

Starting a new job

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Landing a new job can be exciting. But once the initial thrill wears off, many people find their stress levels rising. Starting at a new place of work with a new boss and unfamiliar work colleagues can, after all, be a daunting experience.

If it's your first job, you may well be feeling nervous about what's in store for you on your first day. Even if you've been working for years and are starting at a company in the same line of business as your old job, there'll no doubt be lots of new things to take on board. You'll have to learn how the new company operates, for instance, and maybe also get to grips with new technology and tools. And then there's getting to know your new boss and co-workers, not to mention the worry of having to fit in with your new work environment.

Thankfully, having an idea of what lies ahead and being prepared for the days and weeks to come can significantly help soothe new job jitters.

Did you know?

According to a survey of almost 1,500 workers and managers, learning new processes and procedures is seen as the greatest challenge for those starting a new job. (Source: Accountemps)

Your contract of employment

When you accept a job and your new employer agrees to pay you for your work, it means you have a work contract. This doesn't have to be in writing to be valid. But if you don't receive a written contract, your employer is obliged to give you a written statement of your main employment terms within two months of starting work.

The contract or statement should include the following details:

- Names of the employee and employer
- When the employment started
- Your job title and details of your pay (including overtime and bonus pay)
- How many hours you work (including overtime) and where you work
- Your holiday entitlement and pay
- Sick pay
- Redundancy pay
- Pension schemes
- Notice periods
- Dismissal, disciplinary and grievance procedures

When you receive your contract, read it carefully before signing it. Once you've signed, it means you've agreed to the terms of the contract.

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Your contractual rights start when you arrive for your first day and continue until your contract ends, which is usually when you give notice or if the terms of your contract are changed.

New job checks

When you start a new job, your employer may need to see proof of your identity, such as a driving licence or passport. They may also perform other checks, such as following up any references you gave when you applied for the job. You may also need a medical check-up in some circumstances, though you'll normally be advised about this before you start.

Workers from other countries may also have to provide a new employer with evidence that they have the right to work in the UK. Some jobs also require your employer to carry out a criminal record check before you can start (though this usually only applies to jobs where you'd be working with children or in healthcare).

How to make the right impression

One of the golden rules of starting a new job is to arrive on time, especially on your first day. Being punctual is important, and if you start late on your first day - and continue to be late every morning after that - it's not going to make a positive impression, to say the least.

If you want to come across as conscientious and responsible, treat your first day as you did your job interview. If your new place of work is in an area you don't usually travel to, consider doing a practice run of the journey before you start.

Check how long it will take you to get there at the same time of day you'll be starting, and build in extra time for traffic, commuting or other problems. If you're going to be using public transport on a journey you're not familiar with, you may even want to consider finding out whether there are often delays on your route by asking fellow passengers during your practice run.

Most importantly, try to get a good night's sleep before your first day, especially if you have to get up earlier than usual.

Office dressing

It's a good idea to find out what your new employer feels is acceptable in terms of what employees should wear to work before you start a new job. After all, few things make a worse impression than turning up on your first day wearing a completely inappropriate outfit. If you're not sure what to wear, don't be afraid to ask the person who hired you - it could save you a lot of embarrassment.

Ask questions

Nobody will be expecting you to know everything about your new job and your new place of work on the first day, week or even month. There will be lots of things you won't be sure about, but don't make the mistake of trying to look like you know what you're doing.

Ask your new boss and new co-workers as many questions as you need to - they'll be expecting you to do so. Writing notes about what you learn can help too, as you may be overloading your brain with too much new information during the first few days and weeks. Asking questions is also a good way to get to know the people in your new workplace (and you may be surprised how your

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new co-workers will warm to you if you ask for advice or help).

Also be prepared to answer lots of questions about your self during the first few days as people get to know you. Think about what you'd want to know about someone new - their name, where they live, where they used to work, what did they do at their previous job - and think about how you'd answer those questions. Having an idea of what you'd say in advance could make you appear confident, even if you're feeling nervous.

Be enthusiastic

Help your new employer to see you as having a can-do attitude and being a team player from the first day by showing that you're keen and upbeat. Be enthusiastic and helpful - but don't overdo it, or you'll appear too eager to please.

This doesn't mean you should offer to take on more work than you can handle. Try to bear in mind that you'll need time to learn the ropes, so don't make too many commitments at first - at least until you've found your feet. If you overcommit, it could affect your overall performance, especially during the early days of a new job.

Fitting in to your new work environment

It's never easy being the new person in any workplace. But there are things you can do to make fitting in a smooth rather than bumpy process:

- If you don't already know, ask your boss and co-workers what they expect from you
- Also get to know who's who in your new workplace, and the role each of your new co-workers plays
- Volunteer to help if you notice your co-workers are under a lot of pressure (even if you don't have the skills or knowledge to lend a hand, the offer will go down well)
- Start up conversations with co-workers during breaks to find out more about them - be attentive and try to avoid the temptation to talk about yourself too much
- Accept invitations to lunch or after-work activities. Also invite each of your new colleagues - at least those you'll be working directly with - to lunch or coffee to get to know them better
- Be respectful and courteous to everyone, from the boss right down to the work experience school-leaver
- Keep an open mind to working practices and operations. Even if you have experience doing the job you've been hired for, bear in mind that your new employer may do things differently. Try not to criticise if you think your way is better - this will alienate people rather than get them to like and accept you
- Don't forget to offer when it's your turn to make the tea, even on your first day (it will earn you lots of Brownie points)
- Don't be tempted to make personal calls or texts, send personal emails or check your social media pages during working hours - if you must do so at work, save these tasks for your lunch break. Remind friends and family members not to call you while you're at work (unless it's an emergency), or switch off your mobile phone until it's time to go home

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- Try to avoid talking about how much you loved - or hated - your old job. Never talk about how much you disliked your old boss, especially in front of your new one
- Speak up if you're feeling overwhelmed and don't be afraid to say you don't know something. If your new boss has put too much on your plate before you're ready for it, or if you're having difficulties understanding how certain things are done, it's much better to say so than to suffer in silence or try to figure out things yourself

The 90-day rule

One of the biggest mistakes people make when starting a new job is to think they have to excel themselves from day one. But nobody, especially your new boss, is expecting you to work miracles before you settle in.

Some employment experts claim it takes around 90 days to learn the ropes of a new job and become fully effective. So give yourself time, and you could avoid making mistakes or burning yourself out.

Useful links

If you are experiencing any of the issues covered in this guide, in the first instance call our free helpline on 0808 801 0550. Our Advisors will listen without judging and will work with you as best they can to achieve a positive outcome. If you prefer you can email: helpline@ltcharity.org. Visit our website: www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk. It's full of useful information about the kind of issues we know people who work in the licensed trade face.

Other sources of information:

National Careers Service

nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

Information and advice about all things job and career related.

Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

For free practical advice on a wide range of issues, including the things you need to know when you're in work.