

## What to Expect and How to Succeed on the Job

Congratulations on landing your job! You have impressed the interviewers and earned a spot on their team. Read below for common work expectations and situations, and tips on how to handle these situations and excel at your new position.

Related resources in the Portfolio office library:

- *EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY: How to FIT IN, STAND OUT, and MOVE UP at Your First REAL JOB*, by Emily Bennington and Skip Lineberg, 2010
- *They Don't Teach Corporate in College: A Twenty-Something's Guide to the Business World*, by Alexandra Levit and Julie Jansen, 2009

<b>During the First Week</b>	
<i>What to Expect</i>	<i>How to Succeed</i>
<b>Your first impression goes a long way.</b>	Arrive early, dress appropriately, and introduce yourself to new colleagues to break down the “newbie” stigma. Think about what reputation you want to cultivate, and act on it.
<b>Your computer may not be ready...you may not even have a computer or desk set up. Your new colleagues may be swamped – which is why they hired you!</b>	Be prepared to go with the flow. Check with your supervisor regarding getting situated. Stay positive, and use any down time to read organizational material.
<b>Your job description may be set, or it may change, especially if you are in a newly created position or in a new team or division.</b>	Develop a list of written, measurable goals before you start of what you would like to learn and contribute, but realize that your position may shift.
<b>Since others are busy, you may receive a formal tour and orientation, or you could be expected to learn the ropes as you go.</b>	If there is a company handbook, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with all policies listed and adhering to those policies. If there is no formal orientation, keep a running list of questions that you can ask during a 1:1 meeting.
<b>Most people are happy to answer any questions you have...the first, and maybe second, time you ask.</b>	No one remembers everything, but try to write down the important answers you receive, so that you don't ask people to repeat themselves.
<b>New jobs are often overwhelming. Colleagues use terms and reference projects that are unfamiliar. Each workplace has its own culture, some of which is unspoken and subtle.</b>	Listen, observe, and soak up information when you start. Is the culture cutting edge or traditional, team-oriented or individualistic, supportive or confrontational? You got a sense during the interview, but not at this level. Research industry terminology.
<b>Your supervisors and colleagues will have expectations and preferences regarding communication style, meetings, and duties.</b>	Follow their lead, especially at first. Do they prefer face-to-face check ins, phone calls, or email? Do they communicate in a straight-to-the-point manner or prefer to shoot the breeze first? How does your boss prefer to be updated on your work? You can ask about expectations, and adjust accordingly. Think back to your Business Communications class – target your message and timing to your audience.

<b>The culture at each company is different, and your willingness to adapt can influence your opportunities.</b>	If you want to move up, be aware of whether you are seen as a “team player.” Observe whether most people eat at their desk or with colleagues. Are you expected to stay until 7:00 p.m. every night?
<b>Working full-time can be tiring and may require long hours.</b>	Be sure to take care of yourself and balance outside activities. Get rest, eat well, and exercise.
<b>Social media policies and access can vary widely. You may use social media in your job, or your company may block certain web sites.</b>	Observe colleagues, or ask about the policy if necessary.

<b>During the First 90 Days</b>	
<i>What to Expect</i>	<i>How to Succeed</i>
<b>You will be expected to attend formal and informal meetings, where you will be assigned projects, contribute, and to provide updates.</b>	Bring a notepad with you and a planner to check on dates, jot down notes and plan upcoming events and projects. Bring any project updates as well. Speak up and share your ideas.
<b>Oral and written communication skills are a critical component of any job. Unfortunately, many employers believe that recent graduates communicate poorly.</b>	Speak and write concisely and directly. Use proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Add a signature to your email.
<b>It is great if your employer provides graduate school tuition assistance or professional development training, but you are always responsible for your own continued learning.</b>	Read relevant articles and books, and attend professional development conferences when possible.
<b>Supervisors and colleagues appreciate people who take initiative and meet your deadlines. It is good to volunteer for projects, as long as you don't get a reputation for taking on more than you can handle.</b>	As you get a sense of how long projects take, map out your own project timelines. Learn to prioritize tasks, so that you deliver quality work on time.
<b>Treating colleagues and clients well is part of your job. It is the “little things” that can make a big difference.</b>	Say thank you or write a note if someone has gone above and beyond. Share contacts or resources. Be collegial and polite to everyone, including the support staff who are responsible for keeping the office running.
<b>If this is your first exposure to negative office politics, you may be surprised by the favoritism, self-interest, and duplicity that may exist in your workplace. Sometimes people lose control of their emotions, and you may face pettiness or gossip.</b>	Avoid negativity and gossip, or you may earn a reputation for drama. A good rule of thumb to follow is to focus on your work and treat others well. If you face a conflict, calm down first, listen carefully, and state your position. It is good to document your position via a paper or email trail.

## During the First 6-12 Months and Beyond

<i>What to Expect</i>	<i>How to Succeed</i>
No one cares about your career more than you. Keeping your head down, plowing through your work, and expecting recognition is not enough. People are busy, so it is different from school where good work translated into higher grades.	Track your accomplishments and goals. Create a portfolio of your work. Your list will benefit you in a performance review or a future job interview. Also, track your mistakes to learn from them.
Everyone has different expectations about socializing at work. Some people want to keep their work and personal lives separate; others seek to develop friendships with their colleagues.	Think about what you are comfortable with, and use your best judgment. Your company may have rules about dating co-workers, so definitely proceed with caution.
People appreciate a problem solver, not a complainer.	If you see an issue or think something can be done more efficiently, brainstorm some potential solutions. Do your research, in order to support your proposal.
Realize that no job is perfect. You will have ups and downs, but hopefully you have identified a field and position that you enjoy for now, and the good outweighs the bad.	Keep a positive attitude, and assess yourself honestly. What skills are required to stay current and advance in your career? Thinking about your career goals is smart, but if you start to become a frequent job-hopper, consider whether you may be better investing in your position or company and growing roots there.
Feedback on your job performance is a big part of your potential to succeed.	You may receive a 30, 60 or 90 day review when you begin at a company. Listen carefully to the feedback you receive and use that feedback to enhance your performance moving forward.

### Advice from Recent Alumni:



***“My advice after graduation is that everything takes time and we just have to be patient. It takes time to adjust to a different lifestyle whether we have a job lined up or continuing education for grad school. Also, everything is a learning process whether we are learning from a text book or learning from others. I learn something new each day at work at it keeps me on my toes. It keeps me eager to learn and I'm surprise at how much I learned from just taking the time to listen.”***

**-Monica Nguyen, Accounting/Philosophy w/ Pre-Law, '13 .Concentration, '13  
Entergy Services, Inc., Accountant I**



***“Lastly, whatever job graduates take, they are going to be slightly unprepared for. They will make mistakes, come across many different people with many different personalities and be in the middle of crazy situations at times. My best advice would be to relax and remember that this is all normal...You shouldn't waste time on worrying about little things as there is too much in your new career and post graduate life that you will miss out on if you do worry and stress all of the time.”***

**-Braden LaRuffa, Management/Marketing, '13  
Pittsburgh Pirates, Minor League Video Intern**