
University Advising & Career Center

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Surviving Your First Month on the Job Tips for Making a Good Impression

The transition to a new job can be nerve-wracking for even the most confident person. Knowing how to make a good impression while getting accustomed to your new situation can make this change go more smoothly for you and your supervisor.

On-the-Job

- Arrive ten minutes early and get settled-in. If work begins at 8:30, then you must be ready to do just that, WORK, at that time not be running in the door. Conversely, if the work day ends at 5:00 be productive until then. Do not spend the last fifteen minutes of the day getting ready to leave.
- Turn off your cell phone and put it away. Do not conduct personal business on company time.
- At the end of the day, leave in the middle of the pack.
- Introduce yourself to everyone. Support staff and building staff members keep the place running and can be very helpful allies.
- Learn people's names and memorize them.
- Show respect for others. Use formal protocol (Mr. Smith) until told otherwise. Listen attentively, use appropriate business language (no slang or inappropriate use of words—the word "like" comes to mind), always say "thank you", avoid controversial subjects, and NEVER engage in workplace gossip.
- Notice if there is a hierarchy in parking spaces.
- Make the most of a manager/supervisor's time. Write questions down and have your list ready when you meet. Be sure you know and understand your responsibilities.
- Communicate! Never assume others know what you are doing.
- Keep a notebook of training topics, accomplishments and areas where you require more instruction. Armed with all this information, you will be prepared for your first review.
- At meetings, listen and observe first then quickly begin contributing. You were hired for your expertise and ideas and will be expected to join the discussion.
- Flexibility is key. The first few weeks are full of paperwork and delays. Don't get rattled.
- Be reliable. Follow-through meticulously and meet deadlines. Whenever possible respond to email within four hours.
- Get to know your peers. Arrange lunch discussions. Learn informal codes of behavior. Ask coworkers to share their success tips and find out the idiosyncrasies of the boss. If there is an informal work get together, join in.
- Schedule half-hour introduction meetings with managers. Ask about their priorities, major projects, their tips for success and how they got their position.
- Expect to be drug tested. Avoid anything that may be problematic--even seeds on bagels and alcohol.
- **LISTEN, ASK & LEARN.**

Presenting yourself to others

- Body language conveys more than the spoken word. Show you are interested! In your office and in meetings, sit up straight and make eye contact. Walk the halls with good posture; make eye contact and greet those you pass.
- Dress appropriately. Follow the example of your supervisor.
 - Build your wardrobe around neutral colors to provide more options without spending a lot of money.

- Women... Be aware of hemlines that will slip upward when you sit, necklines that will drop down when you bend over and shirts that will reveal your midsection if you raise your arm. No flip-flops or sandals.
- Gentlemen...Wear a collared shirt, tuck it in and wear a belt. If a tie is required, it should be conservative (stripes, paisley, etc.) and just reach your belt buckle.
- Casual Friday dress varies greatly. Observe before you participate and NEVER look like you are going out to do yard work instead of heading to the office.
- When shaking hands, use a firm grasp (not a vice grip or limp noodle) and shake gently three times. Make eye contact and introduce yourself using your first and last name. If you shook hands at the beginning of a meeting, shake again on the way out.

Surviving your first office party

- Office parties are networking opportunities. Do not stick solely with your work friends. Instead, be sure to mingle and meet others. Introduce yourself to “higher-ups” in the organization and those you rarely see but routinely communicate with via email and phone.
- Drink in moderation and dress conservatively. An office party is not a night club; it is forum to present yourself as a professional. Be conscious of alcohol consumption and do not fall into the trap of participating in office gossip!
- Bring a guest only if you are sure others are invited.
- Do not try to slip in and out quickly. Spend enough time to converse with co-workers and supervisors. Once there, you may relax and enjoy the gathering. **Always** thank the party’s host before leaving.
- If you are introduced or recognized for an accomplishment with a toast, proper etiquette is not to drink to yourself.



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Resources:

Attire. NC State University Career Center

<http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/interviewing/attire.php>.

Monster Work/Life Balance. Office Holiday Party Etiquette <http://wlb.monster.com/articles/parties/>

Morris, A. How Not to Flunk the New Job: Rookies Should Ask Questions and Be willing to 'Overcommunicate'. <http://onlinewsj.com/article/SB115741420181253280.html>.

Business Etiquette. NC University Career Center

<http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/interviewing/etiquette.php>.