

YOU



HAVE A JOB!
Office Etiquette

Congratulations you have a new job! The most obvious guidelines for being a good employee are similar to going to school: show up on time; respect your managers and co-workers; do the work that is expected of you; and go out of your way to be helpful to others. It's quite basic but let's discuss a few topics further.

Office outfits... People may not judge the core of your personality based on what you wear, but they will judge to a certain degree and they do notice what's appropriate or not. Dressing for the job is not the same as conforming or going against your identity. You can still show individuality while dressing appropriately for work.

For example, instead of wearing a shirt that makes a potentially offensive statement, find a harmless accessory that might express that same side of you. Instead of wearing a shirt with an offensive statement about being pro-war, you could wear a hair piece or a belt with an American flag on it. Instead of wearing a shirt with an offensive statement about anti-war, you could wear something with the peace symbol on it. **Be yourself and stand up for your views but don't be confrontational, obnoxious, or "in your face" about them.**

Every work environment has different rules and norms. Hopefully your employer will make their expectations clear but if not, trust your best judgment. If you are unsure, then you should follow the guidelines in this handout. Even after you've been at the job long enough to dress more relaxed, you should continue to dress appropriately, regardless of how your co-workers dress. If you are unsure that an outfit is acceptable, play it safe and don't wear it. If you absolutely must (for whatever reason?), then have a back-up outfit in your car, locker or desk in case you regret your decision.

If you're a female please realize there is sexy-elegant (which is OK) and there is sexy-desperate (which is inappropriate and diminishes your intelligence). Here's a rule of thumb: if you are showing skin on the top half of your body then don't reveal much skin on the bottom half of your body. In other words, if you are wearing a tank top or a low cut shirt, you should wear pants or a long skirt (or tights). Or if you are wearing a skirt or shorts and showing skin on your legs, don't wear a skimpy tank top or a low cut shirt. Trust me ladies, following this rule will create a nice balance in your appearance in more than just the work environment!

Comfort zones... Once you get comfortable in a job, it is easy to start slacking in the way you talk, the way you sit, the way you dress, and maybe the language you use. After a month or longer, you will observe the office norm and you might feel comfortable enough to act more relaxed. Relaxed is good because most people don't want to work with someone who comes across "prissy" and so overly "proper" that they are uncomfortable to be around, but there's still no need to swear or become careless. Continue to carry on your professional appearance because the managers are always watching. (And so are customers or clients!)

Even if you don't want to keep your job long enough to be promoted up the company ladder, you may stick around long enough to be offered a promotion. So why not behave like you deserve one? If you do plan to quit in the upcoming days, stay on the good side of your management in case you need them to write a letter of recommendation for new employment.



Be a relaxed and fun employee while maintaining mature composure:

- Sit like a mature adult.
- Avoid swearing.
- Continue to be on time.
- Do the work you were hired to do.
- Go out of your way to help people, when appropriate.
- Don't abuse work equipment for personal use.
- Keep your cell phone ringer on a polite tune, tone, and volume (or off).
- Be nice to everyone regardless of their employment status.
- Do not gossip about anyone in the office.
- Do not tell too many personal details about your love life or home life.
- If you really like a co-worker, establish a friendship by sharing thoughts, feelings and stories, but only share what you don't mind the rest of the office knowing... just in case s/he likes to gossip.
- Be prepared for the unknowns at work – Have an emergency bag of food in case you don't get lunch one day. It will help keep you focused and prevent you from feeling sick or cranky.
- Be sure you have personal products that you might need to get through the day. (Aspirin, your inhaler, stomach medicine, a bottle of water, feminine products, etc.)

How to Advance in Your Job



In addition the behavioral guidelines above, there are some technical things you can do to earn promotions.

- Learn everything you can about the company. Try to be aware of how the business operates overall, rather than having tunnel vision and only caring about your position or department.
- Be aware of how your specific work affects your co-workers' work.
- Ask your manager what you could be doing different or better.
- Ask your manager if there are any classes or special training you could enroll in to advance your skills.
- In good taste, try to find ways to add flare to your work so your manager can see your creativity.
- Don't make it a habit to cut corners in your work; do everything the way it is supposed to be completed, unless you can prove there's a better way.



- If you have the opportunity, try to increase your workload in hopes your manager will recognize and appreciate your efforts.
 - Only do this if you are sure you can handle it; remember you didn't get hired to work harder and get paid the same. But putting forth extra effort will increase your chances to get a promotion.
 - You'll want to communicate with your manager so they know you are interested in a promotion, otherwise they may be gracious of your extra work, but still not reward you accordingly.
 - If you do take on additional work, you will likely find yourself short of time to get everything completed. Know where it is appropriate to cut corners (if at all), in order to get it all done. Otherwise, don't take on the extra work if it will be done poorly. Learning to make these decisions will develop good time management skills.

Managing problems... Of course we hope no serious problems will arise at work but unfortunately, problems are very unpredictable. It's important you handle issues with grace and dignity.

Here are some potential circumstances –

If someone upsets you, take the high road and handle the situation without raising your voice, calling names, or spreading rumors. There are numerous scenarios but usually the situation would require the following steps:

- Stick up for yourself, if necessary.
- Apologize if necessary.

If further action is needed –

- Ask the individual if you can have a calm meeting at an appropriate time.
- If you can't talk to the individual calmly (or vice versa), then send an email if it's accessible, or drop them a note asking for a meeting.
- If they are not accepting your invitation to work things out, then go to a manager and let them direct you through the rest of the conflict. Managers are usually trained to mediate.

If you have an emergency at home and you can't make it to work, be sure to do your best to follow procedures for calling in absent. If sadly the emergency is a death, and you know your grieving process will be long, then you should talk openly with the manager or personnel director. You may think you have to quit to get away from it all but before you do, find out if there is a program or procedure in place to help you keep your job while also allowing you the time you need to grieve.

If your emergency is chronic, such as chronic emotional distress at home, or a car that keeps breaking down, then you must consult with the appropriate person at work. Otherwise, you'll find yourself backed in a corner where you keep making excuses. They might be believable at first, but it will take no time for

the manager to see a pattern developing. Let them know your problem up front and ask for help, patience, or understanding while you figure it out. Just think - if you need legal or emotional help, it is in their best interest to point you in the right direction. Or if you desperately need to get your car fixed and can't afford it, they might allow you to take an advance on your paycheck or to work overtime.

This is a good time to point out why it can be advantageous to get a feel for your company as a whole. If you understand the company's corporate culture – its aura – its belief system – its emotional make-up, then it will be easier to make the right decisions when you are in an uncomfortable situation or you are not confident in your existing choices.

Ending employment



It's time to quit your job... Assuming you are not entangled in legal hassles or sensitive issues in the workplace, you should quit your job with the same consideration you put toward getting hired. Employee turnover is a frustrating process for employers and it can be quite expensive; remember that fact if you are feeling so anxious to leave that you want to quit and leave them high and dry.

Some employers are easy to talk to and you might find yourself able to discuss quitting your job with them; and other employers...not so much. It's up to you to figure out your exit strategy, but no matter what, be sure to give them two weeks' notice before your last day. *If you have the time*, ask them if they need you to help with hiring or training the next person. Be sure to complete your current tasks and try not to get stuck starting new projects that you can't finish. If you have a friendly relationship with your co-workers, they may assist you in by taking on some of your job responsibilities until your position is filled. And finally, send your boss a Thank You note to express appreciation for your employment. Remember, you may need them for a referral at another job!

Uh-oh, you were let go... Typically the difference between being “fired” or “let go” is that being fired means it was personal, whereas being let go means the company couldn't financially support your position any longer.

If you have a confrontation with an employer and you're fired on the spot, then the damage is pretty much done. The best thing to do at that point is leave as quietly as possible. Be sure you have all your affairs in order: your paycheck, your belongings, and you've turned in keys or badges.

If you are let go, you should understand it is a company decision that may have been decided by someone higher up than your manager. Do not get regrettably angry or lose your temper. Ask what the specific reasons are for being let go and then have them tell you what is expected of you at that point: when is your last day; how many more pay checks are coming your way; ask if you have to sign anything; and be sure to return keys or badges.



Do your best to maintain some form of a relationship with your manager or somebody at this company. You may need a letter of recommendation from them, or they may be able to assist you in finding a new job.

“Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine.”

~Anthony J. D'Angelo, *The College Blue Book*