Your First Day on the Job

Each year, approximately 20 million Americans begin a new job. You will be one of them. A new job offers a chance to begin anew – to show off what you can do on a payroll or to correct mistakes you made in past positions. Here is some advice on what to expect and how to handle yourself accordingly.

1. **Expect to Be Bored**
   Much of your day will be filled with minor details – you are shown where to work, how to do certain tasks and where to find the things you need. Or, you may have to wait to fill out numerous employment, health, liability and other forms. An employee handbook may be placed in front of you, and you will be asked to read it. Hint: If you are asked to read things, ask if you can take them home to read at night.

2. **Expect to Be Confused**
   You will be exposed to many new faces, new names and new rules. Make a point to remember the people you meet and how they fit into the organization. Hint: Use a small notebook to jot down names and functions as you meet people.

3. **You Will Have Many Questions**
   Learn what you need to know and who can answer your questions. Does your boss want you to first ask your colleagues or go directly to the top person? It often pays to have several questions before interrupting people to ask them. Hint: Write down your questions in your notebook.

4. **Don’t Be A Pest**
   People all around you have their own work to do. They are usually willing to help but can only spare so much time from their activities. Limit the number of times you interrupt them and try to sense when their mood changes from cheerful assistance to grudging help.

5. **Accept a Student Role**
   Learn how you will be trained. Many organizations have a formal orientation or training program. Others use on-the-job instruction or assume you will learn a lot on your own. Take all training seriously, just as you might a school course in which you want an A.

6. **Learn the Rules**
   Ascert the normal working hours and periods for lunch or break. Keep within the required time periods for a while – no matter what other employees do. Every setting has some things you must do, some things that are nice if you do, and some things that you really don’t need to do. Early on, try to distinguish which are what. Hint: Pick some successful employees and watch what they do. If in doubt, ask them for guidance.

7. **Pick a Role Model**
   Eventually, you will want to select one or more employees whom you respect and try to work up to their level. But, don’t force friendships too soon or you may find yourself close to someone who, in the long run, may be bad news.

8. **Leave the Cell Phone Alone.**
   A cell phone can be a distracting item on the first day. Make sure to turn it off or on silent before going to work.