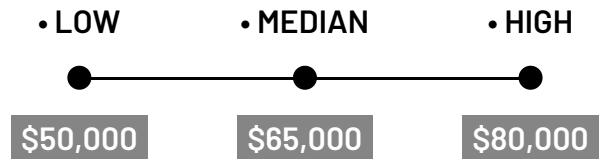
### VALUES & ATTRIBUTES

Values and attributes of anyone considering a job as a plastics processing machine operator include:

- ✔ Safety-conscious
- ✔ Precision
- ✔ Adaptable
- ✔ Reliable
- ✔ Continuous learning
- ✔ Realistic – “Do-er”

### SALARY EXPECTATION

The expected salary for a Plastics Processing Machine Operator can vary across different areas of manufacturing and may vary as you become more experienced.



### RELATED INDUSTRIES

- ▶ Polymers, Plastic and Rubber

### RECOMMENDED SCHOOL SUBJECTS

- Chemistry
- Engineering
- Engineering Skills

### CORE SCHOOL SUBJECTS

- General Mathematics
- Essential English

## JOB OVERVIEW

As a Plastics Processing Machine Operator, you'll be a key player in the diverse field of polymer manufacturing. Your role will involve operating and managing sophisticated machinery that transforms raw materials into finished products through various processes. Depending on your specialisation or the needs of your employer, you may focus on a specific area such as extrusion, injection moulding, or compounding, or you might work across multiple processes.

In this position, you'll be responsible for setting up, operating, and monitoring different types of polymer processing equipment. You'll work with a variety of materials, including thermoplastics, thermosets, and elastomers, understanding their properties and how they behave under different processing conditions. Your attention to detail and adaptability will be crucial in maintaining product quality and consistency, whether you're specialising in a particular process or working across multiple techniques.

Your expertise will be vital in troubleshooting issues, making necessary adjustments to machine parameters, and optimising production efficiency. You'll collaborate with quality control teams, engineers, and other operators to meet production targets while maintaining high standards. As a Plastics Processing Machine Operator, you'll also play a significant role in implementing safety protocols, maintaining a clean work environment, and contributing to continuous improvement initiatives.

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Your role may include duties as follows:

1. Set up and operate polymer processing machines (e.g., extruders, injection moulding machines, compounders)
2. Monitor and adjust machine parameters to ensure proper product dimensions and quality
3. Perform regular quality checks on produced items
4. Troubleshoot and resolve issues with machinery or product quality
5. Control melting, mixing, and forming processes for various polymer products

## HOW TO BECOME A PLASTICS PROCESSING MACHINE OPERATOR

Becoming a Plastics Processing Machine Operator offers an exciting entry point into the diverse world of polymer manufacturing. While formal qualifications can be beneficial, many employers value hands-on experience and offer comprehensive on-the-job training. To get started:

1. Complete high school, focusing on subjects like mathematics and chemistry.
2. Consider pursuing a Certificate II in Polymer Processing (PMB20121) to gain foundational knowledge across various polymer processing techniques.
3. Look for entry-level positions or apprenticeships in polymer manufacturing companies that offer exposure to one or more processing methods.
4. Highlight any relevant skills or experience in your resume, such as mechanical aptitude, attention to detail, or interest in manufacturing processes.
5. Be prepared to start in a junior role and progressively learn different polymer processing techniques from experienced operators.
6. Show enthusiasm for learning and a willingness to adapt to new technologies and methods.

# VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING

Whether you're starting your journey or looking to upskill, there are multiple entry points and career progression opportunities available through vocational education and training.

You may want to pursue a qualification to deepen your expertise. The following qualification/s can be completed as an apprenticeship:

- Certificate III in Polymer Processing (PMB30121)

A range of specialisations exist for this qualification, including blow moulding, blown film, composites, conveyor belt maintenance and repair, conveyor belt manufacture, extrusion, plastic fabrication, injection moulding, polyurethane, rotational moulding, and rubber lining.

As an apprentice you will combine work with formal training, allowing you to gain practical skills and knowledge in a specific trade while earning a salary.

**Duration:** Apprenticeships typically last up to four years for full-time participants. Part-time apprenticeships may take longer, depending on the individual's work schedule and training progress.

**Work and study combination:** As an apprentice, you will work either full-time or part-time while receiving formal training from a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). School-based apprenticeships may be available.

**Eligibility:** Generally, apprenticeships do not require any formal qualifications to enter, making them accessible to a wide range of individuals, including if you are a school leaver or someone looking to change careers. There are minimum age requirements and there may be other eligibility criteria.

**Completion:** On completion you will receive a nationally recognised trade qualification, showcasing your skill and experience.

## Advancing Your Career

Choosing to advance your career offers exciting opportunities for growth and specialisation. As you gain experience and skills through entry-level positions or initial qualifications, you can explore higher-level vocational education and training options to elevate your expertise. These qualifications can open doors to senior roles allowing you to take on more responsibility, as well as offering a foundation for further education.

To advance your career, or deepen your knowledge in this industry, consider the following qualifications:

- Certificate IV in Polymer Technology (PMB40121)
- Diploma of Polymer Technology (PMB50121)

# UNIVERSITY & HIGHER EDUCATION

Depending on the facility and employer, holding a business degree with a specialisation in human resources, finance, economics, marketing or management could also be useful. Degree qualifications in engineering and manufacturing are also available to help deepen your specialist knowledge.