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Chapter 1

The First Day on the Job



As you enter the world of work on your first job, you may feel like a stranger in a strange land. Don't worry. This won't last long. But, it's important to start off right! The way you start a job will affect how well you get along with your boss and the other workers.

Chances are you'll be a bit nervous about starting a new job. You know you want to do well. But you're not sure if you know what to do. You may be worried about whether the boss or the other workers will like you. You may wonder if you have the skills to do the work. The best way to feel more sure of yourself is to be ready for things that are likely to come up on the job. And that's what *150 Ways to Keep Your Job!* is all about.

Get started on the right foot! Here are 10 ways to start out right and KEEP YOUR JOB

1. Get to work on time.

You should always be on time. But it's doubly important the first day. Give it a trial run ahead of time. Be sure you know how to get there and how long it will take. Double check bus or subway schedules. Then allow plenty of time to get yourself ready. Leave home a little earlier than you think you need to. If you have allowed yourself too much time, take a walk and get to know the neighborhood you'll be working in. Try not to arrive at your new job more than 5 or 10 minutes early.

2. Ask your boss what he or she would like to be called.

Say "Should I call you Ms./Mr. _____?" Don't call the boss by his or her first name unless asked to do so.

3. Introduce yourself to your co-workers.

Be pleasant and smile. Learn their names as soon as you can.

4. Show that you are willing to learn.

Cooperate with co-workers who offer to show you the ropes. Ask questions. Listen carefully to what you're told. Take notes if you need to.

5. Go all out to do your best work.

No matter what tasks you are given, do your best. As the new kid on the block, you are likely to get some simple or boring chores. Don't complain.

6. Find out the *unwritten rules* of your workplace.

These rules are ways to act that everyone else knows, but no one will think of spelling out for you. Look around you to find out:



What kind of clothing is suitable?

How loud/quiet should you be?

How neat should you try to be?

Can you eat/drink at your work station?

How should you act at lunch/coffee breaks?

Can you take or make personal phone calls?

It's important to remember, however, that just because you see another worker doing something, that doesn't mean it's OK. The best thing to do is *ask*. You should also remember that it's best to use good judgment. Other workers may wear sloppy clothes or eat at their work stations. But your boss may not like it.

7. Take “newcomer” jokes or pranks in stride.

Sometimes workers will play jokes or tricks on a new person. They may give you a job no one else wants, like cleaning up a mess or making coffee. Or you might be assigned the worst shift to work. This kind of thing is normal. The others are testing you to see how you’ll fit in. If you’re good natured about it, it shouldn’t last long. (Of course, if you’re asked to do something that is dangerous or against the law, you shouldn’t go along with it. If that happens, walk away and inform the boss.)

8. Be friendly to everyone.

But don’t be too friendly too fast. You could find out too late that you’ve become chums with someone who’s on the outs with the boss. Or someone who is about to lose her job for poor work habits. It’s best to get to know everyone a little better before you get too close to anyone.

9. Give the job a fair chance.

If the going seems tough, don’t take the easy way out. Give yourself and the job a fair chance. If things still seem to be going badly, talk it over with the boss.

10. Eat a balanced diet and get enough sleep.

Starting a new job is hard work! Be good to yourself. If you’re rested and are not hungry, things are bound to go better!

■ **RIGHT OR WRONG?** ■

Read what each of these workers did on their first day on the job. Write **Right** or **Wrong** by each action.

- _____ 1. Lyle tried to learn his co-workers’ names right away.

- _____ 2. Danny wanted to be friendly. So he called his boss "Joe."
- _____ 3. Clark skipped breakfast to get to work on time. He ate a snack when he got to work.
- _____ 4. Maria went over the directions for each task she had to do. Then she asked questions about everything she didn't understand.
- _____ 5. Lily was sure she already knew how to do her new job. So she told her co-workers "no thanks!" when they offered to show her the ropes.
- _____ 6. Ken noticed some of the other workers had soft drinks at their desks. So he felt free to do so also.
- _____ 7. Cara noticed her boss was very neat and favored employees who turned in neat work. So she knew she'd have to try to be neat too.
- _____ 8. Liza's co-workers gave her the worst jobs to do. She thought they might be just testing her. She didn't say anything, since she was new.
- _____ 9. Bill's co-workers sent him all over the building looking for a left-handed hammer. When he found out it was a joke, he got mad so they'd know not to fool around with him.
- _____ 10. Marcie wasn't sure if it was O.K. to leave the building on her lunch break. She needed to do some errands, so she left quietly by the back door so no one would notice.
- _____ 11. LaToya arrived at work 10 minutes early the first day. She had allowed herself more time than she really needed.
- _____ 12. Raol invited all his co-workers to his place for a beer after his first day on the job.

- _____ 13. Lane's co-workers offered her drugs during break time. She refused even though they teased her.
- _____ 14. Mark couldn't read well. He was told to read the instructions, then repair a machine. Mark was afraid to say he couldn't read well enough to understand what to do. So he went ahead and tried to do the job anyway.

■ **WHAT DO YOU THINK?** ■

1. Name two ways a job and school are alike.

2. Name two ways they are different.

3. Whose responsibility is it to see that you learn to do your new job well? Why?

4. Whose responsibility is it to see that you get along with your boss and your co-workers? Why?

5. Most companies have a *probationary* period for new workers. This is a time to see if the new worker can do the job and fit in. A worker who does poorly during this time will be fired. What do

you think would be the most important things you should do to succeed in the probationary period?

■ WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES? ■

Write the consequences for each action at work and at school.

Action	At School	At Work
1. You don't finish work you're assigned.		
2. You make several mistakes in your work.		
3. You arrive an hour late.		
4. You can't get along with your teacher (boss).		
5. You put your work off until the last minute.		
<i>(continued)</i>		

Action	At School	At Work
6. You don't take anything very seriously.		
7. You take pride in doing your best work.		