

Rest

Teaching teens about super

A guide for parents



Contents

Before they start	
Making super matter	4
Part 1: The basics of super	6
First week:	
Part 2: What to do together before day one	10
First payslip:	
Part 3: The first payslip and super contribution	14
Questions your teen might ask (and answers)	17
Go deeper:	
Part 4: Why starting early is a big deal (hello compounding returns)	19
Part 5: What happens to the money (investing and super)	22
Part 6: Risk and return	25
Part 7: Lead and learn together	27
Digital tools and support	30
Quick checklist for parents/guardians	31

Who this guide is for

Your teenager just got a job offer. Amid the excitement of the first uniform, first roster, and first shift, there's a quiet financial moment happening in the background that most parents don't feel ready for. This guide is for that moment.

Super isn't the first thing most teenagers think about, and that's okay. But as a parent or trusted friend, you're in a better position than you think to make a difference to their financial futures.

This guide won't turn your teen into a superannuation expert overnight, but it's been designed to help you have conversations along the way. What it will do is give you the words, analogies, and confidence to have a conversation that actually sticks.

You don't need to know everything. You just need to know enough to get the conversation started. We can help with the rest.

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Making super matter (even at 15)

Let's be honest, unless you were the type of teenager who went on to work at Rest (ahem), it's unlike you cared about super when you were a teen. This means "you'll thank yourself when you're older" isn't exactly a winning opener.

Instead, your first step is to **find a point of entry and explain why super matters to them.**

Make super real

It's hard enough to get our teens to do homework let alone think about the future, which is why meeting them where they are is important. Super might be less abstract when it's relevant to something they actually want.

Start with their dreams, not the details

Everyone has something they're excited about even if they'd never call it a "financial goal." It might be travelling through South America, owning a dog and becoming a YouTube star, starting a business, or just never having to stress about money. Whatever it is, that's your way in.

Try something like:

"Generally, when you fully retire you won't have a salary coming in anymore. So, how do you fund the time you want to spend doing the things you like doing? That's basically what super is – the money you're quietly building up right now for future you."

Some conversation starters

Different teens will respond to different angles. Here are a few to try depending on what makes your kid tick:

The traveller

“Imagine you’re 67, you’ve just retired, and you want to spend six months in Europe. Where does that money come from? It could come from your super.”

The entrepreneur

“If you want to start a business one day, there’s no employer to pay your super, so you’ll have to consider learning about it and even organising payments yourself. If your business really takes off, it’s possible that one day big investors, including super funds, could invest in companies like yours. Super isn’t just about retirement – it’s one of the ways businesses grow.”

The socially conscious

“Some super funds let you choose ethical investments. That can mean anything from supporting renewable energy and technology, to avoiding companies involved in things like fossil fuels, tobacco, weapons, or modern slavery. Your super can reflect what you care about.”

The social media mogul

“If you end up making money through social media, there’s no boss setting up super for you. If your income comes from ads and sponsorships, it probably won’t be consistent either. Super is how creators may protect-future them, even when their income goes up and down.”



What you’re NOT doing: You’re not trying to turn your teen into a financial expert in one conversation. You don’t need to talk about preservation age or the Government Age Pension just yet. All you’re doing in this first step is shifting super from “something boring adults talk about” to “something that’s actually connected to my life.”

01

The basics of super



Make sure your teen has a clear picture of what super is.



You work



Employer pays super



Super grows



Use in retirement

Super is your money for later

Super (short for superannuation) is a retirement savings system that helps you put money away while you're working, so you've got something to live on when you retire. Think of it as a long-term savings account that grows over decades, and you generally can't touch until you retire.

Your employer typically pays it

By law, your employer must contribute a set percentage of your earnings into a super fund on your behalf if you are eligible. This is called the Super Guarantee, and the rate is currently 12%. It's on top of your salary, so it doesn't reduce your take-home pay.

Super is your money, so when you change jobs, you can just give your new employer your fund details, and they can contribute to it. Super is always hard at work in the background.



It's locked away until you're older

Super is locked away until you turn 65 years old, or you reach what's called your 'preservation age' (currently 60 years old) and retire. This is because super is meant to fund retirement - not dipped into early - and carry you through to the rest you deserve. However, you may access super early under specific conditions, such as severe financial hardship, terminal illness, or permanent incapacity.

A team of experts manages it

When your employer pays super on your behalf, it goes into your super fund account. Generally, super funds (unless it's a self-managed super fund) have a team of people whose job it is to manage and invest the money held in the super fund on behalf of its members. The team works to grow member balances over time.



Tip: Sometimes it's easier to meet teens where they get their info. [Rest's YouTube Shorts](#) break super down in plain English. It's perfect for a teen who'd rather watch than listen to a loved one.

02

What to do together before day one



The super choice decision

Most employers offer a default fund, but your teen has the right to choose their own.

Example of what to say:

“When you start this job, your employer will ask you to nominate a super fund. If you don't choose, they'll sign you up for the default fund. This may be perfectly good, but it's worth thinking about it before you sign anything.”



Stay with default vs. Choose your own super?

Here's what to weigh up before your teen signs anything.

What to compare	About
Fees	If the fees are too high, there's a chance that it may eat into your super balance, especially while it's smaller as you begin to grow it.
Performance	Look at how super funds compare based on performance - a.k.a. the rate of return over a set period. Consider using comparison tools, like the Australian Taxation Office's YourSuper tool. Just keep in mind that past performance is not reflective of future returns.
Insurance	<p>Under Australian law, super funds do not automatically provide default insurance to members under 25, or to those with a balance under \$6,000. If you are under 25, you must "opt-in" to activate Death, Total and Permanent Disability (TPD), and Income Protection (IP) cover.</p> <p>If this is something that's important to you, check which insurance options are available with each fund and compare the cost and level of cover provided.</p>
Profit-to-member	A profit to member fund is run for members, not shareholders. Any profits go back to members. For some people, this may be an important reason to choose a super fund. Rest is proudly a profit to member super fund with competitive fees.
Financial advice services	<p>Think about whether you might want access to financial advice through your super fund.</p> <p>For example, Rest offers members access to Rest Advice to help them make the right decisions with their super. Simple personal advice on their Rest account is at no extra cost. More complex personal advice may incur additional fee which will vary depending on the complexity of the advice.</p>

What to bring & what to know

Before day one, make sure your teen has:

- Their Tax File Number (TFN).
- Thought about if they want to choose their super fund or opt for the employers' default option.
- Their Rest Digital Member Card, or equivalent super fund details, downloaded to their phone wallet for easy access.
- A basic understanding of what the super choice form is asking.

If your teen doesn't have a TFN yet, they can apply at ato.gov.au. The fastest way to apply is online using a Digital ID, such as myID. Your teen will need to be at least 15 years old to do so.

First job super check list:

- Choose a super fund
- Fill in the super choice form
- Download the Rest App
- Check the first contribution

03

The first payslip and super contribution



All that hard work has paid off – literally!

Your teen has just received their first payslip from their employer showing key information about their pay, like earnings, taxes, and super contributions.

Pay slips can look different depending on where you work, but they should always contain certain details:

PAY SLIP

Employer: A Pretend Business
ABN: 12 345 678 910
Employee: Joe Worker
Employee status: Part time
Award: Fast Food Industry Award
Classification: Level 1
Hourly rate: \$24.73

Pay period: 01/04/26 - 14/04/26
Pay date: 16/04/26

Annual leave balance: 32.5 hours
Sick/carer's leave balance: 15.4 hours

Entitlements			
Description	Hours/units	Rate	Total
Ordinary hours	32	\$24.73	\$989.20
Personal/carer's leave	1.6	\$24.73	\$39.57
Saturday penalty rate	8.0	\$6.118	\$49.94
Total gross payment			\$1,077.71

Deductions	
Income tax	\$71.76
HECS/HELP	\$0
Total deductions	\$71.76

Superannuation	
Employee Superannuation Fund Pty Ltd	\$118.55
Total contributions	\$118.55

Net Pay	
Bank Details: A Pretend Bank BSB: 123-456 Account: 1234 5678	
Total net payment	\$1,005.95

- 1 Your details and your employer's details
- 2 What you've earned
- 3 Deductions (what's taken out)
- 4 Superannuation
- 5 Net pay (what hits your account)

One of the most important things to explain when your teen gets their first payslip: **the super line isn't money being taken from them.**

Their employer is required by law to pay an additional 12% of their earnings into their super fund, on top of their wages. It doesn't reduce their take-home pay - it's extra.

Checking the first contribution

While super contributions may be listed on a payslip, it doesn't always mean that the money has been paid into their super fund.

To see when and how much was contributed, have the teen check their fund's app or online account, or review their annual statements. This should show the contributions that the employer has paid.



Tip: As of 1 July 2026, the employer must pay super at the same time as wages. If after seven business days you don't see a contribution, it's worth checking with the employer first (sometimes it's an admin delay). **If contributions are consistently missing, your teen can report it to the ATO via myGov. The ATO takes unpaid super seriously.**



Questions your teen might ask

❓ Do I get super if I'm under 18?

If you're under 18 and work over 30 hours a week, your employer must pay the super guarantee amount regardless of how much you earn. If you work 30 hours or less per week, the employer is not required to pay the super guarantee (though some employers might still choose to do it). If you've got more than one job, the hours for each are counted separately, so you might qualify for super in one job but not the other.

❓ Is super the same as tax?

No, they're completely different. Tax is money that goes to the government to pay for public services like schools, hospitals, and roads. Super stays in your name, in your fund, and it's yours. The government just makes sure employers contribute to it.

❓ Why am I paying fees on my super?

Super funds typically charge you a fee for looking after your super and providing related services to you. For example, to administer your account and invest the amount held in it. The fees are typically deducted directly from your super account balance. Think of it as a subscription for experts to help manage your super account and handle how it is invested. You can see how Rest calculates your fees by visiting rest.com.au/fees.

❓ How will my super ever grow if I keep paying fees?

Over time, the contributions to your super account from your employer (and any additional personal contributions you make) and the returns on the invested amount should generally outpace what you're paying in fees.

What if I change jobs?

Your super belongs to you, even if you change jobs. Generally, you can keep the same account no matter where you work, just give your new employer your fund details.

What if I work casually or part-time?

Doesn't matter. If you're eligible for super, your employer must pay the superannuation guarantee amount. You can be full-time, part-time, or casual. Just remember if you're under 18, you need to work over 30 hours a week.

Can I add my own money to super?

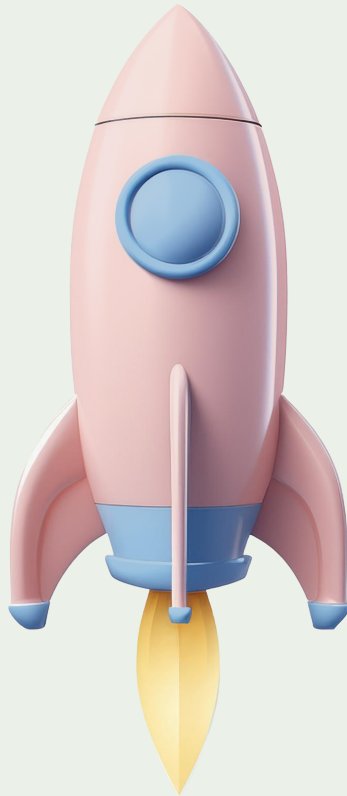
Yes, if you're in a financial position to do so. Adding your own contributions may help your balance grow faster thanks to the power of compounding.

What if I want to work for myself?

Put simply, when you work for yourself (e.g. as a sole trader or in a partnership), there is no separate employer to pay super on your behalf and no legal requirement to pay super for yourself. You can choose to make your own personal super contributions to save for your retirement, so it's something to plan for if that's the direction you're considering.

04

**Why starting early
is a big deal**



One of the most powerful lessons your teen can learn is that time is their secret weapon.

The money in a super fund is invested, and those investments can generate returns. Those returns are added to (or deducted from) their balance, which then continue to earn returns on top of regular employer super contributions. And so on, for decades.

This is called compounding, and the earlier it starts, the more powerful the effect over time – even with the ups and downs along the way. We have found that once teens learn how compounding works they tend to get interested fast.

The magic of compounding

For example, let's start at zero and say someone has an annual salary of \$50,000 and the amount invested in their super earns roughly 8% in returns each year.

Year	Super Balance	Hypothetical Total Return
Year 1	\$6,000	\$0
Year 5	\$35,200	\$5,200
Year 10	\$86,919	\$26,919
Year 20	\$274,572	\$154,572
Year 30	\$679,699	\$499,699
Year 40	\$1,554,339	\$1,314,339

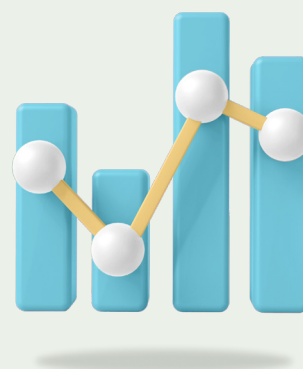
Note: Hypothetical example for education purposes only. Based on starting balance of \$0, a flat salary of \$50,000p.a., with 12% SG contributions, and 8%p.a. returns compounded annually. Does not factor in fees, market fluctuations impacting returns or changes in income.

After 30 years, their super balance increases to almost \$680,000 and earns roughly \$50,000 a year in returns. After decades of contributions into their super account, the balance is over \$1 million dollars. That's the power of compounding growth.

Of course, super doesn't come with a guarantee. As your super is invested in the market and investment markets can go up or down, some years your balance may actually stay the same or fall. The 8% p.a. investment return used here is just for example purposes. This is because...

Returns are not guaranteed

There's always some risk involved with investing. When you contribute to your super, the money is invested for you, and investing generally doesn't come with guaranteed returns. Markets go up and down, and super balances typically reflect this. But over a long time super generally should help you build wealth.



05

What happens to the money? (Investing and super)



Once your teens' super contribution lands in their super fund, a team of investment professionals puts it to work, investing it across a range of different things with the goal of growing it over time.

These different types of investments are called asset classes. Think of them as different buckets, each with a different level of risk and potential reward.

Examples of Asset Types

Asset Type	Description
Cash	This is money held in bank deposits and short-term government securities. It's stable and lower-risk, but it also typically grows the slowest.
Debt (bonds)	<p>When governments or big companies need to borrow money, they issue bonds. These are basically an IOU that pays interest over time. Buying bonds is kind of like being the bank. You lend money, they pay you back with interest. Super funds invest in loans rather than owning part of a company (shares) or physical assets (like property).</p> <p>Example: if the Australian Government issues a bond to fund infrastructure, your super fund might lend them money and earn interest in return.</p>
Property	<p>Not just residential houses, this includes office buildings, shopping centres, warehouses, and apartment complexes in Australia and overseas. Your super fund may own a slice of a major office tower in Sydney or a logistics hub in the US.</p> <p>Example: That big shopping centre your teen works their first job in? A super fund might part-own the building.</p>

Asset Type	Description
Infrastructure	The big physical stuff that keeps the world running, like airports, toll roads, power grids, ports, telecommunications towers, and AI data centres. These tend to be considered steady, long-term investments because people always need electricity, internet, and airports.
Shares	Buying a share means buying a small piece of ownership in a company. If the company does well, the share price goes up, and they may pay out a portion of profits (called a dividend). If it does badly, the value can drop. <i>Example: Companies listed on the ASX (like the big four banks or BHP) as well as global giants like Apple, Microsoft, or Amazon.</i>
Alternatives	This is the catch-all bucket for investments that don't fit neatly into the others. Things like private companies not listed on any stock exchange, hedge funds, or specialist strategies designed to grow even when other markets are falling. More complex, but they help spread risk across the overall portfolio.

Why does a super balance go up and down?

Super balances go up and down because most of those buckets (especially shares and property) move with the market, and markets don't move in a straight line.

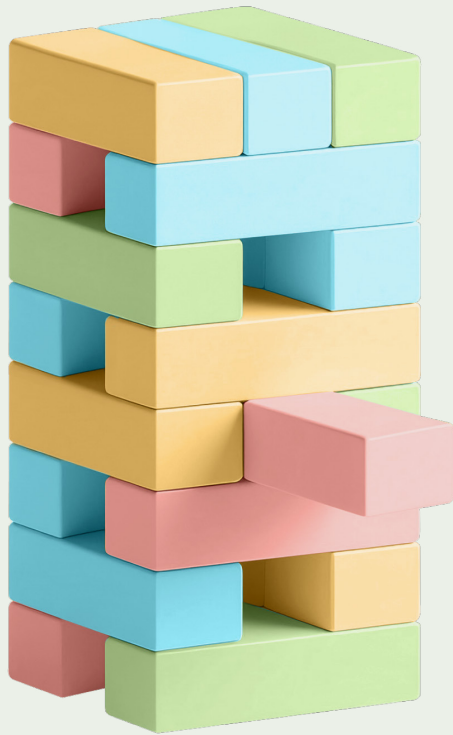
A simple way to explain it to your teen:

“When the economy is doing well and people are confident, investment values tend to rise. When there's uncertainty, like a recession or global pandemic, they can fall. Your super balance reflects that.”

The good news is that someone who starts young potentially has decades of market cycles ahead of them. History shows that over long periods, markets have consistently recovered and grown.

06

Risk and return



There's no such thing as zero risk when it comes to investing. All investments come with some level of risk. But risk isn't automatically a bad thing.

Think of it like bungee jumping vs. base jumping. Both give you a thrill and both come with their own risks. One might be riskier than the other. The key is knowing which kind of "jump" you're making and what level of risk feels right for you.

Why bother taking any risk at all?

Generally, the riskier an investment is, the higher the potential return. This is called the **risk return trade-off**. So, if you want a higher return, the trade-off is that you generally have to take on more risk. The trick is finding the level of risk you're comfortable with.

Defensive vs. growth: the two flavours of investing

All asset classes have different risk and return characteristics. Defensive investments, like cash and debt, are generally seen as lower risk, but they usually offer lower returns. Growth investments, like shares, offer the potential for higher returns but are also more likely to deliver a negative return – particularly in the short-term. Most super funds offer diversified investment options that include a mix of growth and defensive assets.

The Standard Risk Measure*

Super funds use something called a Standard Risk Measure (SRM) to assist with comparing the risk of investment options. The SRM is an industry-standard risk measure which sorts each investment option into a risk label, ranging from 1 (very low risk) to 7 (very high risk).

* The Standard Risk Measure is not a complete assessment of all forms of investment risk, for instance it does not detail what the size of a negative return could be or the potential for a positive return to be less than a member may require to meet their objectives. Further, it does not take into account the impact of administration fees and tax on the likelihood of a negative return.

07

**Lead and learn
together**



The most powerful thing you can do as a parent or loved one to your teen is show that you take your own super seriously.

Check on your super with them

You don't need to share every detail but letting your teen see that you actively check in on it makes a real impression.

1. Show them that you review your super statements regularly.
2. Walk them through what you look at (balance, fees, how your investments are performing etc.)
3. Share any decisions you've made, like combining old accounts or switching investment options.
4. Make it clear there are no silly questions when it comes to money.
5. Keep the conversation open. Teens are more likely to ask questions in a relaxed, judgement-free environment.





Getting them super ready from the start

The goal is for super to become a normal topic in your household. A few natural moments to bring it up:

- **When they get their first payslip** – point out the super line.
- **When they start a new job** – help them fill in their super details.
- **When you get your own super statement** – show them and talk through it.
- **When something's in the news about super or investing** – use it as a jumping-off point.

The more normal it feels, the more likely they are to stay engaged with it as they get older and come to you when they have questions.

Digital tools and support

Once your teen has the basics down, point them to a few tools that may help them be more engaged with their super, and show how super can grow over time.

The Rest app



If your teen is already a member, Rest has an app where they can check their balance, access educational tools and guides, update details, and share their fund info with a new employer easily.

Rest Digital Member Card



Gone are the days of needing to remember your super details for a new job. You and your teen can add your Rest Digital Member Card to your phone's digital wallet through the Rest App.

Rest's Superannuation calculator



Enter an age, estimated salary, and contribution rate to see a projected balance at retirement.

ASIC's MoneySmart



A trusted set of simple calculators and guides that can help your teen understand fees, compare funds, and see how contributions and investment choices can shape their super over time.

ATO via myGov



Through myGov, your teen can see all their super accounts, find any lost super, and roll multiple accounts into one. Really handy once they've had a few jobs.

Social media



Whether your teen loves scrolling TikTok, YouTube Shorts or listening to podcasts, Rest puts out quick, plain-English explainers made for exactly this kind of audience.

Quick checklist for parents

Before their first shift

- Connect super to your teen's personal goals: travel, freedom, the future they want

- Cover the basics: what it is, who pays it, and when they can access it

- Run through the questions your teen might answer before their first job

- Explain why starting early matters (compounding!)

After their first shift

- Help them understand their money is invested, not just saved

- Introduce the idea of risk in plain terms

- Download the Rest App:
 - Download the activation card

 - Access free education and support

- Show them a super calculator: let the numbers do the talking

- Lead by example: check your own super together

We're here to help

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Live chat



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