

Career & Employment Center

Your First Day on the Job

A new job offers you a chance to begin anew and contribute your skills and talents to the world. Learn what to expect and how to handle the feelings and thoughts that may naturally arise when starting a new job.

You May Be Uncomfortable

Beginning a new job is like being a new student at a new school. Everyone in your class (office) already knows each other, and the teacher (boss or supervisor) already has individual relationships established with each student (co-worker). The office or organization you are joining is a complete organism, in which everyone has a different role. Questions you may have before you start are, “How will I fit in with my colleagues?” “Which jokes are OK to tell?” “How much of myself can I comfortably reveal in the first few weeks?” Learning about the workplace culture through observation is a good way to find out. Watch the relationship dynamics in the office. Learn where your position fits within the structure of the company. Figure out how to fulfill your employer’s expectations while still bringing your unique personality to the organization. It is important to be able to be yourself and still maintain a professional persona. This can be a difficult goal to achieve if you accept a job that doesn’t fit your personality. For example, if you identify yourself as a free spirited, spontaneous person, and take a job working in a structured, corporate environment, you might feel that your authentic personality clashes with the mood of the workplace. For tips on how to find jobs that match your personality, visit the Career Center!

You May Be Excited

You may be excited because you really wanted the job and now you are eager to prove yourself. Your excitement and enthusiasm is wonderful! However, don’t try to do too much all at once. It is better to go slow and do a good job without mistakes. When you are eager and excited, it is sometimes hard to wait until you are familiar enough with the job to tackle some of the more interesting projects. When you first start a job, you may not have the interesting projects to do right away. Depending on what kind of job it is, much of your first week may be filled with minor details – you are shown where you work, how to do certain tasks, and where to find the things you will need. You may be asked to read an employee handbook or procedure manual.

You May Be Confused

Depending on the size of the office or organization, you may be exposed to many new faces, names, and rules. When introduced to new people pay attention to where the person fits into the organization. You may want to jot down some notes to help you remember. No one expects you to remember everyone’s name, but it’s a good idea to try to remember the leaders of the organization, such as the president or CEO of the company. Don’t worry; you will get used to the new environment sooner than you think.

You Will Have Many Questions

Sometimes it can be awkward not knowing what to do. Asking questions demonstrates your willingness to learn about the company and its services, and shows your interest in becoming an effective member of the team. Many organizations have a formal orientation or training program. Others use on-the-job instruction or

assume you will learn a lot on your own. Take all training seriously, just as you might a school course in which you want an “A.” When you need clarification, don’t hesitate to ask questions!

Important Things to Remember:

Follow the Guidelines

Adhere to normal working hours, and designated time for lunch and breaks. Discuss with your supervisor when you need to change your schedule for any reason.

Be on the Lookout for a Role Model or Mentor

Having a teacher, guide, coach or role model can be invaluable. Some companies have mentoring programs. A mentor can help you learn about the company culture, develop technical and professional skills, and guide you in career decisions. Or, you may have a friend with more experience in a similar environment, of whom you can ask advice on how best to relate to your supervisors and colleagues. Asking for guidance can make a big difference.