



10 Tips for Your First Year on the Job

1. **Learn everything you can about the company.**

Although you may have to do it while off the clock, take the time to read the organization's annual reports and company magazines. Also study the organizational chart. The more you know about the organization—what they do and how they do it—the better equipped you will be to fulfill the duties of your role.

2. **Ask a lot of questions; be an active listener.**

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Your colleagues and bosses alike understand that you are transitioning from a student to a professional and will be more than willing to help you when needed. Asking questions serves a dual purpose: 1) it continues your learning process; and 2) it helps you to create a positive image of a hard-working and motivated employee. When asking questions, always be certain to listen attentively. Although questions are great, asking the same question twice is not.

3. **Develop time management skills.**

Although you may have been able to pull an all-nighter to finish a term paper and still get an A in college, you will not be able to continue these habits in the workplace and achieve the same results. Make sure to set deadlines, giving yourself sufficient time not only to complete the task, but to complete it well.

4. **Seek opportunities for professional and personal development.**

Many organizations offer training sessions to further educate their employees. Participating in such trainings will show your commitment, while also giving you the skills, resources, and competencies to excel and advance in the organization.

5. **Accept responsibility when appropriate.**

It is expected that in your first year you will make several mistakes—after all, nobody is perfect. Therefore, it is important that you accept responsibility for your own errors. This will keep your conscience clear while also strengthening your reputation for being honest and forthright.

6. **Be prepared to work extra hours.**

You will not learn the most efficient ways to complete your tasks and projects overnight. During your first year, you will learn what works and what doesn't. Unfortunately, you will do this at the expense of working extra hours. Although not ideal, your hard work will be noticed and appreciated by your bosses and colleagues.



7. Make sure to be prepared for meetings.

Meetings are often a forum for many of your colleagues to get to know you and assess your capabilities. To showcase your talents, rather than highlight any weaknesses, make sure to be well versed in the topic you are discussing, have something to contribute, address your comments to the entire group, and listen to others' questions, comments, and concerns.

8. Find a mentor.

Seeking out a mentor in an organization is a great way to receive meaningful encouragement, constructive criticism, and feedback. Mentors help you understand the ins and outs of an organization, while simultaneously helping you to identify problems and create comprehensive action plans. Mentors also serve as a great resource for networking both inside and outside of the organization.

9. Learn how to market yourself and stay competitive within the organization.

Even after you are employed, it is important to continue your education and make yourself more marketable to your bosses and colleagues. To do this, you can obtain professional certifications, join professional groups, and volunteer to be a part of projects that interest you and which you feel you can contribute to.

10. Be nice and get to know your colleagues.

Avoid office politics and be nice to all staff, ranging from the custodial staff to the CEO. Furthermore, getting to know individuals from diverse backgrounds and different levels within the company will help you form more alliances and have access to more resources and knowledge within the organization.

Suggested reading:

Backpack to Briefcase: Steps to a Successful Career, A Life After Graduation Publication.

Work 101: Learning the Ropes of the Workplace Without Hanging Yourself, Elizabeth Freedman.

Questions? For further assistance, please reach out to Career Services at cservices@clarku.edu.