

Now that You Have a Job...  
How Do You Keep It?

Once you've made the big transition through job searching and landed the job, the next goal is job success. Employers say many people lose their job because they don't use good work habits and not because they are unable to do the job. There are specific skills you need to know and use to be successful at your job. It's important to practice these skills prior to starting the job. First impressions show from day one and you only get one first impression.

The following list of suggestions is based on feedback from a majority of surveyed employers. This isn't a complete list. It's a good idea to check with your supervisor about what's most important.

### **Employer Expectations**

- A positive attitude is one of the most important factors in achieving job success. Don't carry negative feelings into your new workplace. Resolve them elsewhere.
- Always be on time. How long will it take to get to work? Allow a few extra minutes for traffic problems and getting children to daycare. Set an alarm clock to help you get up. Being reliable and dependable gains the trust and respect of your new employer.
- Good attendance and promptness are always important. If you're going to be unavoidably late or out sick, ask your supervisor the proper method of informing them.
- Know and follow all office rules, policies and procedures. Read the employee manuals.
- Listen and learn. Be open to new ways of doing things, even if you were taught differently in school or on a different job. Don't be quick to find fault, criticize or complain until you can prove you can do something a better way.
- Meet and exceed your employer's expectations.
- Learn all you can about the job you were hired to do before thinking about moving up.

### **Communication**

- When you need to talk with your supervisor, ask when would be a good time to meet.
- Take advantage of your performance reviews. Stay calm. Learn from them. Ask how you can improve. Show results or job-related classes you've taken. Most supervisors appreciate employees who are concerned about performance and in finding ways to improve. Your job success is also their success.
- Be a team player. Be willing to help. Know the goals of your job and how your job fits into the overall organization. Avoid a "know-it-all attitude." Try to fit in with the team. Keep your sense of humor.
- Ask for help when you need it. If you make a mistake, let your supervisor know immediately. Find out how you can fix it.
- Follow the proper chain of command. Discuss items with your supervisor first.

### **Personal**

- Prior to starting the job, have all of your appointments with doctors, dentists, etc., out of the way. Have your transportation and daycare lined up so you don't immediately have to take time off. Have an emergency plan for daycare and transportation.
- Be willing to learn new skills. Keep a record of classes you're taking that relate to the job. Review this with your supervisor at an appropriate time.
- Take time in making new friends. Find positive and upbeat coworkers. Avoid negative, critical and gossiping people.
- Be clean and well groomed. Wear clean and job-appropriate clothes. Pay attention to how your coworkers are dressed. Avoid wearing strong perfumes or colognes.
- Keep your personal life and problems at home. Do not use the employer's equipment and time to do personal things like making personal phone calls, using the copy machine or resolving your personal problems on the job. If you're having trouble resolving personal problems, counseling, support groups or employee assistance programs may be useful.
- Create the image. Dress for the job you want next.

- Be patient with yourself and your employer. It takes time to get used to, learn and like a new job.
- Volunteer for projects and committees if your work is completed and your supervisor approves.

## Getting Along With Others

- Don't express your opinions, biases or prejudices about others while you're at work. Diversity is a priority in the workplace.
- Accept criticism as constructive. Don't become defensive or take criticism personally. Thank the person for their input. Consider changing if it's warranted. If you're unsure how to handle the situation, check with your supervisor.
- Always be friendly to everyone. Be willing to go the extra mile. This creates goodwill with employers, coworkers and customers.
- Notice who your boss relies on and model yourself after them.
- Find a mentor, someone who knows the employer and the job well enough to coach you or show you the ropes.
- Realize playing politics or power games could be dangerous and backfire on you.
- Treat everyone with courtesy and respect. Remember that as you climb the career ladder, you may meet the same people on your way down the ladder.
- Keep your emotions under control. The job isn't the place to express or show your opinions or feelings.
- Show appreciation. Let your supervisor know you appreciate their training, support, input, feedback, etc.
- Strive to be positively recognized. Be friendly and helpful to everyone at all levels.



## References

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# College vs. Work Environments

## Job Culture

1. More rigid time schedule
2. You can't skip work
3. Feedback is irregular and infrequent
4. No summer vacations and few holiday breaks
5. Very few right answers to problems
5. Assignments may be vague, unclear
7. Team performance is evaluated
8. Longer work cycles lasting for months or years
9. Rewards based more on subjective criteria and personal judgments

## Your Boss

1. Not often interested in discussion
2. Assigns rush jobs with short lead-time
3. Is sometimes arbitrary; not always fair
4. Is outcome-(profit) oriented

## The Learning Process

1. Concrete problem solving and decision-making
2. Based on incidents happening on the job; concrete, real life
3. Socialized, shared learning

## College Culture

1. Flexible time schedule
2. You can skip class
3. Feedback more regular and specific
4. Long vacations and liberal breaks
5. There are correct answers to problems
6. Syllabus provides clear assignments
7. Individual competition for grades
8. Short cycle work periods: class meets one to three times weekly, 17-week cycle
9. Rewards based on objective criteria and merit

## Your Professor

1. Encourages discussions
2. Schedules lead time for completion of assignments
3. Is expected to be fair
4. Is knowledge-oriented

## The Learning Process

1. Abstract, theoretical principles
2. Formal, instructional, symbolic learning
3. Individualized learning