

# Getting Ahead at Work



Off to a Good Start

Learning the Job

Succeeding on the Job

Workplace Problems and Solutions

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## PREVIEW | Off to a Good Start

■ How much do you already know about the material in this unit? Circle letters or words to correctly complete the sentences. Answers are upside down at the bottom of the page.

1. When you meet new people on the job, you should ( ask them to spell their names / shake hands with them ).
2. When you start work, you need to know the time allotted for ( your lunch break / reading the fax directions ).
3. An employee ( handbook / evaluation ) is a manual that explains work-related information.
4. An employee's *grievance* is a ( bonus / complaint ).
5. *Harassment* on the job is ( unwanted behavior / consideration ) by another.
6. It's important to remember your co-workers' names and to make note of their ( cars / responsibilities ).
7. On every paycheck, you will see that *deductions* have been \_\_\_\_\_ from your salary.
  - a. added
  - b. taken
  - c. borrowed
8. The letters *FICA* on your paycheck stub stand for
  - a. Federal Insurance Credit Association.
  - b. First Income Collection Agency.
  - c. Social Security.
9. Your *salary* is the same as your
  - a. gross pay.
  - b. net pay.
  - c. Social Security number.
10. A savings and loan business that serves company employees is called a
  - a. union office.
  - b. headquarters.
  - c. credit union.

Answers: 1. shake hands with them 2. your lunch break 3. handbook 4. complaint 5. unwanted behavior 6. responsibilities 7. b 8. c 9. a 10. c

## LESSON

# 1 The Importance of First Impressions

When we meet another person for the first time, we get a quick idea of what that person is like. This is called a first impression. When you start a new job, others will judge you quickly. For that reason, it's important to think about the image you present. Remember these six simple guidelines:

*First, be sure your clothing is appropriate for the workplace.* If your clothes are too fancy, you'll look like you're trying to attract attention. If your clothes are too casual, it may appear that you don't think your workplace is important. Clothes that are too tight or revealing are never appropriate. Choose "middle of the road" clothes, such as a neat blouse or shirt and nice slacks. Try to remember how people dressed when you interviewed. (After your first day, you'll have a better idea of what's appropriate.)

*Second, when you meet others—men or women—look them in the eye and extend your hand for a handshake.* Smile in a friendly way and make an effort to remember the other person's name.

*Third, concentrate on learning your job throughout the day.* Direct your effort toward doing your tasks correctly. Don't worry if you can't do everything right on the first day. Show that you are trying hard and willing to learn. It takes a while to learn any job. Don't be shy about asking questions or asking for help. Your efforts will be noticed.



*Fourth, make sure to take breaks only when you're supposed to.* Don't be late back from lunch. Don't stretch out your breaks. Bad habits are easy to get into and hard to break.

*Fifth, don't expect special favors or ask for them.* Remember that you're one of a group of employees. Don't expect your supervisor to give you extra time or special attention.

*Sixth, try your best to do work that you're proud of.* Developing your own special skills and abilities can be an interesting challenge. When it comes to your job performance, never settle for "good enough." Try hard to do a little bit better every day. Over time, you'll discover that one of the most rewarding aspects of your life can be succeeding in the workplace.

■ **Thinking It Over:** Write **T** for *true* or **F** for *false*.

1. \_\_\_\_ You shouldn't offer to shake hands until the other person puts out his hand.
  2. \_\_\_\_ Making eye contact is important when you meet someone new.
  3. \_\_\_\_ You shouldn't expect special favors just because you're a new employee.
  4. \_\_\_\_ Sometimes it takes a while to learn new job tasks.
  5. \_\_\_\_ Men and boys greet each other with a handshake, but women don't.
  6. \_\_\_\_ Your supervisor will notice if you're working hard.
  7. \_\_\_\_ It's okay to take as much time as you like for lunch.
  8. \_\_\_\_ Your supervisor won't mind if you go home early.
  9. \_\_\_\_ Your boss will be impressed if you wear very dressy clothes to work.
2. To *put forth effort* means to
    - a. try your best.
    - b. take short breaks.
    - c. ask others to help you.
  3. *Appropriate* clothing is always
    - a. suitable for the occasion.
    - b. stylish and expensive.
    - c. loose and comfortable.
  4. You *extend* your hand when you
    - a. stretch it.
    - b. reach out.
    - c. make a fist.
  5. *Allotted* time is
    - a. too much.
    - b. variable.
    - c. a certain amount.

■ **Everyday Math**

On his first day of work, Jake found out he had 45 minutes for lunch and two 10-minute breaks during the day. Altogether, how much of his 8-hour day did Jake spend *not* working?

\_\_\_\_\_ minutes

■ **Key Vocabulary**

1. A *first impression* is the opinion others have of you
  - a. after a long acquaintance.
  - b. when you first meet.
  - c. when they change their minds.

■ **On Your Own**

Tell how you could show your supervisor you are eager to learn.

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## LESSON

## 2 An Employee Handbook

When you start your job, your supervisor may give you an employee handbook to look over. If you don't receive one, it's a good idea to ask if a handbook is available. This booklet contains the basic information you'll need to know about your job and workplace. Usually, an employee handbook—sometimes called a *manual*—is fairly short and easy to read.

A typical handbook will tell you about company policies. It explains such things as time sheets and shift times, sick leave, vacations, official holidays, and the location of supplies. The purpose of the handbook is to answer questions that new employees might ask:

*How do I report my extra hours to be paid at the overtime rate? Where can I park, or how can I get a company parking permit?*

It may also explain how and when employee evaluations are conducted. These evaluations, sometimes called *performance reviews*, are special sessions when you and your work are judged by a supervisor.

The handbook may also explain safety precautions you should take to protect yourself in the workplace. The handbook explains what you should do if you're injured on the job. It will tell you where to find assistance and how to get emergency care if you've been exposed to chemicals. It may tell you where to find first aid supplies or how to help injured co-workers who are unable to help themselves.



The handbook may also offer information on filing a *grievance*—a complaint or concern. By following certain procedures, you can get your grievance addressed by the person or company that employs you. For example, one type of grievance may have to do with *harassment*. To be harassed is to be repeatedly bothered or annoyed by someone else on the job. It may be another employee who is pestering you to go on a date. Perhaps someone is touching you or hanging around you all the time. It might even be that someone is interfering with your work so you won't get credit for it. In any case, you don't need to feel helpless. If you decide to file a grievance, someone will investigate the problem and offer a solution.

Most employee handbooks give tips on how to become a valuable member of the workplace team. So read the whole book thoroughly the first or second day of your job. Ask questions of your supervisor if you don't understand something. It's a good idea to get everything clear in your mind before you begin. This information will help you to stay satisfied and safe on the job.

■ **Thinking It Over**

1. An employee handbook is provided in
  - a. all workplaces.
  - b. many workplaces.
  - c. the library.
2. The handbook may explain
  - a. employee evaluations.
  - b. other employees' records.
  - c. names of poor employees.
3. If you're not given an employee handbook, you can
  - a. write one yourself.
  - b. ask if the company has one.
  - c. buy one at the bookstore.
4. The purpose of the handbook is to
  - a. make you well-informed.
  - b. ensure that you'll get a raise.
  - c. give you the supervisor's home address.
5. You should study the handbook
  - a. at the end of the first week.
  - b. in the first two days on the job.
  - c. every day you work.
6. Reading safety precautions may prevent you from
  - a. getting injured.
  - b. being promoted.
  - c. being hired.

■ **Everyday Math**

Jonah's pay is \$8.75 per hour. He'll earn \$14.50 per hour for overtime per the employee handbook. He worked five eight-hour shifts and

three hours of overtime. How much did he earn that week?

\$\_\_\_\_\_

■ **Key Vocabulary:** Write a letter to match each **boldface** word with its meaning.

1. \_\_\_\_ **handbook**
2. \_\_\_\_ **precaution**
3. \_\_\_\_ **evaluation**
4. \_\_\_\_ **supervisor**
5. \_\_\_\_ **assistance**
6. \_\_\_\_ **grievance**
  - a. judgment
  - b. manager
  - c. help
  - d. complaint
  - e. manual
  - f. warning about safety hazards

■ **Recalling Details:** Name five types of information you may find in an employee handbook.

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■ **On Your Own**

A co-worker insists on going to lunch with you. Sometimes he or she takes a hold of your arm and won't let you walk away. Now the same co-worker has asked to be moved to the work space next to yours. What should you do?

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## LESSON

### 3 Fitting In with Co-Workers

A big part of job satisfaction comes from the way you feel about your co-workers—and the way they feel about you. All relationships won't be the same. You'll really like some people and want them to be your friends outside of work. Others, you won't like nearly as well. But, when you're new on the job, your goal should be to get along with *everyone*. Your first priority is to do your job as best you can.

When you first meet your fellow employees, you should concentrate on remembering their names. Notice who's who. That means paying attention to the different job titles and responsibilities they have. As you work, notice how your co-workers follow company procedures.

Check in with the company's supply clerk to learn how to restock your own work supplies. Do this on a regular basis—such as weekly or monthly—and keep them handy. Sometimes, it may be tempting to “borrow” supplies from others. But even if you're in a rush, be sure to ask first. Don't just remove something—a pair of scissors, a wrench, or a clipboard—that someone else will need. Your co-worker may be irritated or inconvenienced if you help yourself without permission.

Stay in your own work area. If you're always “visiting” someone else's work space, that person isn't doing his or her work. If you annoy your co-workers, they may react by avoiding or complaining about you.

Be aware that there will always be gossip in any company. Gossip can be



tempting. You may want to agree with a criticism you hear about someone else. Or you may be curious about a co-worker's personal life. But it isn't wise to get involved with such conversations. If you do, someone might say that you're taking sides against someone else.

Besides not talking about others, you should resist talking about your own personal life while at work. Why give the gossips something more to talk about? No one needs to know that your girlfriend is mad at you, that you talked a policeman out of a speeding ticket, or what you did on Saturday night.

Instead, stay focused on the tasks you were hired to do. Of course, you should be friendly and helpful to others when the opportunity arises. Good manners count. Remember that it's never a mistake to be considerate or to thank someone who has done something helpful. Getting along with your co-workers just makes sense. In the long run, your work experience will be as positive as *you* make it.



■ **Thinking It Over:** Write **T** for *true* or **F** for *false*.

1. \_\_\_\_ It's important to get along with co-workers as you're learning your new job.
2. \_\_\_\_ If you don't have something you need, just borrow it from someone else.
3. \_\_\_\_ When you hang around someone else's work space, you may be annoying the person.
4. \_\_\_\_ If you don't remember your co-workers' names after the first month, it's not important.
5. \_\_\_\_ Gossip occurs in only a small number of companies.
6. \_\_\_\_ Even if you feel like criticizing someone else, it isn't smart to do so.
7. \_\_\_\_ To make yourself seem interesting, tell everyone about your weekend activities.
8. \_\_\_\_ Never associate with co-workers after hours.
9. \_\_\_\_ It's all right to take sides in personal arguments among co-workers.

■ **Key Vocabulary**

1. If you *replenish* your supplies on a regular basis, you \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Company *procedures* are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

3. When you *resist* gossiping, you \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

■ **Everyday Math**

T.J. loans Jason \$12 until payday. When payday comes, Jason hands T.J. a \$50 bill and asks T.J. to give him change. T.J. has one \$20 bill and one \$5 bill. What other bills does he need to make the exact change?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

■ **On Your Own**

1. You've been at work for one week. Every day your three co-workers ask you to have lunch at a nearby cafe. You want to go, but you don't have enough money. What should you tell them?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. You've been at work for three days. One of your co-workers calls you Cheryl, although your name is Sharon. It's beginning to bother you a lot. What might you say or do?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON

## 4 Interpreting a Paycheck

It's quite a thrill to hold that first paycheck in your hands! Getting paid makes all of your hard work seem worthwhile. Many employers even offer *direct deposit* of your paycheck into a bank account—so you don't ever have to pick up your check in person, or go to the bank to deposit your check. You'll still receive an earnings statement, though.

If you've never had a paycheck before, you may need some help understanding your earnings statement. This is the check stub attached to your check. Your salary is listed there, of course. It's called *gross pay*. But the amount you actually receive is less. Why are these two figures different? Because *deductions* have been taken from your gross pay. Your employer withheld certain amounts from your earning to pay for other things. The amount remaining after deductions is your *net pay*.

Two deductions are always required to be taken from your paycheck. The first is Federal Income Tax, and the second is Social Security, or FICA. Federal Income Tax is the part of your salary paid to the Treasury of the United States. Social Security is money you contribute to a plan that supports disabled people and senior citizens.

Other deductions may be state tax, health insurance, disability insurance, voluntary donations to charities such as United Way, union dues, and contributions to accounts you may have at the company's credit union.

The *state tax* is the money paid from your salary to the state treasury. Not all states require their residents

to pay a tax, but most do. The *health insurance* deduction is for your membership in a plan that helps pay your medical bills. The *disability insurance* payment is for a plan that pays employees who can't work because of injury or illness. The *United Way* deduction goes to local organizations that help people in need. In some jobs, *union dues* are subtracted. This money pays for your membership in an organization that helps workers negotiate things like pay and benefits from employers. A *credit union* account contribution goes to a savings and loan business that services company employees.

Every company or organization has its own list of deductions. Rick Marshall works for the Applegate Cannery. His earning statement looks like this:

<b>Rick Marshall</b>	SS#101-20-3456
Gross Pay	\$895.00
Deductions:	
Fed. Tax	\$98.45
FICA	71.60
Health Ins.	107.40
United Way	3.00
Union Dues	32.00
<b>Net Pay</b>	<b>\$582.55</b>

Your earnings statement will not be identical to Rick's. But you'll find some of the same categories listed. What's the *most important* reason you should read your earnings statement? To understand what each deduction is for and make sure the amount is correct. When you begin a new job, talk to the payroll clerk. Make sure that all your information is correct.