

THE LITTLE GUIDE TO NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF WORK



FutureManagers
SIYAFUNDA • SIYAKHULA

Introduction

In this booklet, we provide some handy information, tips and hints that many people entering the workplace for the first time want to know but are never formally taught at school or college.

We begin with that most important **first day** – there are **checklists** you can use to prepare for and navigate the big day. We also look at **workplace etiquette** and unpack the do's and don'ts of workplace behaviour. We investigate **social media** platforms and learn about when sharing is not that caring.

Once the first hurdles are covered, we look at sustaining your presence in the workplace and learn some handy hints for the **first month** on how to get ahead. We also cover **office gossip** – how to identify the type and how to respond in each situation.

We provide some insights into the **different cultures** you'll come across at work and in your social life. We are a rainbow nation, and we should be respectful of everyone's beliefs and cultures.

Of course, finance is important because you're working for the money! So, we check out some starter **bank accounts** and look at how to register for tax and file your **tax returns**.

It's a crazy journey into the working world, but with these guidelines you will soon master your career path. Best of luck!



Nailing the first day

Onboarding begins when you accept the offer and spans a period of transition. This includes orientation, which begins on your first day at work and is filled with introductions and information.

The following checklists are detailed and you may not need all the points. Create your own lists.

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Arrive early – at least 15 minutes beforehand.
- Plan your commute – know the best route, where to park, public transport routes etc. Reach out beforehand and ask about company parking or transportation offered.
- Prepare a list of questions. This has been detailed in your first-day checklist.
- Dress for your position – reach out beforehand to ask for the dress code.
- Be organised – bring your own stationery and notebook.
- Study the company tools – know which software they use as operating platforms, timekeeping, backup, daily work, etc.

FIRST-DAY CHECKLIST

Your attitude

- Bring positive energy. Be friendly, smile and thank everyone who helps you. Be authentic and enthusiastic in a quiet way until you're more settled.
- Prepare an elevator pitch – about 15 to 20 seconds of your history that is interesting and funny.
- Silence your phone. Only use it to save numbers of colleagues or join work groups.
- Use positive body language – sit or stand straight, shoulders back. Face the person talking and try to make eye contact.
- Communicate verbally – not speaking could send the message that you're tired, frustrated, or unhappy. Relax and show that you are grateful to be there.



Your learning curve

- Be prepared to learn a lot!
- Clarify expectations – you should get a list of responsibilities on the first day. Find the person who will mentor you as you learn.
- Learn the location of everything.
- You may receive a training pack with materials that contain everything you need to know. Just listen and observe at first and make notes.
- Ask about general work requirements – email address, auto signature for emails, work WhatsApp groups, etc. Keep a list of the usernames and passwords in a safe place.
- Ask about training in the company tools you studied in preparation and any new ones you receive.
- Ask HR if there are any documents you need to complete e.g. pension/RA, medical aid, etc.
- Ask questions but listen first, make notes, and ask afterwards. Write down everything, even the most obvious things. Don't interrupt during training – wait for the question time.
- Keep your list of questions handy and add or delete as the day goes along. Ask the questions at the appropriate times:
 - Who do I report to? Is there an *organisational chart* I can use?
 - How will my performance be reviewed? How frequently are these reviews?
 - What decisions am I in charge of making? Are there decision-making policies I can follow?
 - Which cross-functional teams do we work with most often?

Never share your passwords with anyone except your manager.



Your social cues

- Be humble when you first start using past knowledge and skills. Be respectful of company processes and only suggest alternatives if you think they will be an improvement. And then, suggest the change in an approachable way.
- Accept lunch invitations – it's a good way to meet your colleagues and learn more about the company culture.
- Get to know your colleagues/team – Ask some icebreaker questions such as:
 - Do you have any pets?
 - What was your first job?

- What's one piece of career advice you would give to a new hire?
- What book are you currently reading?
- Thank everyone who offers help.
- Avoid office gossip.
- Take note of body language. The way your colleagues/team position themselves when you talk to them will tell you if you have their full attention or not. They might want to say something short and hurry back to work, and not have a long chat at that moment.
- If you wish to ask or talk to a colleague urgently on a work-related matter, and they are already talking to another colleague or occupied with a task, do not stand near them and wait. Rather tell them that you want to ask them something later, or send an email and wait for their response.
- Show common courtesy. It's always good to be respectful to your colleagues, no matter their position in the company.

4 *ways to show interest in others*



Listen when they speak ...



Look them in the eye ...



Ask follow-up questions ...



Remember things they tell you ...

Workplace etiquette

You've survived your first day and you're settling into the office routine. How do you maintain that good first impression you worked so hard to create?

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

- Pay attention to the dress code in the office. Dress respectfully and appropriately.
- **Dress for the position you want**, not the position you have. If you aim to be a manager one day, adapt your style to match theirs.
- Clothes must be clean, ironed and mended. Assess yourself critically every morning and ask yourself: is this the best version of how you want to present yourself today?
- Footwear should be comfortable and appropriate. High heels will hurt if you're on your feet all day. Slip-slops are more suitable for the beach and the clappity noise may irritate co-workers. Closed shoes work better in a workshop environment where falling objects could injure you.
- Hair should be clean and neat. Makeup is not a requirement, but it does help to hide blemishes if you feel conscious about them.

PERSONAL HABITS

- Limit your personal calls during the day. If you have to take them, keep them brief. If you are in an open environment, take the call outside to avoid disturbing others.
- The same applies to emails and social media time. Only answer time-sensitive messages and emails. You can attend to the rest during your lunchtime, at home or over the weekends.



- Do not use your work email for personal activities like online shopping or personal messaging. Create your own email address for free using Gmail.
- Office stationery is for use in the office only. Avoid the temptation to take items home for your family or schoolchildren. This is considered theft and your company could view this very seriously.
- Do not invite personal friends or family into your workspace without permission from your supervisor. You may give them a quick tour, but then meet them outside the office.
- Avoid talking loudly in the office where it disturbs other workers.
- Ear pods or headphones are a great way to listen to music, keep you focused and block out any office noise. However, keep one ear slightly open to make sure you don't miss your name being called or other discussions you need to be aware of.

OFFICE BREAKS

- Take a break every few hours. Move away from your desk so your mind and body can relax.
- If you **have** to eat at your desk, avoid strong-smelling foods like boiled eggs or curried fish. Also, eat quietly or time your meals with the rest of the office so no one is disturbed.
- Lunch stored in the fridge should be sealed and labelled with your name and the date. Remove any uneaten food after 1–2 days to avoid nasty smells in the fridge.
- Find out which office supplies you are allowed to use. Don't assume biscuits, muffins, spreads or other items are free to use. Always check first. Usually, it's only milk, sugar, tea and coffee.
- If you bring your own mug to the office, mark it with your name.
- Your contract will stipulate tea and lunch breaks. Smoke breaks should be worked into these times and are not in addition to tea and lunch breaks. Find out about the office smoking policy if you are a smoker. Try not to have the scent of smoke on your clothing or breath if you work close to colleagues or customers who may feel ill.





WORKSPACE

- Keep your workspace neat and clean. Remove all dirty dishes to the kitchen, wash them and pack them away at the end of the day.
- Have a box of tissues and some hand sanitiser handy. A breath mint or throat lozenge is also handy when you have a dry cough you want to subdue.
- You can place personal items on your desk, but avoid leaving valuable items lying around as they could go missing. It's great to personalise your workspace as you will spend a lot of time there and should feel relaxed and comfortable.
- Do not leave confidential items unattended on your desk.
- Lock away bags and devices if you are going to be away from your workspace for a while.

HYBRID WORKING

- Clock your time diligently. Log all your hours.
- Let someone know if you are going to leave your desk for a while.
- Keep the same workspace as you would in the office. Be organised!
- Use technology to always be available. Use your camera in meetings to establish rapport with your colleagues and try to meet up with them at least once a month.
- Make sure your deliverables are met and are on time – this way your hybrid working experience will work for everyone.



Social media etiquette



If you recognise all these logos **and** use them in your work or personal life, you are on top of your social media game! However, be very careful about how you use social media and what you share – once it's out there you cannot get it back, no matter how many times you delete it.

Social media gives you access to the global village. Your conversations will also appear to other users around the world. It's a way to connect and network with other people with similar interests.

However, there are rules about sharing information about the company you work for. Company privacy is very important. Imagine the scenario: you are working on developing a new app that will change the way maps are seen on cell phones. So, you post: "I love working on the new map app – wait till you see the warning icons!" **What have you done?** You've just told the world – including your company's competitors – what your company is developing and have ruined any advantage they might have had by keeping it confidential until the launch.



NEVER SHARE ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR WORK WITHOUT PERMISSION

This is the golden rule – it doesn't matter if it's about colleagues (they may not want to be on social media), work development or even about social events. Keep your work and your personal life completely separate on social media.



Having said all this, LinkedIn is a great work social media tool. It is primarily a work-based platform where you indicate your availability to work, apply for advertised jobs, learn about other people's opinions and perspectives, and very often hear about innovations in the industry you're interested in.

This is a good place to have work interaction on social media, add colleagues as contacts, see who they follow, build your network, follow groups or people who can provide valuable insight into your chosen career and be up to date on all the latest news. This shows your managers you have an interest in what you do and provides interesting topics of conversations when you're waiting for a meeting to start or standing in an elevator with a senior colleague.

7 *habits to survive the first month ... and beyond*

1. SAY 'YES'

When you first start working you want to create a good impression. Don't be the person who says, "That's not in my job description." Instead, be the person who says, "Yes, how can I help?" and is willing to learn. You want to be the sponge who soaks up all the information and can eventually step into any role because you are so multi-skilled and versatile.



If you've never done the task before, ask for help or ask questions about how to complete it:

- When is it due?
- What tools/information do I need to complete it?
- Who can I ask if I'm not sure of something?
- Does anyone have to check it before I complete it?

If you are busy with other tasks, ask where the new task should be positioned in terms of priority.

You will learn more skills and more information to help future team members and will be seen as a reliable employee with your 'can do' attitude. It doesn't matter what position you're in, always say yes and work out how.

2. BE RELIABLE

This follows on from saying yes – if you say yes, then do it when you promised.

Remember, the person asking you might not know about the other tasks you've been given. If you say yes and the deadline conflicts with another one you are already committed to, speak up. Keep everyone updated if deadlines move – they are relying on you to help them meet their own deadlines. Don't assume that they know your existing workload.

3. WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN

Never assume you'll remember everything you hear. At the end of every day, rewrite your notes into a new notebook

or type it up on your computer under

separate headings. This serves two purposes:

organising your thoughts and revising your notes.

Never assume:
'assume' makes
an 'ass' out of
'u' and 'me'.

Refer to these notes before you start a specific task and update your notes with anything new that you learn. If there are gaps in your notes, go back to the person the next day to ask, or send an email if it needs written confirmation or links to be sent.

Your notes don't have to be words only – sketches and diagrams help record information in a visual way that makes it easier to remember.

4. IF YOU ASK A QUESTION, OFFER A SOLUTION AS WELL

It's often easier to ask how to do something without trying to figure it out yourself first. While it's important to ask if you're not sure, it's easier to understand the answer if you have given it some thought first.

In other words, when you ask a question, come up with a suggested solution as well. For example, instead of asking, "Where do I file this?", ask, "Do I file this under Invoices?"

This shows you've put some thought into the issue. It also engages your mind and makes it easier to understand the answer.



5. KNOW YOUR VALUE BUT ALSO YOUR LIMITATIONS

You are an important part of the workplace, no matter how insignificant you think your role is. If it wasn't important, you would not be paid to do the work.



Understand your role and the skills and knowledge you bring to the role. If you have a skill that your boss or co-workers are not aware of, share it with them. Offer to do a task that will showcase that skill. No one will ask you to do a task if they think you can't do it.

However, know your limitations as well. Don't say yes if you know you won't be able to do the task. Don't offer to help on the factory floor if you haven't had training in the equipment, for example. (You can use this to your advantage too – remedy a limitation by getting the necessary training!)

6. NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

Every time you leave your home, it's an opportunity to build on your network. Meet as many people as you can in your workplace, college, gym, clubs, and so on.

When you land your first job, get to know other people in the business. Develop relationships with different departments and teams and be seen as the nice employee who says yes and understands their role. Show interest in their roles – it's important to see the big picture and to know how your role affects theirs. You can even use this knowledge to improve your own delivery and processes.



7. BE POSITIVE



Be that person ... the one who always sees the positive side. You don't have to sprinkle glitter on every moan you hear – even that gets annoying after a while – but if you are asked directly, give it a positive spin. For example, if someone complains about the brand of coffee, you can say that you're grateful for the coffee because you usually miss your morning fix at home. It deflects any unhappiness and gives others a new perspective on the situation.



Dealing with office gossip

Hey! Did you hear that his wife is having an affair?

Don't tell anyone, but I heard he stuffed up on a project and now he's going to be demoted.

Sigh ... they've been together a lot lately. You know that can only mean one thing, right?

Workplace gossip is common. People speaking in low tones and keeping quiet when you walk in the room. Very often, repeating a 'harmless' rumour can do a lot of damage. It can break down team spirit, affect workplace morale and damage reputations. However, there are some useful forms of gossip too. How can you tell the difference?



USEFUL GOSSIP

Most gossip is unavoidable and can even help us in the long run. These are “green light” chats.

Banter

At end-of-week work get-togethers, the stories usually turn to discussing people. This is what everyone has in common. It could be about who's dating who, or the details of a coworker's divorce. As long as it's kind, light and honest, it's just banter. It helps create cohesion in the office.

Good-to-know colleagues

Hopefully your workplace has one of those people who always knows what's going on – which managers to avoid, who's leaving the company and why, and the most efficient copier in the office. These are things that HR can't tell you. When you know about new projects or a toxic manager, it's much easier to safely navigate a workplace environment. Just remember to find out the facts for yourself as well. Workplace gossip passed on from one to another often skews the information.



Helpful chit chat

While chatting about your colleagues isn't the best way to pass time, it can be helpful to say nice things about others. Not only does it boost their reputations, it also builds team morale and creates a positive vibe.

Be honest and offer opinions such as: "He's such a laugh" or "She's been awesome in helping me settle in" and "I'm lucky to have him as a supervisor. He's so patient." It often helps others to see these people in a positive light too.

POINTLESS GOSSIP

Some workplace gossip serves no constructive purpose at all. These are the "amber light" chats.

Remember!
Those who gossip
with you, will
gossip about you!

Office slander

Let's face it. It's easy to relish the details of a scandalous affair or a perceived poor management decision. But by spreading these stories, you are dragging someone's name through the mud. No one feels safe in a workplace where everyone's personal lives are examined. Let the stories stop with you. Don't play a part in ruining someone's day.

Have some useful replies handy to deflect these conversations:

Sorry, I had my earphones in.
I don't really know what you said.

Oh gosh, I just zoned out.
I've been focused on getting this report done today.

I didn't really have that experience with
that person. They've always been nice to me.

Just a vacant smile clearly shows you're just not interested.



Jealousy makes you nasty

People work for money, so this naturally becomes a common point of discussion at bonus or increase time. Avoid discussing your payslip with anyone – in fact, most companies forbid this in their Code of Conduct. It's confidential. You don't need colleagues wondering why they are being paid less, have a lower or no annual raise, or have different concessions.

If it's an issue at your workplace, suggest to HR that they act with transparency and give benchmarks around pay and raises and shares its policies around promotion. If you are approached, just say you've been told not to discuss your payslip and don't want to offend anyone in your first year of working.

DESTRUCTIVE GOSSIP

Some forms of workplace gossip are abusive and destructive and are definite "red light" chats.

Sabotage

Imagine the regional manager is retiring and a few people apply for the position. Suddenly, someone starts a nasty rumour about someone else that could ruin their career. In this scenario, one person is trying to ruin an opponent's chances of promotion and advance their own.

This is destructive, dishonest, and shows a complete lack of integrity. Unfortunately, it can also be difficult to prove. If you happen to have written proof of a malicious rumour, report it to HR immediately. And never ever spread the rumour – rather inform HR so that they can deal with it.

Grapevine culture

If you are in a workplace where the only way of finding out things like upcoming projects and new employees is via the office grapevine, the company culture may be dysfunctional.



Remember, rumours are often skewed or completely false. The only way to know the facts is to ask Management or HR for regular feedback on company events.

In the meantime, try to filter out what is useful and what is toxic. This is hard to navigate in your first few months, so the best advice is to not pass on the rumour and instead, think about what you heard. Then seek the advice of a senior staff member or manager to clarify the rumour.

Smear campaign

It's never fun when people gossip about you. Not only is it hurtful, but it can impact your career when people hear and believe unfair stories about you. If this happens, avoid being tempted to hit back. Instead, spend time with people who know you and 'get' you and will take your side. Gossip is often about power games, so their hurtful words reflect back on their character, not yours. Rise above it, talk to people you trust, and put up those protective psychological walls.

Here are some steps to take when you're the subject of workplace gossip:

- **Ask the speakers to stop.** If you ask calmly and politely that they stop discussing your personal details in a public workplace, they may respect your request and stop immediately.
- **Talk to your manager.** If they continue, ask for advice from your supervisor or manager. Don't name-shame anyone at this point – just ask for help on dealing with it and how to stop the gossip. You may even get a different perspective on the issue. Your manager could even address the workplace in general about not gossiping about personal issues in the workplace.
- **Consult HR.** If nothing works, you may need to report this to HR. This could become a serious matter as you would file a complaint and name the speakers who will be called in. So, make sure you are prepared to follow this route and that the issue is not frivolous but quite serious.

WORDS HAVE POWER





Words are powerful. They have an impact on how you feel, the company culture and the team morale. A little comment like "Is that what you're wearing to the meeting?" or "That colour is great on you!" can ruin or make your day. Carefully choose what you repeat: Is it relevant? Is it helpful? Is it true? A true professional is someone who knows how to stop nasty gossip and avoids office politics.



Cultures in the workplace

Whether you are interacting with your colleagues or the Board or dealing with suppliers, customers and other external parties, you are bound to interact with someone who has a different religion, culture or belief system to yours.

To interact in a respectful manner, you should understand the needs and traditions of every culture. This is only the tip of the iceberg – do your research and update your calendars at the start of each year so that you can wish all your customers, suppliers and colleagues correctly. The religions below account for about 80% of the world's population.

Islam	Christianity	Judaism	Hinduism
			
Food			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be Halaal • No pork • No alcohol • No meat of carnivores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No restrictions besides personal preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be Kosher • No pork and shellfish • Meat and dairy cannot be prepared together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No beef, but may eat dairy • No animal-derived fats • No alcohol
Holidays			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eid ul-Fitr • Ramadan • Eid ul-Adha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas • Easter • Ascension Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannukah • Yom Kippur • Purim • Passover • Rosh Hashanah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diwali • Holi • Navaratri • Krishna Janmashtami • Ram Navami
Holy day(s)			
Fridays, with prayers (juma'a) at noon	Sundays	Shabbat from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset	Sabbath is on Saturdays



If you are dealing with international businesses, be aware of the public holidays in each country and plan your transactions around them.



FOOD PREFERENCES

Many people choose a healthy lifestyle that does not involve animals or animal products. If you have to arrange catering for clients, either at the office or at a restaurant, be aware of their preferences and choose a menu and venue that will create a good experience for them:

- **Vegetarian** – doesn't eat meat, chicken or fish, and sometimes other animal products too
- **Vegan** – doesn't eat or use any products derived from animals
- **Pescatarian** – doesn't eat meat and poultry but includes fish, milk, milk products, and eggs
- **Flexitarian** – mostly vegetarian but occasionally eats meat, meat products, poultry and fish

Other food preferences include diabetics, gluten intolerance, dairy intolerance and low carb.



Choosing a bank account

If you're working for a formal business who runs a payroll, you're going to need a bank. Carefully decide what you need. Then draw up a table of what each bank can offer you. But also remember that if you realise the bank is not for you, you can always change. It's important to have a good relationship with your bank for when you apply for home loans, car finance or overdrafts.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A BANK ACCOUNT

- **Size of bank:** Big banks have more resources and branches, and many different offerings. Small banks are more personalised and more in tune with the local market.
- **Credit checks:** Large banks will take a low credit score more seriously than a smaller community bank. What is your credit score?
- **Online banks:** Although their popularity is growing, they are impersonal. Do you need a good relationship with its bank? This can only be done with a traditional bank.
- **Location:** You need a bank close to where you live, work and travel. Bigger banks have more branches and are more open to international travel. Will you be travelling a lot?
- **Digital needs:** Some banks are more digitally in tune than others: decide which type you need.
- **Banking services:** You need a bank that offers the basics – debit and credit cards, good interest rates, low transaction fees, online banking. But if you need any other services, like house or car finance, make sure the bank you choose offers these as well.
- **Perks:** Some banks offer special perks. If these are what you need and you won't pay more for the perks, it's well worth considering.

FIRST-TIME BANK ACCOUNTS

According to FICA (the Financial Intelligence Centre Act), you need to provide certain information and documents to open a bank account.

- Your identity document or passport
- Proof of residence not older than three months, such as a recent electricity or water bill that has your name and residential address on it
- Proof of income, or information about your source of income, such as a payslip or contract of employment, that explains the source of the money deposited into your account.

Make a list of what you want from your bank. Then do your research online and see which bank offers the best option that suits your needs. Chat to colleagues, too – often if you open a bank account that is the same as your employer's, your salary appears in your bank account sooner.

Tax returns



REGISTERING FOR TAX

Not everyone has to register for tax and you don't need a tax number to be employed. You need to earn over a certain amount first and this amount changes each year. If you do earn over that amount, you need to register within 60 days of receiving your first income. Once you have registered for tax, you can register for efilg, where you submit your tax returns online. SARS will send you a form that you must complete and return.

Tax is collected by the South African Revenue Services or SARS. To register as a taxpayer, go to the following website: <https://secure.sarsefiling.co.za/landing>

GET YOUR IRP5

Your employer should deduct the necessary tax from your earnings and pay it over to SARS. At the end of February each year, your employer should issue an IRP5, which is a summary of all the tax paid over to SARS on your behalf. You need to include this certificate with your tax return. In cases where your employer deducted a straight 25% tax, you could be entitled to a tax return. Always insist on getting the certificate if tax has been deducted from your pay.

TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL

According to SARS, you may only deduct expenses that are directly related to the type of income you receive. For example, if you earn an income from renting property, you may deduct some maintenance costs for that property. If you get a car or cell phone allowance as part of your salary, you may deduct expenses against those allowances. If you work from home, you may deduct certain expenses related to your workspace.

You may also deduct for certain expenses such as provident funds, pension funds and donations. If you are a first-time taxpayer, ask a professional for help with your first tax return and make lots of notes. Then you'll know which documents to save and file, and how to claim these costs back.



Good luck!

In conclusion, getting ready for work involves learning different skills and being ready to adapt. This guide has tried to give you the tools and knowledge you need to succeed in the professional world. By focusing on improving how you communicate, work with others and handle tasks, along with having a good work ethic and being open to learning new things, you can confidently start your career. Remember, getting ready for work is a continuous process and it's important to be open to change, look for opportunities to grow and handle challenges with determination. We hope this guide will help you do well in your chosen field.

