

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored button-down shirt, is sitting on wide stone steps. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a bright, slightly out-of-focus outdoor setting with more steps and a building facade.

Growth

Training

Self-Esteem

Communication Skills

Confidence

Steps to Success

A GUIDE TO SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

A solid red background with a repeating pattern of stylized, circular, sunburst-like motifs.



Steps to Success

A Guide to Success in the Workplace



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR
FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Partnering for Financial Well-Being



DRESS FOR SUCCESS®
Suits to Self-Sufficiency

Green Foundation

This booklet is meant to provide general information; it is not meant to substitute for, or to supersede, professional or legal advice.

Note: The content areas in this material are believed to be current as of this printing, but, over time, legislative and regulatory changes, as well as new developments, may date this material.

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Introduction

Congratulations! If you are reading this booklet it means you are well on your way towards becoming employed. Dress for Success® is committed to providing you with professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help you thrive in work and in life. This booklet is one part of the services you are eligible for as a member of Dress for Success.

Now, your goal of self-sufficiency will lead you toward the first day on the job and the months that will follow. Whether it is your first job, a part-time job, or the job you have always dreamed of, this booklet from the National Endowment for Financial Education® is a resource that will assist you throughout your employment.

Soon, it will be your own vision and ambition that will prevail, leading you on a path toward sustained personal confidence, professional accomplishment, and financial independence.

We know that it is not easy to learn the necessary skills and strategies to succeed on the job. How will you get to work? Who will care for your children while you are at work? Will you receive health-care benefits? Who can you turn to at the workplace for support? What is a savings plan? This booklet will answer these questions (and more) to ease your mind from the moment you walk through the door at your new job.

*We believe you can succeed on the job. Your employer does, too,
or they would not have given you the opportunity to try.*

We hope this booklet will assist you as you begin this new chapter of your life in the Dress for Success Professional Women's Group (PWG) and on your personal journey toward self-sufficiency.





Section 1

Before Starting a New Job

Preparations

*“If you can’t change your fate,
change your attitude.”*

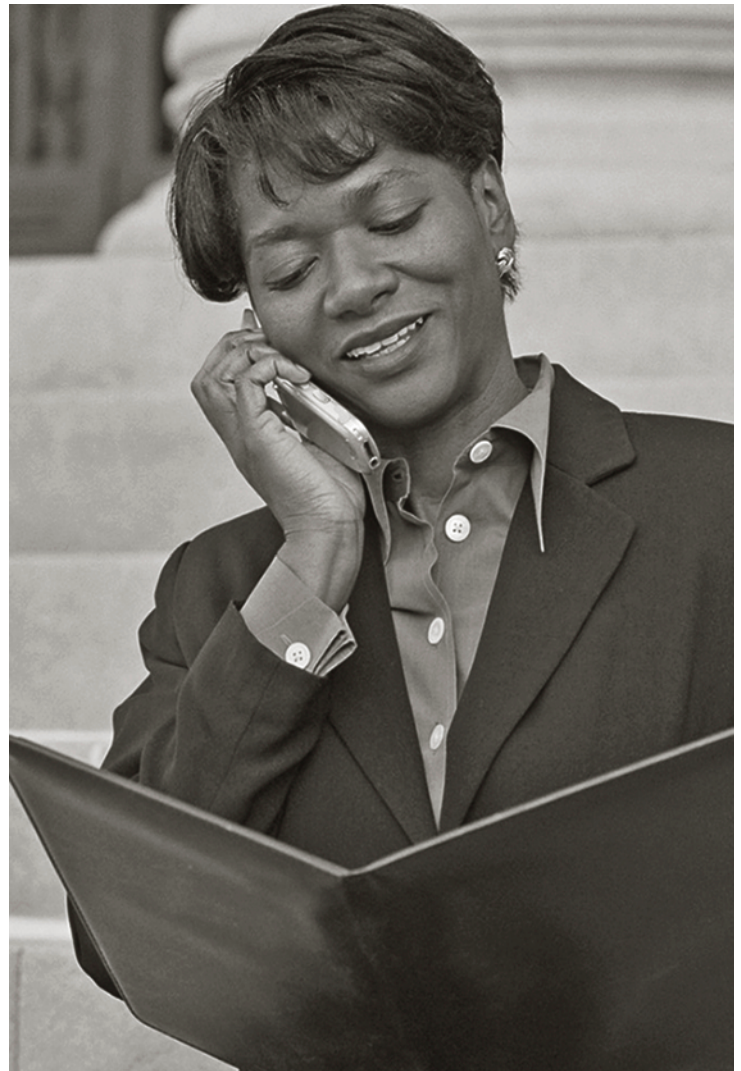
Amy Tan, best-selling author

Very soon, you will begin your first day at a new job. Are you prepared to walk through the doors at your new workplace? This chapter will assist you in doing just that.

If you haven’t done so already, pick up the phone and call your new employer. Thank them for the employment opportunity and ask for a few minutes of their time to clarify some questions you have about your first day on the job. In your conversation, be sure to:

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- ✓ Confirm the day and time you are supposed to arrive.
- ✓ Determine the accessibility of the company. Is parking available on site? Is there a charge for a parking permit? Where is the closest bus/train stop?
- ✓ Discuss the appropriate work attire.
- ✓ Clarify the job offer being made by the employer, including job benefits and salary.



*Once you have asked all of your questions, it is time to determine how
you can—and WILL—be successful on the job.*



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Seventy percent of women enrolled in the Dress for Success Professional Women's Group (PWG) are the primary wage earner, and more than half have children under the age of 18. If you have children at home, you are not alone. Keep in mind that few employers provide on-site child care. There are several resources to help you find child care you are comfortable with, including after-school program arrangements. Many women have never left their children in the care of another person.

Do you currently have someone who provides child care? If so, what will the cost and time differences be once you start your job?

If bringing your children to work is not a possibility, contact local government agencies, civic groups, or churches to see what child-care assistance options are available. A good place to start is Child Care Aware at 1-800-424-2246, an organization that can connect you with local agencies and resources for affordable child care.

Seeking Child Care

When contacting local child-care providers, there are several issues to consider:

- ✓ What licensing does the child-care provider have?
- ✓ What after-school programs are offered near your home and/or work?
- ✓ What is a back-up plan if your child is sick?
- ✓ Are drop-off and pick-up hours conducive to your work day?
- ✓ What qualifications does the provider's staff have? Are you comfortable with these qualifications?
- ✓ Are you able to visit the facility during operating hours before and after your child is enrolled as a student?
- ✓ Is your child supervised at all times, inside and outside?
- ✓ What is the monthly cost of child care at the center?
- ✓ Are there educational resources or classes for parents?
- ✓ Seek out recommendations from other parents.

Give yourself enough time to find child care. Remember, every question is important when it involves your children—take your time finding the right child care situation for you and your children.

DRESSING FOR YOUR SUCCESS

Head to your closet. More than likely, Dress for Success has provided you with several articles of clothing to help you make the transition into the professional world. But what will you wear each day to keep you in that world? Your boss should have told you what the appropriate clothing is, and now you have a responsibility to wear that type of clothing. Your interview outfit should be one of five outfits used for the workplace. Dress for Success can assist you in building your professional wardrobe and the types of garments you should have in your closet. Before your first paycheck arrives, local thrift stores and secondhand clothing stores are affordable places to shop.



There is no doubt that choosing what to wear to the workplace is a source of anxiety but determining what you should—and should not—wear will take only a visit to your closet.

*The solution to any outfit is to KISS it!
Keep It Simple and Sophisticated!*

When selecting an outfit for the workplace, keep in mind the following colors: black, navy blue, charcoal gray, khaki, and white. While a different color can look great, these basic—and workplace friendly—colors are a sure hit. Check off the following general workplace wardrobe basics that will get you well dressed for your first day on the job:

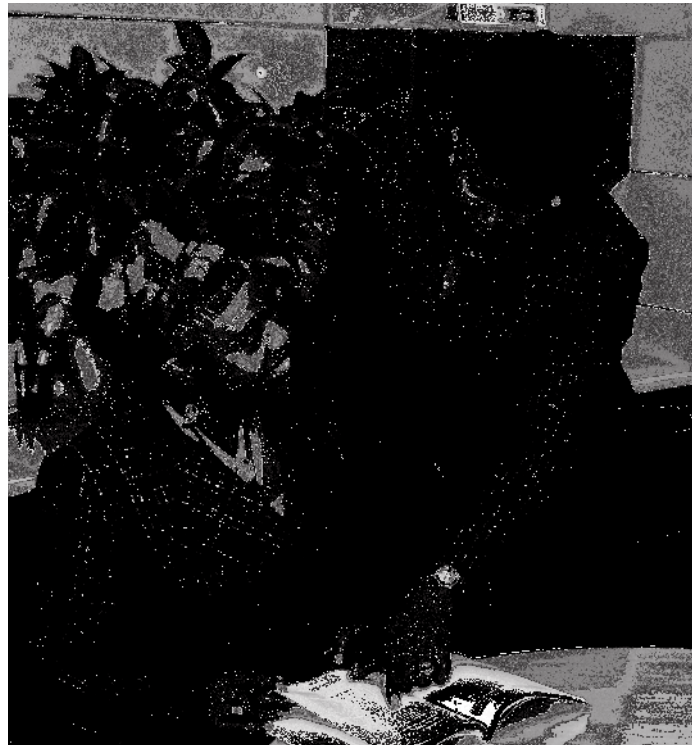
- ✓ Dark unpatterned suit
- ✓ Black or brown belt
- ✓ Black or brown leather dress shoes (heels no higher than 2 inches or flats)
- ✓ Knee-length skirts (or longer)
- ✓ Black, brown, navy, and khaki pants
- ✓ Dress shirts and blouses
- ✓ Skin tone and black hosiery
- ✓ Trench coat
- ✓ Dark colored winter gloves
- ✓ Dark colored umbrella
- ✓ Watch with black leather or metal (silver or gold tone) band
- ✓ Briefcase/professional handbag
- ✓ Accessory scarves
- ✓ Simple jewelry—nothing too outlandish

When planning your workplace wardrobe, try to avoid these fashion mistakes:

- ✓ Too tight, too short, and low cut tops and pants
- ✓ Excessive use of bright colors and wild patterns
- ✓ Noisy jewelry that signals your arrival with clinking sounds
- ✓ Spiky, strappy sandals – these are not appropriate for the workplace
- ✓ Overly trendy styles – when they fall out of fashion, will give you a “dated” appearance

No matter what you choose to wear, you have a responsibility to present yourself with confidence and professionalism. Remember, neatness always counts!

You and your clothes should be clean every day. If you are in doubt whether you should wear something to the office, ask first, or leave it at home. A safe approach is to see how your boss or boss’ boss are dressed when you arrive at the workplace, or ask your supervisor when he or she offers you the job. If you want to stand out, dress to impress. *Your boss will notice!*



SUCCESSFUL SPENDING

Now that you are close to bringing in a steady paycheck, it's important to review your income and expenses before your first day to determine how you will spend your money, and how you can save money, too!

Take a look at your spending over the last few months as a gauge for your average income and expenses. This will give you a good idea how your new income will contribute to your expenses, and it will help you complete the following information worksheet.

SPENDING PLAN WORKSHEET		
LIST INCOME		
Sources	Expected Per Month	Actual Per Month
After-tax wages	\$	\$
After-tax wages from others in household	\$	\$
Tips or bonuses	\$	\$
Child support	\$	\$
Government assistance	\$	\$
Food stamps	\$	\$
Social Security or Supplemental Security Income	\$	\$
Interest on a savings account	\$	\$
Tax refunds	\$	\$
Gifts	\$	\$
Other_____	\$	\$
Total Monthly Income	\$	\$

LIST EXPENSES		
Sources	Expected Per Month	Actual Per Month
Rent or mortgage	\$	\$
Utilities (heat, electricity, water, etc.)	\$	\$
Connectivity (phone, cell phone, Internet, cable/satellite television)	\$	\$
Groceries	\$	\$
Transportation (car payment, gasoline, bus fare, parking fees, etc.)	\$	\$
Tuition or other education fees	\$	\$
Insurance (car, health, renters', etc.)	\$	\$
Child care	\$	\$
Child support	\$	\$
Snacks/meals eaten out	\$	\$
Clothes	\$	\$
Charitable donations	\$	\$
Credit cards and other loans	\$	\$
Personal (toiletries, haircuts, etc.)	\$	\$
Entertainment	\$	\$
Savings	\$	\$
Other_____	\$	\$
Total Monthly Expenses	\$	\$

COMPARE INCOME AND EXPENSES

Your total monthly income	\$ _____
Your total monthly expenses	\$ _____
Subtract expenses from income and list amount here	\$ _____

MAKE CHANGES

Was there money left over at the end of the month? If so, congratulations! If you handle money wisely you will be well on your way to reaching your goals. But maybe you spent more than you earned. That sometimes happens to all of us. Just get back on track.





Getting back on track usually means two things: cutting back expenses or increasing income (or both).

Now that you know your expenses, it will be easier to cut them.

My ideas for cutting back on my spending:

My ideas for increasing my income:

Identifying these expenses will help you achieve your financial goals, clearing the way to financial independence. Establishing your financial goals will come in later chapters, but for now knowing whether you can afford gasoline for your work commute or should stick with public transportation, or whether you can buy lunch while at work or should pack a lunch, will give you peace of mind as you prepare for your first day on the job!

Expectations: *Yours and Others'*

*"There is no such thing as failure.
Mistakes happen in your life to bring into
focus more clearly who you really are."*

*Oprah Winfrey, the number one
name in talk TV and magazine*

After accepting a job offer, there are many expectations—yours and those of the company you will work for—to think about. You may have heard the saying, “You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.” On the first day at your new job, these words should ring in your ears. Your coworkers’ and supervisor’s first impressions of you start from the minute you walk in the door—punctual, polished, and professional.

*On the first day, punctual means at least
15 minutes before your scheduled arrival time.*

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Show your supervisor and coworkers that you take the new position seriously, and you will certainly get off on the right foot with your company. Be prepared for the first day. Learn as much as you can about your new company. Gather brochures and annual reports from the workplace or check out their Web site, if applicable, prior to your starting day. This preparation will give you an advantage in asking questions and knowing what others may be talking about in the workplace. Finally, once you step through the doors at your new office, remember to maintain professionalism in all you say and do.





A few reminders for the first days, and months, on the job will help you understand the company and what to expect from it and yourself:

- ✓ Get to know your coworkers. Whether there is a formal orientation program or not, design your own. Set up meetings with all the key people you'll interact with. Learn what's important to them.
- ✓ Your image matters. Your dress and your language habits paint a picture of you. Gossiping at the new company about coworkers or even your previous company gives an unprofessional impression.
- ✓ Ease in slowly and avoid office politics. Know the culture. Listen, ask questions, and be open-minded.
- ✓ Establish clear, specific, measurable goals. Set work goals that will help you develop your career, so your supervisor will know how to measure your professional success. Write these goals down and keep track of them.
- ✓ Keep a balanced professional and personal life. Working late every night may make an impression, but it will become something that's expected. On the flip side, leaving early when a project is on a deadline is a bad impression to make on your colleagues and boss. It may seem like you're making less of an effort.
- ✓ Learn the unwritten rules in the new position. Figure out your boss' preference for receiving information. Do e-mail messages fulfill the requirements? Should you deliver information face-to-face at impromptu meetings? Should it be memo style?

ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING

In the first weeks on the job, you will continue to learn about your company and your role with them. Companies often schedule a training class on company policies. Or, you may train with a coworker who has been at the company for some time. Throughout this training, remember that you are not the first (or the last) employee to be the newest member of the team. No question is too stupid or silly to ask. Show your boss and coworkers that you have the motivation and attitude to succeed on the job by asking questions and taking notes on what you learn.

Checklist to Workplace Success

As you settle into your new workplace, check these tasks and expectations off your list:

- _____ Fill out forms for taxes, health insurance, retirement plans, and other benefits and payroll deductions
- _____ Obtain and review a copy of the employee handbook, if applicable
- _____ Meet with boss to review expectations and first assignments
- _____ Introduce yourself to coworkers
- _____ Organize your desk, locker, or workspace
- _____ Begin to perform the duties of the position
- _____ Learn the job culture (and unwritten rules)
- _____ Observe, listen, learn, and ask questions when necessary
- _____ Find a mentor who is experienced and is a well-respected individual among his or her peers to show you the ropes



During this basic training period you may receive a written job description of what is expected from you on a day-to-day basis. You also may receive a company employee handbook that explains the expectations of employees. The employee handbook and training should explain the following, but remember to ask questions about any workplace issue you are not clear about:

- Who you report to
- How to report your time at the office
- Office equipment training
- Company dress code
- Employee breaks/lunch
- Policies for sick days and arriving late/leaving early
- Office safety procedures
- Procedure to inquire about overtime

YOUR FIRST PAYCHECK

One of the most basic aspects of a job that should be covered in training is your first paycheck. When you begin a new job, it's common that you will have to wait awhile for your first paycheck, depending on the company's pay cycle, which is often two to four weeks. During your training, ask when your first payday will be, and determine exactly how much money you will be bringing home. Remember, the money you bring home might be less than you expect because your employer must deduct federal, city and state taxes; Social Security taxes; and other deductions. Determine what your wages are before and after taxes. You will learn more about company benefits in Chapter 6: Financial Literacy. The following diagram will assist you in understanding how to read your first paycheck:



YOUR PAYCHECK AFTER DEDUCTIONS

Earnings	Rate	Hours	This Period	Year to Date
Regular	\$13.02	80	\$1,041.60	
Gross Pay			\$1,041.60	\$12,499.20
Deductions				
Federal Income Tax			\$ -87.36	\$ 1,048.32
Social Security Tax			-64.58	774.96
Medicare Tax			-15.10	181.20
State Income Tax			-34.27	411.24
City Income Tax			-3.14	37.68
Net Pay			\$837.15	\$10,045.80

The money you have to live on (your net pay) is the amount left after taxes and other deductions are taken out.

You will need money to live on before your first paycheck arrives. Do you have enough money in your savings account? Could you borrow money from a friend or relative? Does your company offer employees loans against their paychecks? Keep in mind that you will have to repay loans even from friends and family when you receive your first paycheck, so budget accordingly. Avoid payday lenders—an option that is too good to be true—as they charge significant interest or fees to cash a check before payday.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Always keep in good spirits with a great attitude at work. The first few days, weeks, and months at a new job are the most difficult. A great attitude will go a long way toward your success. Dress for Success offers the Professional Women's Group, which provides members with a comfortable atmosphere to share, grow, and network with other women who have recently made the same transition into the workforce.

Now that you know some things to expect during the first days on the job, let's look at what you can expect from yourself in the days and months to come. Finding a job is hard work, and getting settled in a new job will be challenging and rewarding. It is important to keep in mind how your job will help you meet your career, financial, and life goals. The following worksheet is designed to get you thinking about these goals.



LOOKING TO MY FUTURE

In six months, I will:

Goal: _____

Steps to Reach Goal

Cost (if any)

Ways to Cover Costs

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

In one year, I will:

Goal: _____

Steps to Reach Goal

Cost (if any)

Ways to Cover Costs

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

In five years, I will:

Goal: _____

Steps to Reach Goal

Cost (if any)

Ways to Cover Costs

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



Section 2

Surviving Your First Week of Employment



Day One

*“The more you give in life,
the more you get back.”*

Bobbi Brown, CEO, Bobbi Brown Cosmetics

Welcome to the workplace! Now what? As we covered in the last chapter, it is likely that someone—your supervisor or a coworker—will greet you upon arrival to discuss your role at the company. However, there are many things you can do to familiarize yourself with the new work environment. Once you find out where you will be working, find out the mailing address, phone number, and fax number of the company for your reference. Make sure you are familiar with all the office equipment and how to use it. This includes passwords and codes for entrance into the building, office computers, phones, and/or photocopiers.

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When you arrive for your first day, be sure to clarify with your supervisor what is expected of you on the job.

Asking for a written job description is always acceptable and having one will be helpful to you in the days to come. If no description is available, make your own after learning what your responsibilities will be on a daily basis.

OFFICE CONFIDENTIALITY

Once you set foot in the workplace as a company employee, you will learn some things only employees at the company should know. Company security and confidentiality is an important policy to be familiar with at any new job. Learning the following confidentiality tips will ensure you are on the right path toward being a loyal employee:

- ✓ Don't leave confidential documents on your desk. It is best to keep them out of sight, but if you must leave them for a minute, turn them upside down.
- ✓ When transporting confidential documents, carry them in an envelope or locked briefcase until they are needed. If you must mail confidential documents, place an envelope marked “confidential” inside another envelope that is marked “confidential” to ensure the warning is seen.
- ✓ Never send confidential documents by e-mail.
- ✓ Remove printouts from shared printers as quickly as possible.
- ✓ Lock and/or turn off your computer at night.
- ✓ Don't share passwords, key cards, office keys, etc.

Phone Etiquette

Most companies have protocols for answering the telephone. If you are the first person to pick up the phone, you are likely to make the first impression a caller has of your company. Be a positive example of what your company has to offer. Many different greetings are acceptable, but make sure to say your name and, more importantly, the company's name. Make sure you remember the following:

- ✓ Stop whatever else you are doing.
- ✓ Speak clearly into the receiver.
- ✓ Be upbeat.

These tips also apply to the message on your voice mail. When you record a greeting for your company voice mailbox, use the following example to create your own personal message, "This is [insert name] in the [insert name] department at [insert company name]. Please leave me a message and I'll return your call as soon as possible. Thank you."

How to Be a Good Office Conversationalist

1. Talk about many different topics, such as weather, sports, entertainers, etc.
2. Don't repeat office gossip.
3. Know when, and when not, to discuss business.
4. Involve everyone in the conversation.
5. Know when to wrap up your conversations.



OFFICE COMMUNICATIONS

Keep your personal calls to an absolute minimum while at the workplace. There is a time and a place to make personal calls. Never interrupt a meeting to answer your phone or cell phone. Keep your cell phone off or on mute while in the office. Use your lunch break for personal business, including phone calls. If you must take a personal call on the job, try to remove yourself from coworkers or shut your office door.

Now that you are working, you will have to inform your children of your new, added, responsibilities. Educate them on phone etiquette, when and how often you and they can call and what constitutes an emergency.

In recent years, the use of cell phones has increased substantially. In fact, some companies may provide employees with mobile telephones for work-related reasons (such as office travel, meetings). Even though employers often believe there is a place for cell phones within the company, it is important to remember that the place to use it is when you are alone. As with all phone calls, respect others' right not to hear your conversation. Always turn off your cell phone when in a meeting—if you forget, quickly apologize and silence the ringing. If you must take a call while in public, whether in a meeting or at your desk, excuse yourself from other people and make the call short and to the point. It's a good idea to check with your company to learn its cell phone etiquette rules and expectations.



Communication, both verbal and written, presents opportunities to display the utmost professionalism. Today e-mail is a popular form of business communication. Before you hit the “Send” button, keep in mind the following communication tips:

- ✓ Always pay attention to style, grammar, and punctuation. Never write in all capital letters – it will appear as if you are screaming.
- ✓ Complete the “To” field last, once you have proofed your e-mail. This will prevent you from accidentally sending incomplete e-mails.
- ✓ Never omit a greeting. For example, start with “Hi Bill,” then write your message.
- ✓ Never use profanity in the text. Remember, once you hit the “Send” button, many people have the potential to read what you have written, appropriate or not.
- ✓ Double check the “To” and “CC” functions before sending.
- ✓ Face-to-face communication is by far the best way way to communicate. Walk over to a person to discuss a matter as opposed to sending an e-mail. This is especially important in dealing with a conflict.
- ✓ Sending and receiving personal e-mails on your company account is a violation of workplace policies at many companies. E-mail accounts are company property and messages may be monitored.

As always, there is a time and a place for personal tasks at work. From e-mail to phone calls to Internet research, ask coworkers or your supervisor about this typically “unwritten” rule of the workplace. Internet usage may be monitored for inappropriate content, wasting time, etc.



If you are unable to report to work due to an illness or injury, you should notify your boss before the scheduled start of the workday. Your boss also must be contacted on each additional day of absence before the scheduled start of each workday. Check on company policy to learn to whom and when to report.

Written Rules *of the Workplace*

*“A mistake is simply another
way of doing things.”*

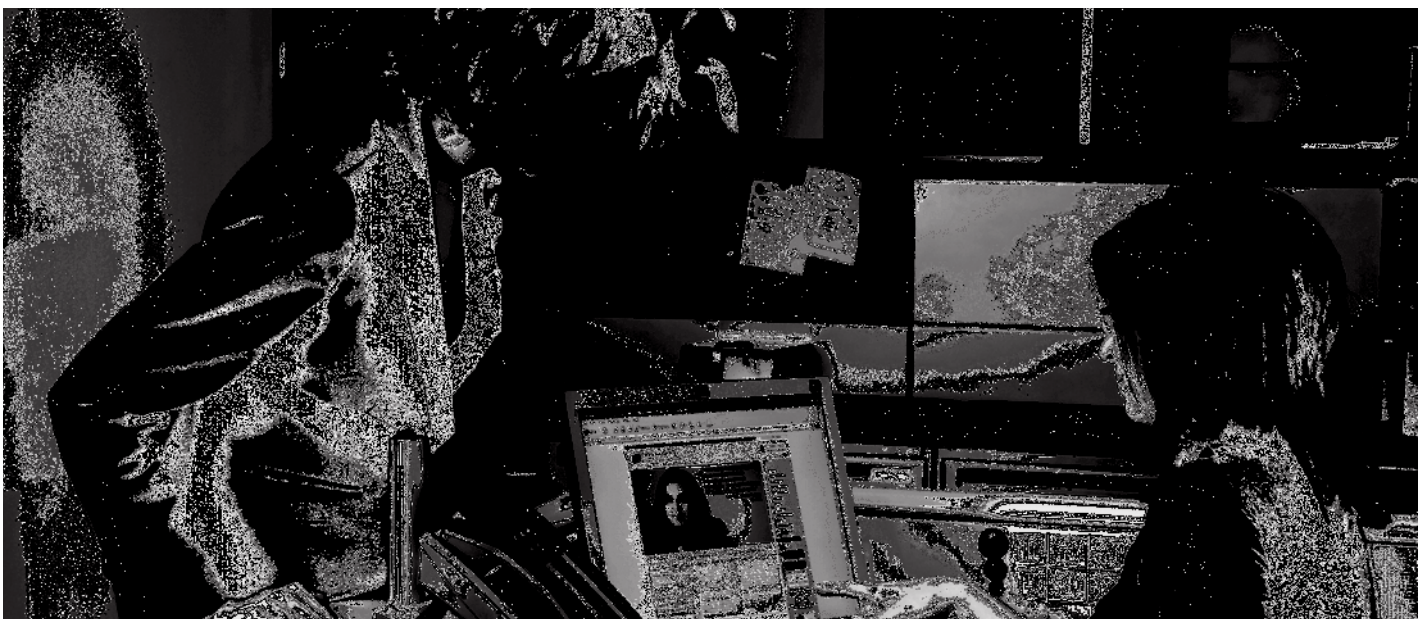
*Katharine Graham,
former publisher of
The Washington Post*

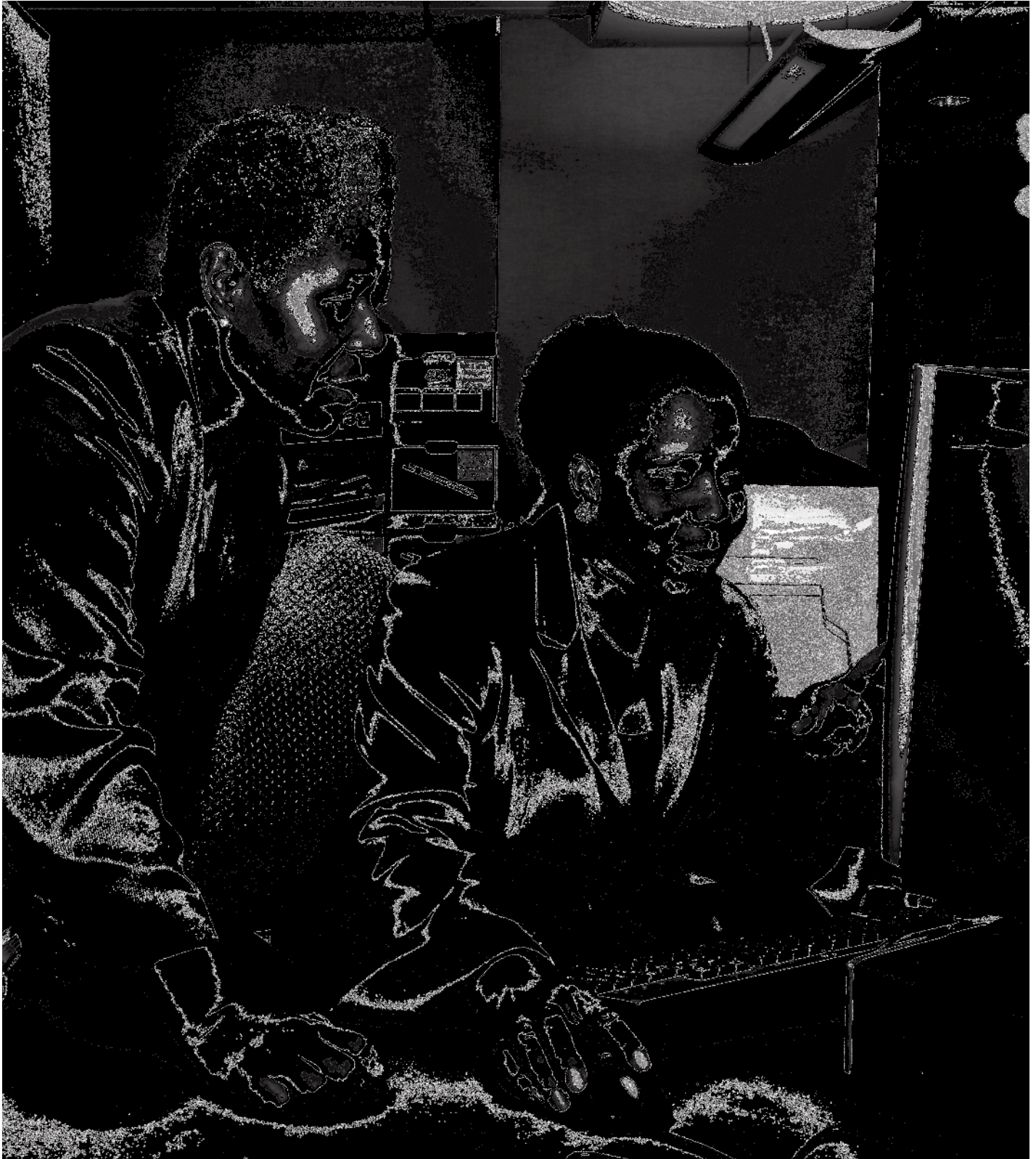
During your first days on the job, your supervisor is likely to tell you many things he or she will expect you to know and respect while at the office. The first, and perhaps the most important, is that from the minute you walk through the front door, you are probably working on a trial basis. Many companies try out new employees for a short period of time—a probation period. You certainly have done nothing wrong: your supervisor just wants to make sure you are the right fit for the job.

During the probationary period, which could be up to six months, it is important to make a good impression. Arrive at work on time. Make sure you stay on task and get your work done. Try to get along with office coworkers. Remember that your supervisor will notice and it is OK to ask him or her how you are doing. At the end of the probation period, you will probably receive a formal evaluation of your performance. At this time, your

supervisor should explain and review your job description and tell you if it has changed in any way based on your performance. Feel free to ask questions about any issues that have come up. You are ready to move ahead with the company.

As discussed in Chapter 2, you may receive an employee handbook that will spell out the company policies. Be sure you immediately familiarize yourself with common procedures such as overtime, disciplinary issues, breaks, vacation time, and sick time. You should read the employee handbook in its entirety within the first week at your new job. Knowing the company policies will be an advantage to you as you establish yourself at the company. Be sure to ask your supervisor or a coworker if there are any issues that are unclear or not explained in the handbook.





Now that you are in the professional world, keep in mind the many unwritten rules of appropriate workplace etiquette that you need to follow. The next chapter discusses these unwritten rules in detail.

Unwritten Rules of the Workplace

*“There is no downside
to success.”*

*Sherry Lansing,
chairperson of Paramount
Motion Pictures*

Of all the things you learn in your first days on the job, it's the things you are not told that might be the most important to know. As you learn your way around the office, remember there is a proper, businesslike manner in which to behave that is not necessarily explained, but is nonetheless expected.

To not only survive but succeed at the workplace, keep in mind the following office etiquette tips:

- ✓ Dress in a manner consistent with company culture and make sure your clothes are always clean.
- ✓ Remember, if you are in a cubicle, you don't have the privacy of a closed office. Speak calmly and with an even tone when you are on the telephone.
- ✓ Face forward in the elevator. Take off your headphones. Do not talk on your cell phone.
- ✓ Say “hello” or “good morning” to those you encounter in the morning, and “good night” to those you encounter as you leave the office.
- ✓ Maintain personal hygiene.
- ✓ Watch your personal space.
- ✓ Refrain from interrupting others.
- ✓ Do not play music in the office, unless you know it is acceptable, and never have loud music.
- ✓ Avoid strong perfume or cologne.
- ✓ Avoid foods with strong smell such as onions, garlic, and fish.

During your transition to a new workplace, it is important to keep your personal and professional reputation in mind. In the first days on the job make an effort to know everyone you will work directly with by name and set up meetings with them to learn more about their roles at the office. Remember, you are not there to make new friends, but to further the company mission by learning how to work as a team with people who are both similar to and different from you. You may also want to identify those colleagues and supervisors that may serve as mentors—a key element to building a successful career. The Professional Women's Group can help you learn how to build relationships at work.





WHO'S THE BOSS?

In learning about professional relationships, one of the most challenging relationships could be with your supervisor. Whether or not you like this person, you have to work with this individual to keep your job. More than likely, you will aspire to have a supervisory and/or management position: therefore, earning his or her respect is crucial to succeeding in the workplace. Again, this does not mean he or she has to like you, but your supervisor does have to like your work. One important aspect of being supervised is learning to take criticism graciously. When your supervisor criticizes something you do:

- ✓ Never lose your poise.
- ✓ Do not make excuses.
- ✓ Do not take it personally.
- ✓ Find something to learn from the experience.

In fact, try responding to criticism by calmly asking how you can do it better next time. Even if you feel temporarily threatened, don't threaten a supervisor. Remember, your supervisor is the key to your future at the company. What is acceptable, however, is for you to

express your discomfort and dissatisfaction with an issue at the office. The following are strategies to help you through the situation:

- ✓ Ask for a meeting with your supervisor.
- ✓ Prepare carefully for the meeting.
- ✓ Remain fair and calm during the meeting.

Working through a workplace issue will demonstrate to those around you that you are committed to the task at hand and your success at the company. If you must vent, find someone outside the workplace who will have a fresh, objective perspective and who you know will not disclose your frustrations at the office.

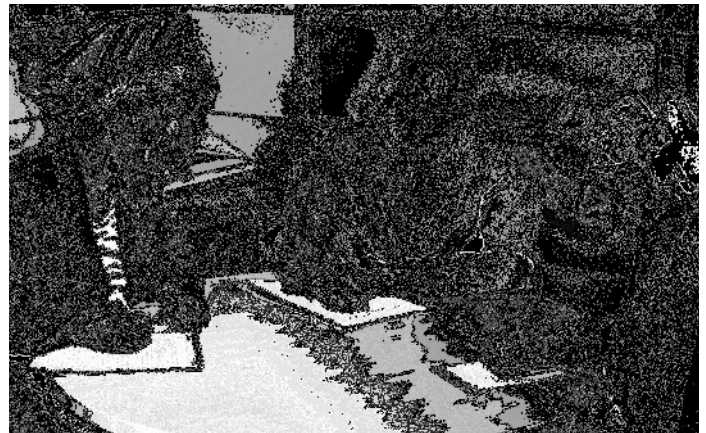
Another great place for discussion is the Professional Women's Group, offered to the clients of Dress for Success. This group offers monthly meetings as an open forum on a variety of topics such as the unwritten workplace etiquette, child care issues, and conflict resolution.

OFFICE TALK

Learning to communicate in the workplace is one of the most essential skills you will ever learn. The art of communicating, in fact, goes beyond simple conversation. Successful communication involves verbal and nonverbal skills. What you say is as important as how you say it.

- ✓ Ensure that the tone of your communication is positive.
- ✓ Make good eye contact to let others know you are open, friendly, and genuine about who they are and what they have to say.
- ✓ Be sure your verbal and nonverbal messages say the same thing.
- ✓ Ask questions of others and really care about their answers. Remember that people like to talk about themselves, not just hear about you.
- ✓ Do not swear or tell off-color jokes, and avoid talking about religion, income, and politics. A lot of people over share about health—which can be bad for your career if your employer thinks you're sick.
- ✓ Pay attention. Think about what you want to say and don't interrupt, whisper, walk away, or work on an activity while another person is talking.

- ✓ Show that you are a team player and acknowledge your coworkers' contributions.
- ✓ Listening well means more than just sitting quietly. A payoff exists for listening well: You'll remember all the major points of the conversation, including any that are your responsibility. You'll be able to ask intelligent questions during—and after—the conversation.
- ✓ Repeat back what you think you're hearing, particularly when dealing with supervisors or clients who are giving you instructions on projects.



WORK CULTURE

Among the many things you have already learned at the new workplace, learning to manage your time is one of the most challenging, but productive, skills you must master. When you walk into the workplace, you are there to do the job you were hired for. You are not the staff counselor or social planner. While many workplaces these days have adopted a more casual atmosphere, there is still work to be done. While there might not always be someone present to tell you what to do, the company expects you to get the work done. You will learn the best way to keep track of your tasks, whether it is on a calendar or with a to-do list. Managing not only your tasks but your time will keep you on the right track at work.

JUGGLING WORK AND FAMILY

Avoid discussing your personal life outside of the workplace until you know more about your coworkers. It may never be appropriate to discuss your personal life. Moreover, creating a balance outside the workplace is important. Your professional life is exactly just that—professional—and sometimes it may be better to keep work at the office. The line between your personal and professional life can be a fine one, but keeping in mind these points might make it easier:

- ✓ Keep your beliefs private. This includes your religious and political beliefs, as well as personal hobbies.
- ✓ Don't tell everyone everything about yourself or your family.
- ✓ Maintain your personal life by establishing workplace boundaries, watching the amount of time spent at work, and managing workplace stress.



DATING AT THE WORKPLACE

Your new job will most likely mean coming into contact with a variety of new people. Before you entertain the idea of dating a co-worker, you must first check the company's dating policy to determine if office romance is even allowed. In deciding whether or not to go ahead with the relationship, a few things to keep in mind include:

- ✓ Keep all public displays of affection out of the workplace.
- ✓ Remember to maintain the utmost professionalism with your significant other. Do not be distracted by each other during the workday or it may negatively impact your work.
- ✓ Before starting an office romance, understand that if it doesn't work out, you still have to work with that person.
- ✓ If your company does allow office romance, and does not require you to tell anyone, use your own discretion.
- ✓ Romance with a supervisor is highly discouraged because of unequal treatment, perceived or not.
- ✓ If your company does not allow office romance and you go ahead with the relationship secretly, know that the secret is not likely to last.



OFFICE STRESS

Have you ever heard the expression, “grace under fire”? It means you are able to handle yourself professionally during difficult situations. Acting gracefully no matter what situation presents itself is a great communication skill. Learning how to handle any stressful situation is a career-long challenge.

To assist you in responding to a difficult situation, consider the following strategies:

- ✓ Count slowly to 10.
- ✓ Check yourself before you respond.
- ✓ Maintain a positive attitude.

Employing these strategies will inevitably lead you toward a manageable—and presentable—reaction to stress. Remember that each of us is presented with difficult decisions every day. Positive handling of difficult situations is a trait companies look for in their employees.

REDUCE YOUR STRESS

1. Analyze your typical stress response and identify its unproductive and damaging aspects.
2. Expect stress and irritation every day.
3. When stress or irritation happens, immediately tell yourself you will not respond in an annoying or damaging manner.
4. Calm down enough to think. Count to 10 and then respond.
5. Think about what you want to say or do in response.
6. Respond in a moderate and constructive tone.

Don't forget to refer to the Professional Women's Group at Dress for Success. Members can access resources to help them further their personal and professional goals. It is an ideal resource to assist you with stress management.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You represent the company when you answer the telephone, correspond through e-mails and letters, and facilitate meetings in your office.

- ✓ Do you make a positive impression?
- ✓ Do you smile when you answer the phone?
- ✓ Do you give the customer/client the impression that it will be a joy to have them as a customer/client when they work with you? Do you say “thank you”?
- ✓ Do you always present yourself in a helpful manner?

Details... details... details... They're critical to the success of every experience you provide for your customers, clients, business associates, and prospects. Keep in mind all the tips listed above whenever you conduct company business.



Financial Literacy

“The world never puts a price on you higher than the one you put on yourself.”

*Sonja Henje,
Olympic
skating medalist*

A new job brings not only professional responsibilities but financial considerations as well. Aside from your salary or hourly wage, a company is likely to offer other employee benefits simply because you work there. This chapter will discuss these benefits including salary, health insurance, and retirement.

WORKPLACE WAGES

As discussed, your first paycheck may not arrive until you’ve been on the job several weeks. When it does arrive, have you decided what you will do with it? The most helpful first step is to deposit the paycheck into a bank account so you are able to easily access the funds. Many employers offer a direct deposit option that electronically places your paycheck wages in the bank account of your choice every pay period. The type of bank account you choose to deposit funds into is your decision, but a checking account is perhaps the most popular choice. Checking accounts offer the following benefits:

- ✓ Safety: Cash can be lost or stolen.
- ✓ Convenience: Many bills must be paid by mail, and a check from your own account is an insured option.
- ✓ Affordability: Checking accounts are generally cheaper than alternatives such as money orders.
- ✓ Debit card account: It is set up as a checking account, and is a better option than a check-cashing store.
- ✓ Deposits are insured by the FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation).



KEEPING A RECORD

Keeping a checking account requires you to maintain good records of your expenses and income. If you do not keep accurate records, you may not realize when you run out of money, causing your check to “bounce,” or be returned due to a lack of money. Bounced checks will hurt your reputation at your bank and with creditors that track all your purchases. These checks may be subject to penalty fees.

Another method of keeping track of spending is using Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). ATMs are computerized money machines that allow you to withdraw or deposit money into your bank accounts. Generally, banks

offer debit cards that serve both as a withdrawal option at ATMs and as credit cards to make purchases that are immediately deducted from your checking account. While ATMs and debit cards offer convenient methods for accessing your funds, keeping good records is essential to tracking how much money you have in your account. One option at most banks is to apply for overdraft protection that will ensure you have enough funds to cover expenses if you overspend the money in your account. If you use overdraft protection with an account, the financial institution may charge interest on funds used. Check with your bank or financial institution for exact fees. Overdraft protection is similar to any other loan from a bank, meaning that you must pay back the money that the bank “loans,” or places into your account, to cover any purchases you make.

Before deciding on a bank, compare banks and fees associated with using checks, ATMs, and other financial services. Besides banks, local credit unions offer low-cost

checking accounts and other financial services, but you must be a member of a group or association that is eligible for membership to join a credit union.

FINANCIAL OPTIONS TO AVOID

Check-cashing stores are an alternative to banks and checking accounts. However, these stores typically charge you a fee to cash a check. These stores also offer a payday loan service that allows you to cash a paycheck before you receive it. This is an expensive option that might not be worth the financial consequence. Fees and interest rates at these check-cashing stores can be significantly higher than you would pay to have a checking account. Again, it “pays” to shop around and know what you are getting yourself into before you make any decisions.

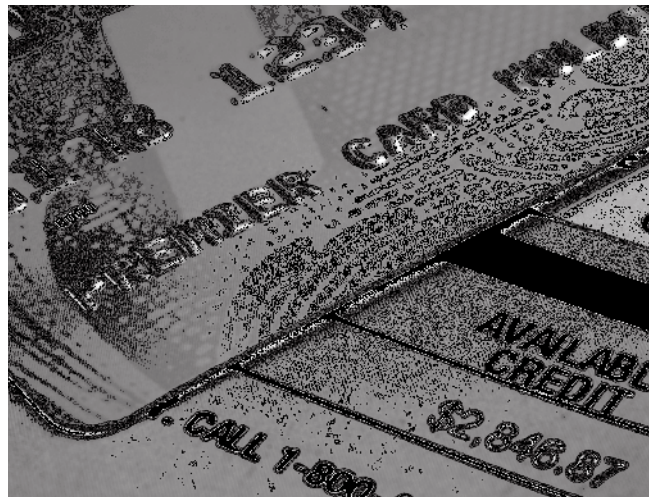


THINK TWICE BEFORE USING THIS OPTION

Credit cards are another convenient and popular financial option. This option offers several advantages including: a credit card can serve as a substitute for cash or checks, as well as a way to handle financial services over the phone. Using a credit card helps build credit. Credit cards also offer a form of financial insurance if you need to rent a car or place a deposit. While credit cards are easy to receive, they are even easier to use and can cause financial hardship if not managed responsibly.

CREDIT CARD CAUTION

- ✓ Choose a credit card with a low interest rate and low or no annual fee.
- ✓ Keep only one or two credit cards. Applying for many cards may harm your credit score.
- ✓ Use credit only for big, essential purchases, such as emergency car repairs or unexpected illnesses.
- ✓ Avoid using credit for everyday expenses.
- ✓ Try not to purchase something that you cannot pay off within a few months. This will help you avoid living beyond your financial means.
- ✓ Pay more than the minimum monthly payment. If you run up \$6,000 in credit card debt and pay only the minimum monthly payment starting around \$120, it could take you six and a half years to pay off the debt! Adding an extra \$30 per month to the monthly minimum payment will reduce your pay-off time to two years depending on your interest rate.
- ✓ Look for a credit card with a 25-day grace period. Without a grace period, the credit card issuer will begin charging you interest immediately after each purchase you make. That extra interest can make using credit cards even more expensive.
- ✓ Don't use your credit card if you are continually late or making only the minimum payment.
- ✓ Never be afraid of credit card plastic surgery—if credit card debt mounts, **CUT UP THE CARDS!**
- ✓ Avoid department store credit cards. Typically, these cards offer interest rates between 13 to 22 percent.



BUILDING CREDIT

Now that you are becoming financially responsible, it is important to establish good credit. You now have the means to do so. However, in order to establish good credit, you must go into debt. This means that you must borrow money (go into debt) and then pay it back on time. A low-interest credit card (resulting in good credit) can certainly provide a step towards good credit. Or, consider making a purchase (such as furniture) and then paying it off in a pre-determined and pre-budgeted amount of time. This type of plan allows you to have a loan, make small payments to pay it off, and live within your means while being financially responsible.

Consider the following suggestions for helping to improve your credit rating:

- ✓ Make payments on time. This will prevent late and unnecessary charges.
- ✓ Budget for loan payments out of each paycheck.
- ✓ Maintain a checking account without bouncing checks.
- ✓ Establish direct debit payments for regular monthly bills such as car insurance, car payments, or mortgage payments or rent.

To determine your credit history, call a credit-reporting agency:

- Experian: 1-888-397-3742, www.experian.com
- TransUnion: 1-800-888-4213, www.transunion.com
- Equifax: 1-800-685-1111, www.equifax.com

Under the FACT Act Amendments to the Fair Credit Reporting Act, you are entitled to one free credit report in a 12-month period. To request this free annual credit report, you must contact the Central Source LLC. To contact the Central Source LLC online, visit www.annualcreditreport.com. You can also contact the Central Source LLC to request this free annual disclosure by calling toll free 1-877-322-8228 or by using the mail request form available at www.annualcreditreport.com.



10 SIGNS OF DEBT PROBLEMS

1. More than 15 to 20 percent of your monthly take-home income goes to pay credit card debts.
2. You borrow money to pay off other debts.
3. You don't know how much money you owe creditors.
4. You make only minimum payments.
5. You make late payments or miss payments.
6. Your creditors are calling.
7. You have been denied credit cards.
8. You have to borrow from retirement accounts or credit cards just to pay monthly bills.
9. You write postdated checks.
10. You have to take an extra job to pay bills.

ESTABLISH A BUDGET

How do you decide where to spend your money? The reality of any paycheck you receive is that you can't spend as much as you want on everything you want. Create a budget for your monthly income so you can make responsible decisions about where to best spend your earned money.

Look back at the income and expenses worksheet you created in Chapter 1. This itemized list will help you determine what you should and can spend your money on.

The most important aspects of establishing a budget are setting priorities (for example, rent, child care, and electricity) and allowing for adjustments (such as giving up movie rentals to purchase groceries or prohibiting personal shopping trips to save for a down payment on a car). Consider the following list of spending tips to help you establish a workable budget:

40



- ✓ Stick to a shopping list at the grocery store to avoid impulse purchases.
- ✓ Shop for bargains and always compare prices.
- ✓ Buy things only if you need them, not just because they are on sale.
- ✓ Look for off-season bargains of necessary items.
- ✓ Buy generic or store brands.
- ✓ Use coupons.
- ✓ Buy in bulk for heavily used items.
- ✓ Make meals from scratch instead of frequenting fast food restaurants. Look for easy recipes online.
- ✓ Trade baby sitting with neighbors or friends rather than paying for sitters.
- ✓ Rent a movie to watch at home.
- ✓ Write letters and/or e-mails instead of making long distance phone calls. Check out instant messaging. Visit www.yahoo.com for more information.
- ✓ Use prepaid phone cards to stick within a certain time frame and not go over the limit.
- ✓ Give homemade gifts such as baby sitting and house cleaning.
- ✓ Compare car insurance prices.
- ✓ Borrow books, magazines, videos, and music from the library. Return the items on time to avoid late charges.
- ✓ Do as much repair work on your own as possible.
- ✓ Look into “budget billing” that allows you to pay the same amount each month (for electricity, for instance) as opposed to higher bills during different months. This will make establishing a budget much easier.

The **Spending Plan Worksheet** from Chapter 1 will help guide you as you manage your money and work towards financial responsibility and independence. Make a copy of the worksheet and put it on your refrigerator or keep a copy in your financial files at home. It will serve as a positive reminder of the hard work you are doing to become financially independent.

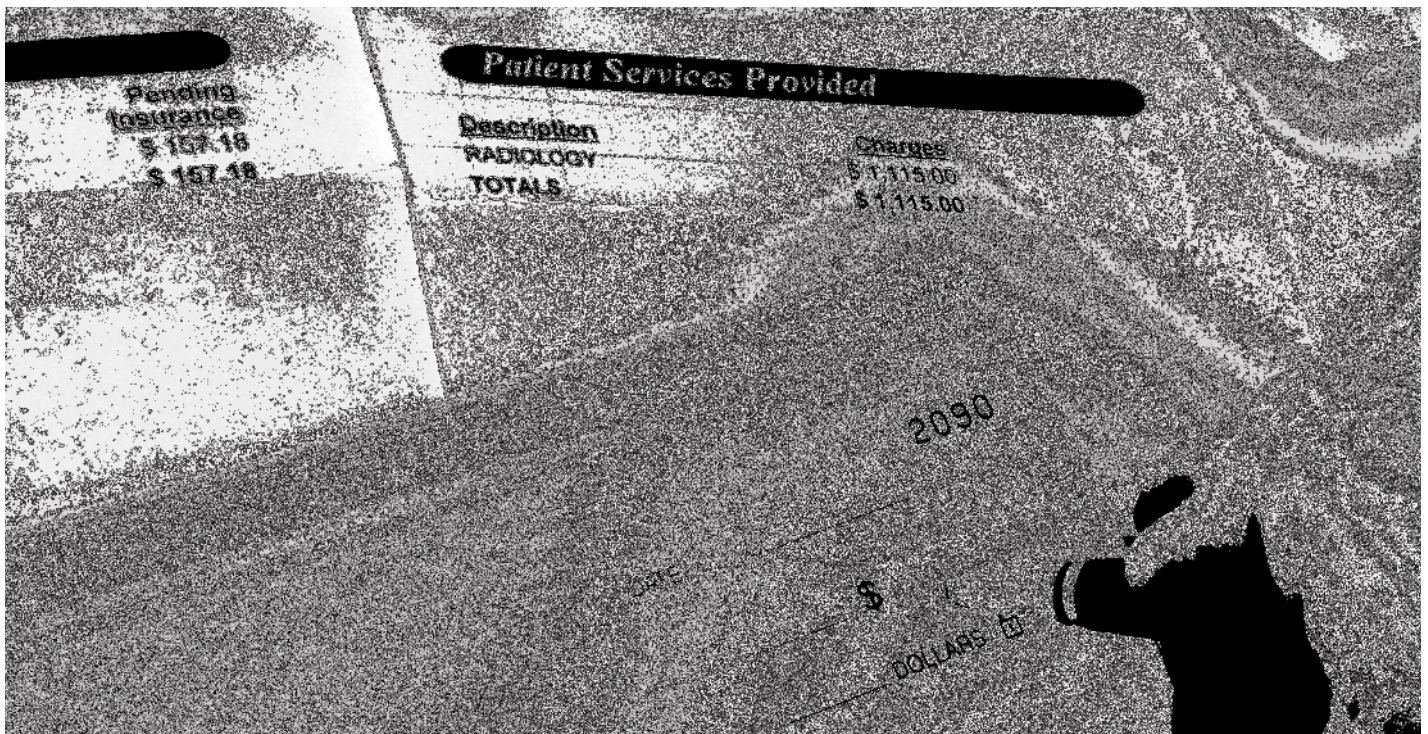
SAVING FOR EMERGENCIES

As you begin to live comfortably within your financial means, it is important to consider not just paying for expected expenses (such as rent and phone bills) but to prepare for unexpected events (such as a medical or family emergencies) as well.

The first step in planning for your financial future is establishing a personal emergency fund. This fund is only to be used for unexpected circumstances such as being laid off from a job or needing extra money for a significant medical bill. Planning ahead for an emergency will make you feel more financially secure in your day-to-day budget. Setting aside money for an emergency also is better than taking out a loan or using money you have placed in a savings account for long-term goals.

Here is how to start an emergency fund:

- ✓ Pay yourself first. Take a little money out of each paycheck and put it into a separate savings account. Save until you have enough money to pay your basic bills for three months. Basic bills are rent or mortgage, heat, light, telephone, food, child care, and transportation to work. Then leave the money there unless you need it for an emergency.
- ✓ Keep the money where you can get to it quickly—for example, a bank savings account (not under your mattress).
- ✓ Put tax refunds, job bonuses, and raises into the emergency fund.
- ✓ Volunteer for overtime or work a second job to contribute more money to the emergency fund.



SAVING FOR GOALS

Remember that your savings account for long-term goals should be separate from your emergency fund but both are equally important. Your savings account can be at the same bank as your checking account, but make sure you are comfortable with the bank's financial services and fees. Each month, add a little money from your paycheck into your savings account for purchases (such as a vacation, holiday presents, and future projects). It is important to always pay yourself first! Ask your employer if a portion of your paycheck can be directly deposited into a savings account. Keeping the money out of sight will result in an easy, manageable way to save money. Many banks offer a service to block withdrawals on savings accounts without consent given by you *at the bank*. This will prevent you from making savings account withdrawals from the ATM for impulse purchases.

The next two pages will help you think of new ways to save money and the positive impact of saving.



SMART SPENDING

Use the worksheet below to list up to 10 ways that you could reduce household expenses. Describe the specific action that you could take, the amount spent currently, and the amount of savings you can reasonably expect on a monthly and yearly basis.

Action To Be Taken	Amount Spent Monthly on Expense	Monthly Savings Possible	Yearly Savings Possible
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EXAMPLES:

Use coupons to purchase groceries at the supermarket	\$160 (groceries purchased without using coupons)	\$40 (value of coupons)	$\$40 \times 12 = \480
Rent fewer DVDs—check out DVDs from the library	\$20	\$20	$\$20 \times 12 = \240
Cut back on coffee/soda purchases outside the home—drink free coffee or tea at work	\$20	\$20	$\$20 \times 12 = \240

MY IDEAS:

Action To Take	Amount Spent Monthly on Expense	Monthly Savings Possible	Yearly Savings Possible
----------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------

1. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
7. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
8. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
9. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
10. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

HOW SAVINGS GROW

The Earning Potential for Savings Over 5 Years

Below is a chart showing the earning potential for varied interest rates and monthly savings amount. Finding the right savings program will require research. Start by checking out your current bank or financial institution. For example, a handful of fund companies will take \$25 or \$50 a month—if you sign up for some type of automatic investment program where the money comes directly from a checking account (or savings account) via electronic funds transfer.

SAVINGS OVER 5 YEARS

Monthly Savings Amount	4%	6%	8%
\$25	\$1,657	\$1,744	\$1,837
\$50	\$3,315	\$3,489	\$3,674
\$75	\$4,972	\$5,233	\$5,511
\$100	\$6,630	\$6,977	\$7,348
\$200	\$13,260	\$13,954	\$14,695

SAVINGS OVER 10 YEARS

Monthly Savings Amount	4%	6%	8%
\$25	\$3,681	\$4,097	\$4,574
\$50	\$7,362	\$8,194	\$9,147
\$75	\$11,044	\$12,291	\$13,721
\$100	\$14,725	\$16,388	\$18,295
\$200	\$29,450	\$32,776	\$36,589



Your financial future can begin today! If you keep in mind that even small steps can have big results, your financial future will head down a whole new path. Here's a list of important money savings reminders:

- ✓ Pay yourself first by depositing into a savings account on a regular basis.
- ✓ Get out of debt as soon as possible.
- ✓ Avoid using credit as much as possible, except for emergencies.
- ✓ Be a smart shopper: compare, substitute, negotiate, and wait for sales.
- ✓ Establish—and stick to—a spending plan.
- ✓ Find ways of celebrating and rewarding yourself that do not involve money.
- ✓ Always remember your long-term goals and dreams.

Each day find time to focus on what you have instead of what you do not have.

LONG-TERM FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TIPS

1. **Set your personal goals.** Do you want to buy a home? Take a vacation? Spend more time with your family and friends? Get more education? Getting a handle on your financial life allows you to reach the goals you have set for yourself.
2. **Understand your income.** A first step in financial planning is to know what your income is. Be sure to include all sources of income, whether you receive it regularly (salary from a job) or irregularly (gifts or repayments on a loan).
3. **Understand your expenses.** Expenses can be regular (rent or mortgage due every month) or irregular (car insurance due every three months). Remember to include the “non-billed” expenses, such as groceries, bus fare, clothing costs, etc.
4. **Create a spending plan.** A spending plan, or budget, lets you decide how you will spend your money and how much you need each month to cover your expenses. Spending plans are particularly useful for reaching the goals you have set for yourself, whether those goals are short-term (buy a new chair in three months) or long-term (buy a house in three years).
5. **Develop a debt repayment plan.** List all the companies and individuals to whom you owe money and how much money you owe. Then decide how much you must pay each month and when the payment is due. Pay off debts with the highest interest rates first. While you are paying off your current debt, try not to borrow any more money.
6. **Spend less than you make.** The only way to save money for your goals is to have more income than expenses. By spending less money than you make, you will be able to invest for long-term financial security.
7. **Pay yourself first.** Some people set a goal to set aside or save 5 to 10 percent of their money, or \$5 to \$10 for every \$100 they earn.
8. **Take advantage of employer benefits.** Your employer’s benefits can be worth a lot of money, sometimes as much as 30 percent more than your salary. That’s like receiving \$30 for each \$100 you earn.
9. **Plan for retirement and contribute to a tax-favored plan.** Investing for retirement is an important long-term goal. Why? Because Social Security will cover only part of the cost of living after you stop working. If your employer has a retirement fund, they may also contribute money into your plan as part of your benefits. Retirement plans provide great tax advantages that allow your savings to grow quickly.
10. **Buy appropriate insurance.** There are lots of different types of insurance you can buy (health, disability, auto, life, homeowners, renters). There are lots of choices for each type of insurance. Taking some time to learn about insurance can save you money. For example, if you are single with no dependents, you may not need life insurance. Or, if you have an emergency fund of a few hundred dollars, you might be able to take a higher deductible on auto insurance and thus save money on premiums.

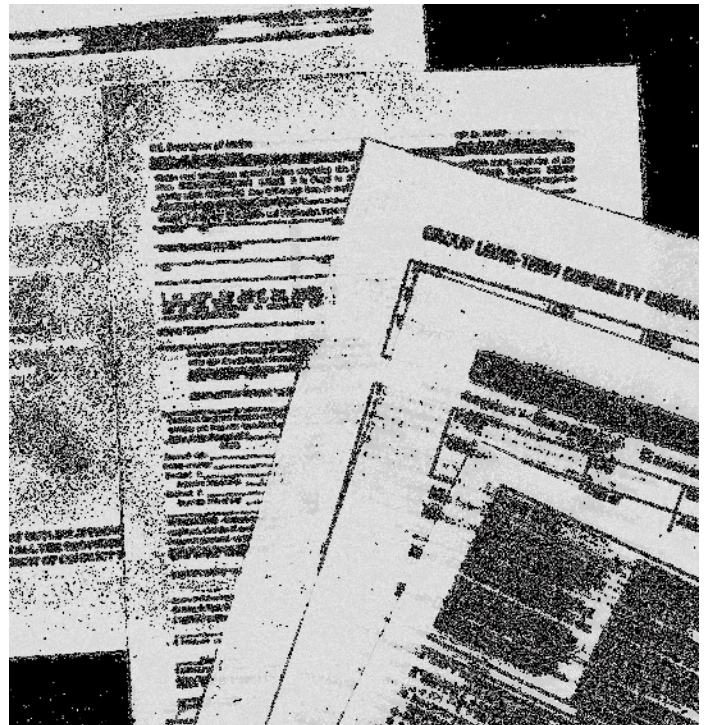


WORKPLACE BENEFITS

Aside from the immediate financial benefit you will receive at your new job—a paycheck—there are many other benefits to being employed. A new job means new professional and personal responsibilities. During the first days on the job, you will fill out many forms that will introduce you to these personal responsibilities. Completing W-4 forms, I-9 forms, and insurance forms will help you make decisions about your future. Do not feel overwhelmed by the information: instead, ask questions of your supervisor (or the department that issues the forms) so you can better understand the choices you are making. The following information will help you through the paperwork process:

- W-4 form: The amount of tax subtracted from your paycheck based on the number of withholding allowances (usually, this is the number of children or dependents you have). The more allowances you claim, the less money is withheld from your paycheck.
- I-9 form: This form identifies your ability to work legally in the United States. Be prepared to show valid identification to verify your work status.
- Insurance forms: These will explain your health, disability, and life insurance policies, if you choose to have this sort of coverage. Some companies pay for some or all of these types of coverage. Otherwise, you may make up the difference as a deduction from your paycheck.
- Retirement forms: Many companies offer retirement savings options, such as 401(k) plans, for employees. You have the option to reduce your taxable income each pay period by a certain amount (such as \$50), which is generally matched at some level by your employer. This total sum is invested in a retirement savings account.

The following page is a checklist of the most common employee benefits. It is important you understand exactly what benefits are offered by the company. It is a good idea to make copies of all the paperwork you fill out and information you receive for future reference. In fact, it is a good idea to review this paperwork every one to two years to refresh your memory and knowledge of applicable benefits.



JOB BENEFITS CHECKLIST

Use this checklist as a tool to learn about your new benefits.

Health Coverage.

___ **State Plans** Available depending on salary.

___ **Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)**
You are required to use doctors and hospitals that belong to the HMO organization. Your total cost for a doctor's visit is usually limited to a small copayment (about \$10-\$30). Your primary doctor must approve visits to specialists.

___ **Preferred Provider Organization (PPO)**
Similar to an HMO, except you do not need permission from your primary care physician to see a specialist. However, it will cost you more to visit doctors who are outside the network.

___ **Other** _____

___ **Dental Coverage.** Coverage usually pays the full cost of preventative care (cleaning and checking your teeth once or twice a year) and part of the cost for other dental services.

___ **Disability Insurance.** Insurance that will pay part of your lost wages if you are unable to work due to injury or sickness. Most disability plans begin to pay you after you have been unable to work for 90 days.

___ **Life Insurance.** Insurance that will be paid to your survivors after you die.

___ **Financial Planning.** Help with your personal financial planning, such as:

- ___ Setting goals, budgeting, and/or credit
- ___ Understanding retirement accounts
- ___ Understanding government assistance programs

Retirement Program.

___ **Matching 401(k) or 403(b)** Money that you put into your account is often matched by the employer. You do not pay taxes on the money you put in or on the interest that it earns until retirement.

___ **Other** _____

___ **Transportation Benefits.** Some employers will provide free or subsidized passes for public transportation. Or, if you drive to work in an area where you must pay for parking, check to see if your employer provides it for free.

___ **Child Care Benefits.** Some employers have on-site child care centers that provide free care or care at a reduced rate. Or, your employer may pay part of the expenses of off-site child care.

___ **Tuition Reimbursement or Scholarship Programs.** Many companies will pay all or part of your tuition to learn new skills or finish a degree. Some companies also offer competitive scholarship programs.

___ **Vacation** ___ **Holidays** ___ **Sick Leave**

___ **Personal Days.** Days for taking care of family or personal business. Uses for personal days may include time off to move or to get your car repaired.

___ **Family Leave.** Allows time off to care for a newborn, a newly adopted or foster child, or a seriously ill family member with employers continuing to provide health-care benefits and save job to workers on leave.

___ **Flexible Spending Account (FSA).** You direct your employer to deduct a certain amount of money each month from your paycheck, which lowers your taxes. The money can be used for child care or medical/dental expenses. You must be careful, though. Any money you have left in the account at the end of the year is lost. An FSA can provide a grace period of up to two and a half months after plan year end to claim reimbursement.

___ **Employee Assistance Program.** Provides counseling services for employees who seek help with problems such as stress, alcoholism, or personal problems on the job.

___ **Other,** such as adoption assistance, wellness programs (such as exercise facilities on site), employee mentoring program, and legal assistance.



In order to understand and appreciate the working world, it is important to know about and use your employee benefits. Employers offer benefits for many reasons including to attract employees and improve workplace morale, enhance workers' financial security, and keep employees healthy and productive. Depending on the company, benefits often are not available to an employee until they have worked at the company for a certain period of time, typically one to six months.

As listed on the previous page, benefits such as life and health insurance and worker's compensation are common perks to working at a company. To reward employees, companies often offer vacation time, holidays, and personal or sick days that allow you time away from the office while still being paid.

It is possible that your employer does not offer any benefits, specifically health insurance. If this is the case at your company, research where you can receive health insurance independent of your company and if you can afford it. While it may seem like a lot of money to pay upfront or on a monthly basis if you and your family are healthy, medical costs can add up very quickly and significantly. Consider the following:

- **Private health-care plans:** Offer protection for major illness and injury only. Look for a plan with a high maximum annual payout and plan to pay for other medical costs (such as doctor's appointments) out of pocket. One note of caution, make sure the plan you choose can't be canceled if you start having health problems.



- **State plans:** You may be able to purchase health insurance coverage from your state government if you cannot find alternative coverage elsewhere. Typically, to be eligible for state coverage, you cannot be on Medicaid or Medicare, and you must not be eligible for group coverage from another source (such as through an employer). There may be other qualifications as well, depending on your state's plan. Check with your state's department of health for more information.
- **Association group medical coverage:** It is possible that you can buy health insurance through an association, or group, you belong to.
- **COBRA:** Also known as the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, allows you to continue medical coverage based on a former employer's plan. As long as your previous employer has 20 or more employees, you could be eligible for up to 18 months of additional coverage, depending upon the reason you are no longer employed at that company. While this is one option for receiving health insurance, it is an expensive one, costing you the entire sum of the health coverage plan and additional administrative fees. Keep in mind that to activate COBRA, you must sign up for the plan within 60 days after you leave your place of work (or when your hours are reduced and you are no longer eligible for health insurance).
- **Short-term medical coverage:** A temporary solution until a job comes along with health insurance. These plans are generally available in six-month terms.
- **Point of Service (POS) plans:** These plans are relatively new and offer a combination of health-care options. To receive care you must first receive approval from your primary physician, but preventive services are typically covered.



- **Indemnity plans:** Traditionally called “fee for service” plans, these allow you to go to any doctor you choose. However, these plans will generally not cover the entire cost of services (you cover 20 percent, the plan covers 80 percent). Moreover, these plans do not often cover preventive care and may require you to pay a high deductible before the coverage is activated.

While all of the health-care plans and options available will require you to pay some out-of-pocket expenses, it is important for you to decide how much you want to pay up-front versus paying significant costs if you suddenly require medical attention. The cost is only one important aspect of the coverage you choose. When choosing health-care coverage for yourself and your family, remember to compare maximum deductibles, the choice of physicians and hospitals, limits on benefits, and coverage for pre-existing conditions.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Another benefit some companies offer to employees is the ability to plan financially for your future. Known most often as retirement programs, these plans will help you and your family (even if you don't have one yet) live comfortably long after you retire.

- **401(k) plan:** Perhaps the most popular type of retirement plan, this option is an easy way to start saving for the future. You set aside a percentage of your paycheck to invest in a money market fund, a bond mutual fund, a stock mutual fund, or company stock. A company consultant can walk you through the process to determine what is best for your financial situation. It is important to identify the risks and rewards with each fund and when you will need the invested money.
- **Profit-sharing plan:** In this option, the employer offers the employees a payout from the company profits, either in cash or stock. One popular type of profit-sharing plan is the Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) in which the employer pays an employee in stock, but the stock cannot be immediately sold or traded. This option is not as secure as your only retirement plan since its value shifts up and down with the value of the company.
- **SIMPLE plans:** The Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees (SIMPLE) offers the opportunity to put as much as \$10,500 for 2007 of your pay into a tax-deferred account. Employers will match the contribution at a minimum amount. While the employee can immediately access employer contributions, there is a penalty if withdrawals are made in the first two years of establishing the account.
- **403(b) plan:** This is a tax-sheltered annuity (TSA) plan that is specifically for nonprofit organizations. While this plan is similar to a 401(k) plan, employees will pay no taxes on the money or the earnings. However, there are limits to how much employees can contribute annually.

An important aspect of 401(k) plans is that the money is not taxed until you withdraw the funds. This allows the interest on the account to grow substantially, creating a means to live on when you retire. Be sure to ask the company consultant how long it takes for employer contributions to your account to be vested, whether withdrawals or loans are permitted, and what withdrawal penalties apply.

Most companies will encourage their employees to participate in 401(k) plans by matching employees' contributions. Think free money! For instance, some employers will contribute as much as 25 cents, 50 cents or a dollar (up to a certain limit) for every dollar you contribute. Therefore, it pays—literally—to contribute as much as you can!





- **Individual Retirement Account (IRA):** Some companies do not offer retirement programs to their employees but that doesn't mean you shouldn't save on your own. IRAs offer individuals the option to put up to \$5,000 for 2008 in a tax-deferred account to begin saving for retirement.
- **Annuities:** This option allows individuals to invest with an insurance company. After you retire, the company will pay you an income based on your investments. Once again, the money is not taxed until it is withdrawn from the account. The important consideration about annuities is the rate of interest, either fixed or variable, because this will directly impact your return on investment.
- **Personal savings and investments:** This is an independent option for an individual planning for the future. Banks offer savings accounts, money market funds, and certificates of deposit (CDs). While these are safer options than some investments, these types of accounts will not increase in value nearly as much as stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. Moreover, personal savings and investments will be taxed each year.

What is important to remember is that anything you save for your retirement is better than not saving at all. Think through the different options to determine what is best for you and your budget. No matter what you choose, you are choosing to invest in yourself and your future.



Section 3

Looking Ahead

Chapter 7:

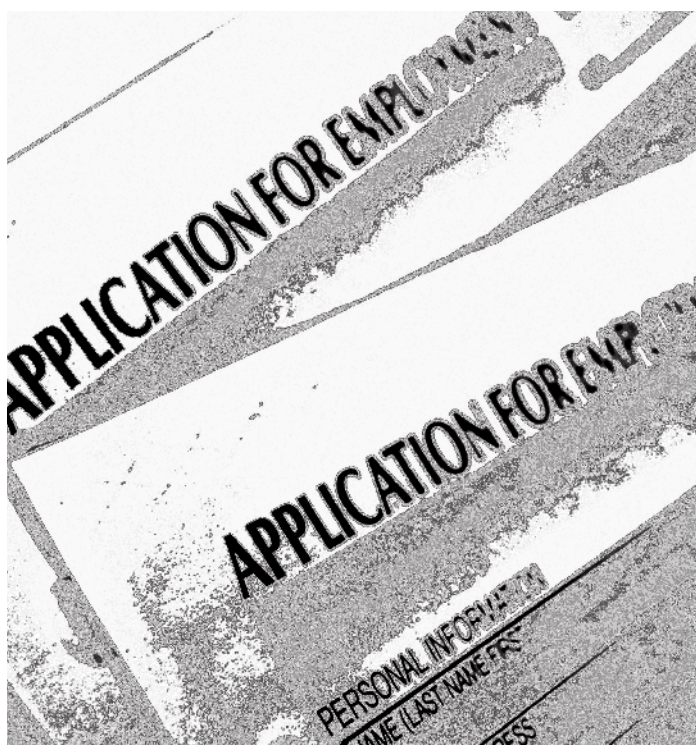
Promotions, Job Changes, and Other Next Steps

*“Always aim for achievement and
forget about success.”*

*Helen Hayes, actress known as
The First Lady of American Theatre*

Now that we’ve discussed investing financially in your future, it is time to talk about investing in yourself. As a woman in the working world, it is essential to take charge of your own professional future rather than letting someone, or a company, decide it for you. Even though you have landed a job—perhaps you have even been there for some time now—it is important to continue the cycle of learning and professional development.

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Keep in mind how you can better yourself to become a more valued employee no matter where you choose to work. Consider the following tips for successful career management:

1. Born to be wired. Whether you work in an office or manage the crew that cleans it, computer skills are needed for most careers today. You certainly don’t have to be a computer wizard, just comfortable and competent.
2. Get an edge and keep it sharp. Workers must keep improving their skills throughout their careers. Research internal and external training seminars to be more marketable.
3. Climb the corporate ladder. Stop thinking about moving up fast and start thinking more about picking up experience and new skills every day. If you focus on learning and doing your best, promotions will follow.
4. Networking works. Improve your skills and expand your job opportunities by actively talking with others in your industry or profession. Keep current with trends in your profession. Information is the key to the future.
5. There is no “I” in team. Companies encourage people to work in teams. In some cases, these teams are connected electronically by email, phone, and fax.

Keep in mind nearly 20 percent of the women enrolled in the Dress for Success Professional Women's Group (PWG) continued their education while remaining employed. Don't think that just because you have a job, you can't get a different—or better—one. In today's labor market, it's necessary to further your education and professional skills if you want to advance professionally and earn more money. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, workers without a high school diploma or GED make 20 percent less than high school graduates. Moreover, four-year college graduates earn 53 percent more of the salary earned by high school graduates.

Companies often are willing to pay for some, or all, additional training or education if it pertains to your profession and position. Keep in mind that your company wants you to succeed, because it will help them succeed, too!

Money Talk

No matter how long you've been at a job, talking about money is not always the easiest subject to bring up with your boss. However, keep in mind that business is business, and timing is everything.

- Raises often go to the people who dare to ask for them.
- Typically, raises occur at annual review time. Determine the best time to ask for a raise—not for you, but for the company.
- Build your professional, not personal, case. You should never ask for a raise because of something happening in your life outside the workplace, only your contributions in the workplace count.



REVIEWING YOUR PERFORMANCE

You will know if you are succeeding at your company through a procedure known as an annual review. Most companies offer their employees an annual (or sometimes more frequent) written performance evaluation. The review assesses your current role in the company and whether you are meeting the company's, and your supervisor's, expectations.

Hopefully, after a year at the company, you will have mastered many of the tasks required to exceed the expectations of your position. During your annual review, you might be asked to sign a new contract identifying any changes to your responsibilities. As you work with your supervisor during the review to establish new goals, this is your time to shine! Tell your boss what you have learned and be sure to show evidence of your skills and progress at the company.

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Demonstrating to your boss that you are excelling at your responsibilities will ensure a successful future for you at the company. This could lead to a promotion and/or raise. An annual review is the perfect time to address your professional development at the company. Come to the review with questions of your own: your supervisor will be impressed with your commitment to the company and your professional development. Make sure to keep a file at home for all of your workplace performance records.

CHANGING JOBS

It is entirely possible that you have reached the point in your current position where you need more challenges that are not available no matter how much additional training or company development is available. Changing jobs is an integral part of planning for your future, but knowing when to make the change will ease your mind and simplify the process.



If you decide that you are not at the right job, how do you find the right one, especially when you have a full-time job? Many people say that finding a full-time job is actually its own full-time job. It's easier, however, to find a job when employed. Remember that personal time at work is limited and rarely private, so use your free time to your advantage. Take your scheduled lunch break every day. This will give you time out of the office to:

- ✓ Search the local newspaper classified ads.
- ✓ Visit the local library to search Internet job sites.
- ✓ Schedule and attend job interviews at other companies.
- ✓ E-mail or call trusted friends and professional contacts to let them know you are searching for a new position and ask if they know of any opportunities.

It is not advisable to let anyone at your office know you are searching for a new job. If you do, it is likely that your supervisor will eventually find out and he or she could let you go. Consider the following tips for assistance with your new job search:

- ✓ If you can, find a new job before you leave your old one. Your new job should be better than your old one. It should pay more money, teach you new skills, give you more responsibility, or give you more job satisfaction.
- ✓ Always try to leave a job on good terms. Give at least two weeks' notice. Do not "burn any bridges."
- ✓ Get copies of good performance reviews. Save samples that prove the value of your work (letters, awards, or product samples) to show your new employers.
- ✓ Obtain reference letters from past employers.
- ✓ Before you leave your old job, collect all the benefits you can. These may include severance pay, payment for unused leave or unused vacation time, reimbursement for expenses, and money put into a retirement plan. Be sure to ask your plan administrator to directly roll over your retirement benefits into an IRA. Keep saving for your retirement.
- ✓ Find out when your old health-care benefits end and new ones begin. If you have to wait before your new plan begins, consider using COBRA to extend your current health insurance.

When looking for a new job, it can be helpful to think about your career path. Take a look at the following pages that chart a fictitious woman's—Yvonne—job path. Following Yvonne's chart, there is a blank chart for you to complete with your professional skills and dreams.

Remember the goals you established in Chapter 2. Review that worksheet as you try to determine the job you really want, and the jobs you must take to get there. Each job is a stepping stone to get what you want out of life professionally and financially, and the path of stones is yours to build!

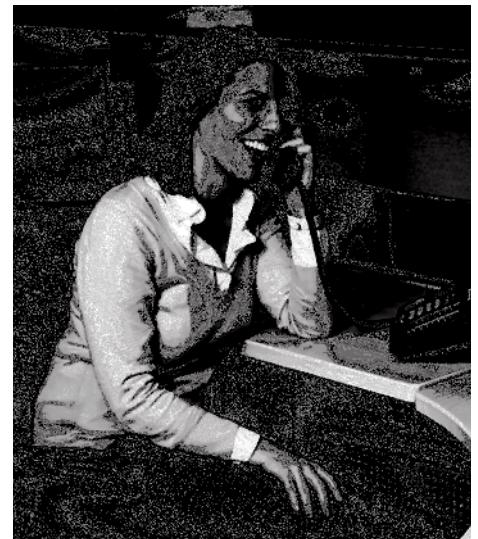


YVONNE'S JOB PATH

This chart shows the path that an imaginary hotel employee took. Yvonne was in her 20s when she began to work for a hotel. She was in her 50s when she bought her own inn.

One reason Yvonne advanced so far is that she had many years to build her skills, get experience, and save her earnings. She changed hotels twice, and notice that she took some night-school classes, too. If you start later, you can be happy with a different job path. But at each job you have, think about the skills you can learn that you can use in your next job.

Her Job	What She Learned	Where This Job Took Her
Housekeeping staff, cleaning rooms	To work steadily and finish a task What hotel guests want their rooms to look like	Busing dishes and waiting tables at a large hotel
Busing and waiting tables in a hotel restaurant	How to serve and clean up in a polite and friendly way How to help people who have problems How to calm or satisfy people who are unpleasant	Working in a hotel kitchen
Cook's assistant	About different foods and cooking methods How to time a meal so that every item is ready to serve at the same time	Helping to prepare and serve banquets
Serving banquets	Planning amounts of foods to serve the number of people expected How to organize servers so that all tables get their food promptly	Working at the reception desk
Reception desk	How to make reservations How to take care of guests as they register How to smoothly register a large number of guests How to track charges on the guest's bill How to work with porters, housekeeping staff, and other hotel staff to meet the needs of guests Also: she took night classes at a community college in Hospitality and Meeting Planning	Helping to plan meetings and conventions at the hotel



YVONNE'S JOB PATH - Continued

Her Job	What She Learned	Where This Job Took Her
Meeting planning	<p>How to determine the number of rooms to set aside for the meeting</p> <p>How to plan when and where meals will be served to the group</p> <p>How to set up conference rooms</p>	Director of Meeting Planning
Director of Meeting Planning	<p>How to manage a staff</p> <p>How to advertise the hotel's meeting facilities</p>	To her dream...
Owner of a small inn in a resort town	Now is the time to apply all that has been learned about housekeeping, food service, scheduling, and keeping customers happy	To a secure retirement

YOUR JOB PATH

What might your job path look like? Here is a blank chart for you to begin filling out. It may be a lot longer than one page by the time you are finished. How far ahead can you think? Thinking about your future is hard—especially if you do not have a job now. And even if you fill it out now, your ideas may change as you learn about other jobs. So stay flexible but remember your goals. Work and learn. Your efforts will make the difference.

Your Job	What You Can Learn	Where This Job Will Take You

Dress for Success® Resources

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead, famous anthropologist

As you know at this point in your professional path, Dress for Success offers many resources for women just like you. From suits, to interviews and mentoring, to ongoing support groups, Dress for Success has offered its services to hundreds of thousands of women. An in-depth look at their resources shows what is available.



✓ **Professional Women’s Group (PWG):** Supports women throughout the days—and stages—of their professional careers. The group meets on a regular basis in a comfortable environment for women to share, grow, and network with other professional women who are also new to the workplace. At each meeting, Professional Women’s Group members will hear from an expert guest speaker on one of the following topics: Written rules of the workplace, unwritten rules of the workplace, financial literacy, and work/life balance. Members may also be eligible for benefits such as additional work-appropriate clothing and connections to community resources. Not only is the Professional Women’s Group educational—it’s fun, too!

✓ **Career Center:** A resource for women looking for a new job. Professional consultants and volunteers will assist with job searching, resume development, and interview skills. Women can also explore new careers, utilize a computer with the latest software or go online.

✓ **Mentoring/Career Coaching:** An ongoing professional and personal woman-to-woman consultation. Professional women have the opportunity to meet with other women who are several years ahead in their careers, and who can provide individualized guidance and support on achieving your goals.

Other Resources

“Find out what needs to be done and do it!”

Marjory Stoneman Douglas,
environmentalist

For Your Information

There are literally hundreds of books and Web sites to assist you on your path and education toward self-sufficiency. The following are a few to get you started:

- **Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: 101 Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers** by Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D. (2004, Warner Business Books: New York, NY).
Includes tips for the working woman
- **What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Changers** by Richard Bolles (2004, Ten Speed Press: Berkeley, CA).
A workbook to help you figure out what kind of work you might like to do
- **Get a Financial Life: Personal Finance in Your Twenties and Thirties** by Beth Kobliner (2000, A Fireside Book: Simon & Schuster, New York, NY).
- **The 15-Second Principle: Short, Simple Steps to Achieving Long-Term Goals** by Al Secunda (2004, Career Press: Franklin Lakes, NJ).
A book that will help you set goals by taking small, manageable steps
- **The Riley Guide: Employment Opportunities and Job Resources on the Internet**, www.rileyguide.com
- **Financial Resources for Women and Children, Inc.**, www.frwc.org

Other Resources

The following resources are available in many communities and cities throughout the United States and internationally. If in doubt about who or where to turn to for personal or professional assistance, contact Dress for Success at www.dressforsuccess.org for more information.



Children and Family Services

- Goodwill: Local thrift stores that offer affordable clothing and furniture
- Community hospitals/churches: Offer ongoing listings of child-care services, classes, etc.
- Local social services: Resources for women in need of assistance, food, and shelter

Education and Job Training

- Local community colleges: Offer inexpensive, ongoing education
- YMCA-YWCA and United Way: Strong community resources for women and families looking for community education, referrals, etc.

Housing and Transportation

- Police department: Offers referrals for emergency shelters
- Local Chamber of Commerce: Resource for local businesses, including housing, transportation, and employment opportunities

Health Issues

- COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act): A method for extending an employer's health insurance when you switch jobs or your hours are reduced
- Community hospitals: May offer ongoing clinics for uninsured patients

Networking and Note Taking

As you continue on your path to self-sufficiency, take notes, remember your thoughts, and look back on how far you have come.

Conclusion

Congratulations! Now you have not only completed reading this booklet, but it is likely you have completed several weeks—possibly months—on the job.

When you picked up this booklet, you knew you had many things to learn about surviving and succeeding in the workplace. Hopefully, the information here has helped guide you through many questions and challenges during this new chapter in your life, so you may more confidently continue on your path to self-sufficiency.

Completing this booklet is just one stepping stone in that professional development path. Yet it is a touchstone you can come back to as a reference when you are unsure about a situation in the workplace.

We hope you continue to search, learn, and succeed in the working world. It is always your own vision and ambition that will prevail, leading you on a path toward sustained personal confidence, professional accomplishment, and financial independence.

*You are one step closer because of your vision and ambition.
Best of luck in the steps to come. We know you can do it because
you have come this far.*

Acknowledgments

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DRESS FOR SUCCESS®
Suits to Self-Sufficiency

The mission of Dress for Success is to promote the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive in work and in life. Please visit www.dressforsuccess.org for more information about Dress for Success.

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