get Work
A Smart Guide to Work

Useful things to know about finding and keeping a job and building career.

TOGETHER WE CAN FOUNDATION
A big part of becoming an adult is moving into the world of work.

That means being able to find and keep a job, and, more importantly, how to build a career that’s right for you.

These are some things you should know.

Finding and keeping a job and building a career is built on some basic principles, that are true for everyone, but this Smart Guide to Work is designed to give young adults just starting out, an edge in the process. This isn’t about just surviving. It’s about thriving and being successful and happy.

The GET WORK Guide is divided up into 3 sections.

Part 1: Finding a Job (page 4)  
Getting hired is largely a matter of how you present yourself.

Part 2: Keeping a Job (page 24)  
Holding onto that job and getting promoted is still a matter of how you present yourself and how you show up, but also how you deal with challenges.

Part 3: Building a Career (page 38)  
Building a career that will make you happy depends on how well you know yourself, how good you are at planning, and how much self-discipline you have to follow through.

What this guide isn’t. This is not an exhaustive guide to employment and careers. It’s not meant for someone with 4 years of college embarking on the search for a full-time career position. It’s intended for young adults looking to find entry level part- or full-time employment and to begin thinking about the relationship between a job and a career.
A job is a place where you work. They pay you wages based on the hours you work or they pay you an annual salary divided up by the number of weeks or months in a year. Sometimes they also provide benefits like health insurance or contributing to your retirement fund. You'll have many jobs in your life.

A career is an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person’s life and with opportunities for progress. Ideally, a career is built around things you love to do, things you are good at doing, and things that make a positive difference in the world.

Finding a Job
While it might make sense to start with building a career, most young people begin working by finding a job to earn their own money, so that’s where we will start—with finding a job. Also, the same skills required to find a job hold true whether that job is just a way to earn money or whether it is part of your career plan.

The people who find jobs easily are people who present themselves to others well and make a good impression. They understand that employers hire people who:

- Appear Qualified;
- Look Attractive;
- Stand Out as Memorable in a Positive Way.
Do you know your qualifications?

Take a moment and think like an employer. What would you be looking for in an employee if you owned the business? For most entry level jobs, they are willing to train you in the specifics of the job, but they want to know whether you have specific soft skills that will ultimately make you a great employee. These are some of the basic things that employers are looking for:

- **Hard Working**
  - Are you willing to work hard and get things done?

- **Quick Learner**
  - Do you pick up new skills and processes quickly?

- **Honest/Trustworthy**
  - Can I count on you not to steal from me and to tell me the truth?

- **Reliable/Responsible**
  - Can I trust you to do the right things even when I’m not around?

- **Punctual**
  - Are you organized and disciplined and will you show up on time?

- **Good People Skills**
  - Can you calm tense situations and make customers feel happy and well-served?

- **Good Communication Skills**
  - Are you easy to hear and understand and a good communicator?

- **Neat Appearance**
  - Do you take pride in your appearance?

- **Leadership Skills**
  - Would you be someone I might want to promote?

- **Problem Solver**
  - Are you the kind of person who is always looking for better ways to do things?

- **A Team Player**
  - Are you the kind of person who is always helping others on your team?

Your Elevator Speech

It isn’t enough that you know what your qualifications are, what matters is whether you can communicate them quickly, easily, and passionately. That’s what is called your “elevator speech.” Imagine you were getting into an elevator with someone who could really make a difference in your life (by offering you a job or an opportunity). What would you tell them about yourself in the few short moments you have together in that elevator. This is not unlike the opportunity you may get in an interview when an employer asks “why should I hire you?”

From the list on page 6 select the three or four qualifications that you think you are strongest in and that you could talk about most successfully. Then put them together in a statement that you could use as your personal elevator speech.

**Example:** “I think I would make a great employee because I am the kind of person who is always looking for better ways to do things. I’m a really quick learner so you won’t have to tell me things over and over again. I also feel that my experience playing sports has taught me the importance of teamwork when it comes to doing anything well.”

Of course this example is still a little generic and the more personal you can make it with actual examples from your experience the better it will be.

Now you have to practice saying it out loud. Ask a parent, teacher, or friend to listen to you practice. The more you rehearse, the more prepared you will be and the more confident you will sound. Be prepared to give examples of when and how you have used those qualifications in the past.
Success Skills:
The smart job searcher and career builder focuses on developing the skills and qualities that employers value most. These are your success skills. They will help you through your entire career not just in landing a job. In 2010, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) published a list of the what skills employers are most interested in their employees having (in order):

1. Communication Skills
2. Strong Work Ethic
3. Initiative
4. Interpersonal Skills
5. Problem-Solving Skills
6. Teamwork Skills
7. Analytical Skills
8. Flexibility/Adaptability
9. Computer Skills
10. Detail-Oriented
11. Leadership Skills
12. Technical Skills
13. Organizational Skills
14. Self-Confidence
15. Tactfulness
16. Friendly/Outgoing Personality
17. Creativity
18. Strategic Planning Skills
19. Entrepreneurial Skills
20. Sense of Humor

So what does that mean for you? It means that you should be using high school and college or technical training as an opportunity to build and refine these skills. It means that you should be gathering evidence of your ability to apply these skills to work situations. You can either spend your time complaining that people won’t give you a break or spend your time becoming the kind of person employers can’t resist hiring.

Who would you hire?

My name is Shanara. I have really good communication skills and I love solving problems for people. I’m very detail-oriented and good at analyzing situations to come up with the best solutions. I tend to be very adaptable and don’t get thrown off by new challenges.

I’m Tyrell. I like working and earning money, and I take my job seriously. When I see problems, I take the initiative to fix them. I have a friendly and outgoing personality and a great sense of humor that helps me keep tense situations from getting worse. I also have solid computer skills.

I’m Ashley. I have strong interpersonal skills that make me especially good at working with people. I also have a strong commitment to teamwork. My tactfulness makes my interactions with my colleagues more effective and my organizational skills help ensure that the projects I work on are successful. I have the technical skills necessary to be taken seriously at work and I’m always interested in learning new skills.

My name is Eric. I’m a natural leader who can motivate others toward a common goal. My self-confidence generally serves me well when it is necessary to take risks and act entrepreneurially. I’m creative when it comes to generating novel ideas and approaches to problems and I have solid strategic planning skills that help me see a project through successfully.
Making Yourself Attractive

Remember that employers tend to hire people that are attractive. That doesn’t mean you have to be a beauty queen or fashion model, but it does mean that you need to make yourself energetically attractive. You only get one chance to make a first impression.

P.L.E.A.S.E. Remember this acronym

Posture

One of the first impressions people have of you is how you stand and sit. Stand up straight, shoulders back and relaxed. If offered a chair, sit on the front edge of the chair and don’t lean back. This automatically makes you seem more engaged and interested. Leaning back and getting too comfortable makes you appear lazy. Avoid crossed arms. It makes you seem defensive.

Language

Use the best English you can. Avoid street language and slang. No matter what the interviewer does, don’t swear. Make sure you keep your volume level up. You never want an interviewer to have a hard time hearing or understanding you. That’s enough to get you disqualified from the top. Politeness matters here. You will never go wrong with “yes ma’am,” or “yes sir.”

Eye Contact

Maintain consistent eye contact. You don’t need to stare, but you do need to avoid looking down too much or looking all over the room. It makes you seem either too subservient or too distracted. It’s okay to look away for a moment when thinking about your answer, but then bring your gaze back to your interviewer.

Attire & Appearance

What you wear and the care you take with your appearance says a lot about you. Dress in clean and well cared for clothes that don’t smell of cigarettes. Guys, a collared shirt and a pair of khakis with a belt or at least tight around your waist usually works well. A sports jacket is a plus. Ladies, a dress blouse and a knee-length skirt or pair of slacks is appropriate. Avoid too much make-up, excessive jewelry, really high heels or clothing that reveals too much skin. If you have a lot of tattoos, make sure they are covered and if you have a lot of piercings, especially around your face, take them out for the interview.

Smile

Believe it or not, your smile may just be your secret weapon in an interview. An easy and relaxed smile puts others at ease. It communicates self-confidence and is the sign of a friendly and outgoing person.

Energetic Attitude

The single reason most employers give for failing to hire someone is that they don’t seem to have a positive energetic attitude. An interview is absolutely the time for you to bring your “A-game” in terms of energy. You need to show that you want this job and that you’d be good at this job. If neither of those things is true for you, then stop wasting people’s time by interviewing for jobs you don’t really want.
Making Yourself Memorable

So let’s assume that you’ve gotten comfortable talking about your best qualities and qualifications for work and you are able to present yourself in an energetically attractive manner through your posture, language, eye contact, attire and appearance, your smile and your energetic attitude. The good news is that you’re about 80% of the way to getting hired. The last 20% requires that you make yourself memorable in a positive way.

You’re qualified and attractive. Now how are you going to stand out? There are basically three ways to make yourself memorable:

• Who you know
• How you connect
• What you bring

Who you know

Okay, so this may not be fair, but the absolute best way to get hired is to have an inside connection. A recommendation from a friend of the business owner or manager or even a recommendation from a current employee often outweighs other considerations when it comes to hiring. Your friends can be your best resource.

So when you begin looking for a job, ask yourself these questions:
1. Where do my friends work and would they put in a good word for me?

2. Do my parents or family members know any employers with whom they could make a connection for me?

3. Could members of my church or community put in a good word for me with an employer?

Here’s the catch with this strategy. For it to work, you already have to have a pretty good reputation with your friends and neighbors and you owe it to them to be a really good employee. If someone has recommended you and then you turn out to be a poor employee, you’ve made that person look bad. You’ve ruined your reputation and tarnished theirs. Using friends and family to get a job can be a great strategy, but it also brings with it a big responsibility.

Needless to say, once you are working and someone approaches you about recommending them, be very careful. It’s a good thing to be a friend to someone, but if they behave badly on the job it will reflect on you.

How you connect

Another way to make yourself memorable is by connecting with the interviewer or employer. This can be difficult, but some people do it quite naturally. If you are good at talking to people, which usually means asking them questions about themselves and listening to their answers, then you might find common interests about which you could have a conversation. A shared love of a sport or sports team, of fashion, of an entertainer, of a place you’ve traveled to or a place you’ve always wanted to visit, of a hobby or particular interest can set you apart in a positive way in an interviewer’s mind.

If you are a natural people person with good conversation skills, this might be a useful thing to remember.
What you bring

So what happens if you don’t have a built-in connection and you aren’t sure of your ability to make those quick conversational connections. Well, another way to make yourself memorable is by what you bring with you to the interview.

The two things you should really put some time and energy into creating and then bring both with you to your interviews are a resume and a personal presentation portfolio.

Resume

A resume is a one-page fact sheet about you. It has your contact information, a record of where you went (or are currently going) to school, any work experience you’ve had (paid or volunteer), any special awards or certificates you’ve received, and any special skills you have. It’s beyond the scope of this publication to take you through the process of creating a resume, but most high schools offer classes on how to create one and the internet is filled with templates for resumes that you can fill in with your own information. Microsoft Word® has resume templates under the Word Document Gallery. Your community probably also has youth career centers where you can get help with your resume.

Always bring a clean copy of your resume to an interview. It has a lot of the information you will need to fill out your employment application. If the employer says your resume isn’t necessary, try to leave it anyway. There’s a good chance it will get stapled to your application, which will make your application stand out. Be honest on your resume, but be thorough. Many people overlook significant volunteer experiences on their resumes.

Personal Presentation Portfolio

A personal presentation portfolio is a binder containing evidence of any claims you are making about your skills and experiences. It’s a great way to show yourself at your best. You can find attractive and professional looking portfolios or presentation books at Barnes and Nobles Book Stores, arts supply stores, or some of the larger office supply stores like Staples or Office Max/Depot. Your portfolio might contain:

• samples of your ability communicate in writing;
• letters of recommendation from coaches, teachers, employers, or community leaders;
• certificates and awards;
• programs from performances or press clippings;
• photographic evidence attesting to your skills and interests;
• photographs of artwork, projects, and performances.

Taking the time to create a personal presentation portfolio says a lot to a potential employer. It helps you come across as someone who is serious about working and serious about your life. It helps an employer see you as organized, thoughtful, responsible, and active.

Having a portfolio also helps you better understand you. It helps you see your strengths and capabilities more clearly and it can help you be more clear about where you want to go in your life.
Using Your Portfolio In An Interview

**Several days before the interview:**

1. Check your resume. Is it up to date? Do you have at least one extra copy to leave with the person interviewing you? Even if you had to fill out much of the same information on an employment form, it is still a professional touch to leave a resume.

2. Reorganize your portfolio to match the requirements of the interview. For example, if the interview is for a service job at a pet store, you might want to highlight some of your other service-related jobs. You might want to show your social or people skills. If you have evidence of how much you love animals, you can highlight that. Highlight materials by moving them closer to the front of your portfolio.

3. Make sure your portfolio is neat and clean.

4. Practice how you might use your portfolio in advance. A parent, teacher, or peer might help you role-play. Think about which evidence most strongly matches the employer's needs.

**On the day of the interview:**


6. Be a little early. This gives you a chance to compose yourself before the interview and rehearse one last time. Try taking some deep slow breaths and saying to yourself “I want this job. I’d be good at this job. I’m the best person for this job.”

7. Never just hand a portfolio to the interviewer. Hold it for a few minutes. Try to maintain control of your portfolio. If someone takes it from you and doesn’t open it, it can be awkward to get it back to show your examples.

8. When you are asked questions about your experiences, try to back up what you say with portfolio evidence. If you are asked for a qualification you don’t have, try to answer with a “No, but...” That means that you redirect the question to a skill that you do have. Example: Question—“Have you ever conducted inventory in a store?” Answer—“No, but my math grades are very good, I’m comfortable working with numbers, and I am good with details.” You can then back up these statements with evidence from your portfolio.

9. When asked why you want a specific job, it is always better if you can explain it as part of your career plan. You could refer the employer to a career plan or statement in your portfolio.

10. You won’t be able to walk someone through your whole portfolio. Don’t expect to! Be prepared to point out the highlights in the limited time you may have. That means you should know what the highlights are and where they are.

11. Remember to leave a resume behind.

12. In general, it isn’t a good idea to leave your portfolio behind. You will probably want to use it for other interviews. The only exception to this rule is if the interview went really well and you are asked to leave it behind. In that case, ask if you can schedule a time the next day to come pick it up. This can provide the added benefit of giving you a second contact with the employer. Just never leave your portfolio without a mutually agreed time for you to pick it up (then, of course, you have to remember to pick it up).

**After the interview:**

13. Take some time to evaluate the interview process. Did you have a chance to use your portfolio? Was there anything that you wished you had that wasn’t in your portfolio? Were you comfortable with the order of the materials? Is there anything that could sell your abilities better next time? Were there questions for which you need to develop better answers?

HONESTY: While it is true that everyone tries to look their best in an interview, it’s never a good idea to lie about your qualifications or experiences. The consequences to your reputation are just too serious to take the risk. Besides, if you’re really practicing the art of presenting the best you possible to the world, you won’t need to lie.
Where to Look

Now that you’ve got a sense of how to present yourself at your best by appearing qualified, looking attractive and standing out as memorable in a positive way, it’s time to put those skills to work.

For entry level jobs the best way to learn about hiring is by networking with your friends who have jobs.

They know when their business is hiring and if an employer can hire someone without advertising, they probably will. This also gives you an opportunity to use an inside connection if your friends are willing to put in a good word for you.

Beyond word-of-mouth, it used to be that most jobs were advertised in newspapers but now it’s internet Websites like CareerBuilder.com, Indeed.com, Monster.com or Craigslist.org. Since hiring has moved online, it can sometimes be hard to actually get to the interview stage because you get pre-screened through an online application process. But, a follow-up visit to the business with your portfolio in hand to check on your application is a great way to get more face-to-face time with the hiring manager, and shows real motivation.

Networking

This sounds so obvious, but most young people overlook this powerful job-search tool: Talk to People! Let friends, family members, community connections and teachers know that you are looking for a job. A word-of-mouth connection or a referral is your best shot at a job anyway. Ask for help.

Job Fairs

Most areas have job fairs where a lot of employers come together at one location. Your city might even have one specifically for youth or for summer employment. Treat a job fair like you would a real job interview. Dress well and bring your “A-game” in terms of energy, attitude, smile, and personality. You may actually be speaking to the person at that business in charge of hiring, so make your best impression. Bring extra copies of your resume and your portfolio if you have one. Bring a notebook and pen to keep track of any follow-up that you are invited to do. Write down names and phone numbers and e-mail addresses and stay organized.

Career Resource Centers

Look into youth oriented career resource centers in your area. These can be great places to get help with your resume, practice interviewing skills, and even do online job searches. The staff at these centers can be really helpful.

Facebook

The future of recruiting is in social media. Many businesses now have dedicated Facebook pages and use them to create a sense of community. A lot of employers are using their Facebook communities as the source from which they hire. If you know a business that you really want to work for, try to become part of their social community through Facebook. Just make sure that your Facebook page content represents you as a professional first.

Linked In

While Linked-In is more focused on professional careers, if you aspire to one day having a professional career, it’s never too soon to practice having a Linked-In account. If nothing else, it will show you how other professionals present themselves in the world of work.
As a student, in high school or college, you will probably be looking for a part-time job that doesn’t require technical skills. These are some of the more common and available jobs.

**Fast Food Worker**
Fast food restaurants are almost always hiring and they don’t usually don’t require experience

**Pros...**
- It’s a job.
- If you keep applying with a decent attitude and appearance eventually someone will hire you.
- It’s a good starter job.
- Do a good job and advancement is fairly easy.
- 16 years old is usually fine. Sometimes they will hire at 15 with a work permit.

**Cons...**
- Minimum wage.
- With some exceptions, fast food restaurants are often poorly managed. This can lead to poor service and a poor working environment.
- You work assigned shifts and some weeks you may work more than others, which can be hard to budget around.
- Your friends are going to expect free food (don’t do it!).

**Working It.**
While you can gradually work your way up the management chain in the fast food world, the real money is in owning franchises. If you’re interested in that, use your time to learn how the business works. If not, do a good job. Be punctual and respectful and hard working and leave with plenty of notice and on good terms when you’re ready for a new job.

**Sales Associate/Clerk/Cashier**
Clothing stores, shoes stores, and grocery stores all need clerks and cashiers on a fairly regular basis.

**Pros...**
- It isn’t food service.
- Larger chains often provide benefits after you’ve been with them for awhile.
- A great place to develop your sales and service-oriented people skills.
- Getting hired by the right store can help your career plans and look good on a resume.

**Cons...**
- Minimum wage.
- When the economy is in a slump people hold onto these jobs so there is less turnover.
- You work assigned shifts and some weeks you may work more than others, which can be hard to budget around.
- The more upscale the store, the more competitive the application process is.
- You may need product knowledge to be a sales associate.

**Working It.**
At the very least you can build some great work skills as a clerk or sales associate. If you want to make more money in this field, be good at your job and make a great impression. Take initiative and be a problem solver. Don’t just punch in and do your time. Care about the company and the company will think about you when it comes time for promotion or training opportunities.

**Waitress/Waiter**
As long as there are restaurants, there will be a need for waitresses and waiters.

**Pros...**
- A good waiter or waitress at a more expensive restaurant can make significantly better than minimum wage through tips.
- Because people tip for emotional reasons, providing good, friendly service can significantly impact what you actually earn.

**Cons...**
- You’ll need to be 18 if the restaurant serves alcohol.
- Some restaurants have complicated tipping out policies that cut into your earnings.
- Some diners will be ignorant of how restaurant workers get paid and think tipping is just an option, regardless of how well you serve them.

**Working It.**
The big money in waiting tables is at pricey restaurants, frequented by business people or in tourist locations. The competition for these jobs is tougher. You need to be attractive, personable, organized and have a good memory to compete. When you’re serving, the more you are able to connect with a party, the bigger your tip will be.
“This seems like a lot of work just to find a job. Can’t I just fill out some applications?”

The short answer is “Yes.” You can just fill out some applications. We all know people who got hired just by walking in and filling out an application without a resume or a portfolio and without any particular attention to their appearance or how they were presenting themselves. Maybe they knew someone who got them the job. Maybe they were so attractive and charming that they got by on that alone. Maybe the employer was desperate and needed to hire the first person who came along. Maybe they just got lucky.

The point is, that’s not most people’s experience with the job market. Since the recession in 2008, a lot of older and far more qualified people are in competition with you for the same low-skill, entry level jobs. And, while some jobs just seem to require skills, like being an auto mechanic, which auto mechanic would you rather hire? If skills were more or less equal, wouldn’t you still hire the person who made the best impression?

If you view getting a job as a kind of lottery, then don’t bother improving your odds, just trust to luck. If, on the other hand, you view getting a job as a game of skill, then why not improve your odds and make your own luck?

The other thing to remember is that what we’re really talking about is your future.

As a teenager or young adult your brain isn’t fully wired to think about the future or future consequences, but the more adult you become, the more you will be considering your future. The ability to find a job is a life skill. That means you are going to need it over and over again for your entire life. If you are entering the workforce today, current research suggests that you will have between 12 and 15 different jobs over the course of your life. Getting good at getting a job just makes sense.

So why not begin developing those tools (resumes and portfolios) and practicing those skills (personal presentation, networking, and interviewing) now? If you blow a couple of fast food job interviews when you’re just starting out but learn from your mistakes, you’ll be that much better prepared when you’re applying for a job that really matters to you.
Part 2: Keeping a Job
How well you deal with challenges and opportunities

Keeping a Job

Few things feel as good as getting hired for a job. It means that they liked you, they picked you, and they’re investing in training you. If you’ve been hired, congratulations. You did something right, because that employer had other people to choose from and they chose you.

But now it’s time for the second challenge: keeping that job. Your goal should be to be noticed in a positive way, to be liked and respected by your colleagues and your managers, to take on more responsibility and to earn timely pay raises and promotions. If you know this is just a temporary job for you, then your goal is to keep that job for just as long as it serves you, then be able to leave that job on good terms and with a good recommendation.

The good news is that most of the skills you used to find a job will serve you well at keeping a job. Because, like finding a job, keeping a job and getting promoted is all about how you present yourself each and every day. But keeping a job is also about how you actively engage and deal with the challenges and opportunities that arise at work.
Cultivating Your Work Brand.

The first thing to realize when it comes to keeping and excelling at any job is that you are always being watched, judged, and evaluated...even when you think no one is watching.

What that means is that you have to be cultivating and maintaining your personal brand as an employee every minute that you’re at work. You have to learn to think strategically. No matter how much it might seem like your bosses and even your colleagues want to be your friends, they aren’t. I know that sounds harsh, but when it comes to the world of work, the rules of work will always come before the rules of being a friend and they very often are in conflict.

That doesn’t mean that you can’t socialize or be friendly with your bosses and colleagues, but never forget their positions, because they won’t forget yours.

Fortunately, if you’ve gotten this far, you probably already know how to begin cultivating your work brand. Look back to page 6 and page 8 for those qualities that employers most value. Which ones are going to be an essential part of your brand—the things you are known for as an employee?

Over the next several pages we’re going to look at the most significant ways you are being evaluated at work:

1. How you show up
2. How committed you are to the job
3. How ethical you are
4. How effective your interpersonal skills are

How are you showing up?

The first and most obvious way you are being evaluated is on your appearance, energy, and manners.

1. Do you dress well? Are your clothes clean and pressed and well cared for? Are they appropriate for your work environment—neither too dressy nor too casual? If you have to wear a uniform, is it clean and pressed? Opt for a more classical look rather than something too faddish, too tight, or too extreme (like really high heels). A good rule of thumb is to dress for the job you want, not the job you have. If your male supervisor wears a coat and tie, then, if you’re a man, you should wear a coat and tie. If you want to be a supervisor, by dressing like one, you make it easy for the people in charge of promotions to think of you as a supervisor.

2. Are you well groomed? Is your hair clean, cut, and groomed? If you wear make-up it should be a clean and simple daytime look. If you have facial hair is it neatly trimmed? Are your teeth clean and is your breath fresh? Avoid excessive fragrances.

3. Are you confident and energetic? Do you psych yourself up before going in to work so that you are cheerful and upbeat? Do you smile easily and often? Do you speak up and not mumble? Do you look people in the eyes and really notice them? Do you have a firm handshake? It’s not a strength contest, but you shouldn’t have a limp-fish handshake.

4. Are you well mannered? Do you use please and thank you and yes sir and yes ma’am? Do you listen more than speak, but are you unafraid to speak when there is something that needs to be said?
How committed are you to the job?
This one can be a challenge, especially if you don’t think much of the job you have and just view it as a way to earn a few bucks. But, this is where you really begin to get noticed if you choose to. Building a great work brand isn’t easy, but it can really pay off professionally and financially down the road.

1. **Your challenge is to come across as giving 100% commitment to work and being really good at your job but always make it look easy.** This first rule might seem a little crazy, but hang in there for a moment. Never talk about how hard you’re working, even when it’s true. Why? Well, we may admire people who work hard, but we are amazed by people who make it seem effortless. So while being the reliable hard worker or the amazing person who gets the work done so well and makes it look so easy are both attractive, the second one tends to get noticed more often.

2. **Don’t stand still at work. Stay busy.** If you’ve finished everything you were supposed to do, help someone else out or take on a new project or do something extra, and don’t do it just when you think someone’s watching. If you’re working a shift job, it makes time go much faster if you stay busy.

3. **We can’t all do everything well, but if you challenge yourself to be the best person where you work at one or a couple of things, you will get noticed.** Find a niche for yourself. That means find yourself a specialization. If you’re new to a job, take a little while to study the set-up. Can you make yourself the “go-to” person for certain situations? Sometimes that means taking on a challenge other people don’t like doing. Don’t martyr yourself. Don’t take on jobs that no one values. This is a strategic move. Take on a challenge that your supervisors are likely to notice.

4. **Keep your personal life and your work life separate.** This isn’t a hard and fast rule when it comes to sharing positive things about your personal life, but should be when it comes to negative things. If you’re fighting with your boyfriend or girlfriend, turn your cell phone off before starting work. In the first place you shouldn’t be managing an interpersonal relationship that matters to you by text message. It never works out well. Your colleagues may have some sympathy for you, but the moment that they have to cover for you, that good will is going to evaporate. Leave your personal issues in your employee locker.

5. **Be a student of your workplace.** That means that you ask questions about how things work and why they are done a certain way. Be careful not to sound challenging when asking these questions, just be curious. Learn from the mistakes of others. As a student of your workplace you will be well-placed to make the kinds of suggestions for improvements that will get you noticed.

6. **Make your boss look good.** Good bosses will love you for this and when they get promoted, they’re going to want to take you with them. But even bad bosses will appreciate that you are always making them look good. Good bosses will praise you quite openly for how you make them look good. Bad bosses may try to keep your efforts a secret and take credit for your work. Don’t sweat it. Those kinds of situations don’t stay secret for long. The right people will end up noticing you.

Right about now you might be thinking that this work stuff sounds like, well, like a lot of work.

You’re right. It isn’t easy and most people don’t bother. But then most people spend a lot of time complaining about how other people get all the breaks and opportunities and promotions and pay raises.

Which kind of person do you want to be?

My Brand: Gives 100% but makes it look easy, Doesn’t stand still, Takes on challenges, Keeps home and work life separate, Always makes his supervisor look good.
How ethical are you?

We live in a culture that seems to value “getting away with things.” Cheating in sports is sometimes only viewed as a problem if you get caught. You might work in an environment where everyone cheats a little and everyone breaks the rules and it can be really tempting to join in, but avoid the temptation. Your reputation as an honorable and ethical person is worth far more than any gain you might see from cheating.

1. Set personal standards and live by them. You should know what your personal code of conduct is and stand by it. If you work in an industry with a published professional code of ethics, get to know it and make sure your personal standards are higher.

2. Never Lie. It's simple. Don't do it. If you always tell the truth then you don’t have to remember what you said to whom. That means your life is way less complicated and way less stressful. Far more people get fired for lying about things than for the things they lied about in the first place.

3. Don't cover up for others. I know, it seems like that is what being a good friend means, but how good a friend is it that is willing to risk dragging you into their mess? Of course you can offer to help, just don’t lie or cover up for others.

4. Understand the motivations of others. People often behave in strange ways. Rather than wasting too much energy judging them, try to understand why they are doing what they are doing. What are they afraid of? What is making them so angry or defensive or secretive? You don’t have to approve of or condone their behavior, but the more you understand them, the more power you have.

How effective are your interpersonal skills?

Your most critical set of skills are those that are directly related to how well you get along with others. These may be habits in your personal life, but if you want to be successful in the world of work, become conscious of your habits and get them under control.

1. Don't gossip and don't openly disapprove of others. This may feel hard because in work settings information about others feels like power, but 9 times out of 10, it’s just gossip. Stop it. Whether you know it or not, when you openly disapprove of others, you’re taking sides and making enemies. Don’t waste your energy or your reputation.

2. Don’t gripe. If you have an issue, go directly to the person who can address it or let it go. An honorable complaint is good. It’s a commitment to repair the relationship. Anything else is just building a reputation for yourself as a whiner.

3. Don’t swear. Even if other people do (like your boss), it isn’t attractive and it will hurt your reputation.

4. Compliment people sincerely. When you compliment people sincerely, you make them feel good about themselves and good about you. You’re building a team and valuable relationships.

5. Be a good listener. In office situations really good listeners stand out. They stand out because they aren’t just waiting for their turn to jump in and say something.

6. Stand up for others. Covering up for others is bad, but standing up for them can build you a powerful network of supporters.

My Brand: An Honest, honorable, and ethical person, who is supportive of colleagues, but will not lie or cover up for them.

My Brand: A sensitive and supportive team member, without a lot of prejudices, and a good listener who stands up for others.
How well do you handle challenges?

Keeping a job and thriving at that job also depends on how well you handle challenges that arise. The most common workplace challenges revolve around poor commitment conversations. Those are conversations where a request is made and accepted. A significant part of your reputation is based on your integrity and integrity means honoring your agreements. If you agree to things without enough information and you can’t deliver, your integrity will suffer.

A poor commitment conversation is when I think I’ve asked you to do something, but I’m not sure you’ve accepted or we haven’t set conditions we both understand and agree to. It can also mean that I’ve accepted a request without understanding everything I need to know about fulfilling it. By practicing conscious commitment conversations you force others to communicate more clearly and eliminate a lot of misunderstanding.

Conscious Commitment Conversations

With the possible exception of the military (and outside of the heat of battle, even the military could stand to improve their commitment conversations), when you are asked to do something, it is a request. You’re not a slave, you’re an employee. When you receive a request, there are actually 5 acceptable responses:

- Yes
- No
- Seek clarification
- Check resources
- Counteroffer

**YES.** That should mean that you know exactly what you are supposed to do and when you need to have it completed and you feel confident that you can fulfill the request. If you don’t know even one of those things, then “Yes” is not the right answer.

**Example:** “I need you to break down those empty boxes and get them into the dumpster before your shift is over.” You know what is being asked and when you need to complete it and probably whether you can physically handle it, so “Yes” is an appropriate answer.

**NO.** That should mean that you know exactly what you are supposed to do and when you need to have it completed and you do not feel confident that you can fulfill the request. It doesn’t mean you don’t want to do it, but that you honestly don’t think you can. Of course when saying “No” it’s a good idea to explain why.

**Example:** “Will you go reset the cash register program to reflect the special promotional price?” You know what is being asked of you but you may not know how to do it, so “No, I don’t know how to do that” is an acceptable answer.

**SEEK CLARIFICATION.** This is what you do when you aren’t sure of what you are being asked to do. There is no shame in seeking clarification. It’s the responsible thing to do, especially when it’s your integrity that’s on the line. Once you are clear on the what and when, you can then consciously choose “yes” or “no”

**Example:** “I’d like you to inventory the stock room.” In this case you don’t know the specifics and you don’t know when you are supposed to have it completed, so this response would be smart: “I’d just like to clarify that you want me to stop what I’m working on now and go take an inventory of the stock room. And did you need the entire stock room inventoried or are you concerned about just specific items?”
CHECK RESOURCES. Sometimes what you are asked to do involves resources or things beyond your control. If that’s the case, then before committing, you might need to check those resources.

Example: “I need your team to stay late tonight to get the new displays set up before we open in the morning.” In this case you’re not just answering for yourself, you’re answering for your teammates, so a strong answer would be: “I understand what you need, let me check with my team and get back to you within the hour (or the soonest you think you can reasonably get back to your supervisor).”

In this case when you check your resources you might find that one of your team can’t stay late, but that the rest of the team feels they can handle it. Then your follow-up after checking your resources would be, “One of my team (and there’s no need to throw that team member under the bus) has a conflict and can’t stay, but the rest of us are confident we can get this done.”

COUNTER OFFER. When you are asked to do something that you really don’t think you can accomplish in the time frame, you might simply say “No” but the smart move would be to make a counter offer. That makes you seem like a problem solver rather than an obstacle. Effective counter offers sometimes require the “seek clarification” stage first and usually require that you understand what your boss really needs, even though he or she may not be expressing it very clearly.

Example: “I need you to make sure the e-mail database is up-to-date by Friday.” In this case you may realize that this is a huge job that you cannot do while also fulfilling your other obligations so your counter offer might be, “I’m afraid that to get that done, I’m going to have to put all my other work on hold until it’s done. Is this that kind of priority for you?” If the answer is “yes,” then at least you both are clear about it. An alternative counter offer might be “I know the big e-mail blast is scheduled to go out on Tuesday. If I push a few of my other projects back (and you should be specific about what deadlines you are pushing back) then I think I can get this done by Monday at noon. Will that work?”

Your boss may not accept your initial counter offer but at least you are coming across as cooperative and someone trying to solve his or her problem rather than someone who didn’t speak up initially and failed to get an important task done.

Managing Conflict

Having clear commitment conversations will go a long way to reducing the conflict you experience at work, but sometimes you also have to figure out how to deal with difficult people on the job.

The structure of your brain is a kind of sandwich with a very emotional and highly reactive core surrounded by a more logical and rational cerebral cortex. The reactive core is focused on survival from the millions of years and threatening environments that we evolved in harsh and threatening environments. Some people call this our reptilian brain, because it reacts like a large reptile would. The problem is that when we feel stressed, the emotional core kicks in automatically and we tend to feel threatened, as if we were in actual physical danger. When the emotional core of our reptilian brain is running the show, it feels like we only have three options: Fight, Flight, or Freeze.

The problem is that the office or the workplace is not a jungle. Fighting is counterproductive and will get you fired. Flight, which means running away, hiding, or quitting doesn’t serve you very well. And freezing just means that you become incapable of doing anything well, which reflects poorly on you.

Your goal, part of your work brand, is to be “cool.” Cool means rational and logical—the kind of person who doesn’t let their emotional core run the show and who knows how to defuse the tension created by other people’s reptile brains.
How to not be one of these people.

At work, the coolest one wins. Keeping your cool means controlling your own reactions and defusing other people’s reactions. The first step is to make sure that the “cool,” you is back in the driver’s seat.

1. Slow down: In tense moments, things can get out of control quickly. Slow it down by asking for a moment to think before you answer or by calmly asking clarifying questions. This will often calm the other person down as well.

2. Check your status: If your heart is pounding and you are taking short rapid breaths, be careful. There’s a good chance that your reptile brain is now in charge and you’re about to make a bad decision.

3. Take some steps to put your logical, rational brain back in charge: Take some long slow deep breaths. Research suggests that this simple act of deep breathing sends signals to your brain that you are no longer in danger, which will allow your logical brain to regain control.

4. Hold your response: Your first response is probably going to be bad or at least less than helpful. When someone else is in attack/defend mode, they are most likely just going to hear your clever comeback (even if it’s technically true), as another attack. Remember that your goal is to turn down the temperature of the conflict and get it back to “cool.”

5. Refocus on your goal: Once you have made sure that the “cool” you is back in control, you can ask yourself what you want to have happen and what steps would best ensure the outcome you’re looking for.
Part 3: Building a Career

How big you dream and how well you plan

Having a job is about earning money. Having a career is about creating the life you want.

Without investing in yourself by earning a training certification, a technical qualification, or a college degree, you’re probably always going to be struggling financially, working one or more jobs just to make ends meet. You simply won’t have the time or energy to move out of survival mode and think about building the life you want.

Finding work is often about choosing between jobs that you don’t really like doing. Building a career is about realistically assessing your G.P.A. and creating a long-term plan.

Your G.P.A. is the way your GIFTS, your PASSIONS, and your ASPIRATIONS interact.

Your Gifts are those things that you seem to be naturally good at doing. Another name for a gift is a talent. If someone has ever complimented you for something, that might indicate a gift or talent. When we take a natural talent and develop it, that becomes a skill—something we’ve worked to improve. Successful people know what they are good at. Never undervalue your gifts.

Your Passions are those things you really love to spend time doing. A great way to know whether something is a passion for you or not is whether you lose track of time when you are doing it. A passion for something can also motivate you to develop a skill for that thing. Successful people live passionate lives, doing things they love to do—perhaps not every moment—but at least often enough to feel happy and fulfilled.

Your Aspirations are those things you most deeply desire—what you want out of life. These can be material things, like a house or a car or money itself, or emotional things, like love, family, and relationship, or experiences, like travel, adventure, or making a difference in the world.

When you know what you are good at and you know what you enjoy doing and you know what you want out of your life, you’re ready to build a career plan.
The average work day is 8 hours long. If you are a professional with a lot of responsibilities you sometimes put in more hours than that. If you need to work more than one job just to make ends meet then you will probably also work more hours of your day. But let’s start with an 8-hour work day.

Let’s assume it takes you an hour to get ready for and get to work, you get an hour for lunch, and then it takes an hour to get home and change clothes. That’s 11 hours devoted to work so far. If you do even minimal cooking or meal preparation for yourself or your family, you’ve probably used up another hour. Give yourself a half hour of personal time in the bathroom. You’ve now used 12.5 of your 24 hours. Let’s assume you sleep 8 hours a night. So before getting any personal time in your day you’ve used up 20.5 of your 24 hours.

Chances are that your home is going to require some maintenance and you’re going to have to clean dishes, empty trash, make beds, do laundry, clean the bathroom, etc. Unless you dedicate your weekends to all these chores, you’re going to be spending another hour a day on some of these. If you have children or a partner, chances are they are going to want some of your time as well. That’s another 2 hours, so now you may have 1.5 hours left to do everything you personally enjoy.

So much of your day is going to be taken up with work. If you end up doing something you dislike, you’re not going to be happy. Why not spend those 40 plus hours each week doing something you enjoy? That’s why you need a plan.

The details of a career plan will look different for everyone, but in general, a career plan should have a series of steps that take you from right now through your entry into a career. Projected dates are useful and can help you stay motivated. If you don’t know exactly where you want to end up, the steps toward the end of the plan will be less specific, but without actionable steps, you will tend to get drawn off course easily.
"Is the career I’ve been thinking about really a good fit for me?"

Part of how happy you will be in a career depends on how well it fits your personality and preferences. If you’ve been thinking about a particular career, you might want to take a simple work personality test to see if it is a good match. There’s a rather long link for a good online test at the bottom of the page. It will give you scores in six different work personality clusters. The higher the score the better that cluster matches your personality and, more likely, the happier you will be.

**Conventional Group:** You prefer organizing and processing data in a structured situation and office environment. You may have clerical and computational ability. Avoid free and unstructured occupations or situations. (bankers, bookkeepers, accountants, secretaries, computer programmers, financial analysts, tax preparers)

**Artistic Group:** You prefer manipulating physical materials and intangible ideas to create art forms, products, or performances. You may have artistic, language, or musical abilities. Avoid structured and repetitive occupations and situations. (actors, composers, musicians, designers, decorators, writers, dancers, architects, artists, crafts-people, filmmakers, photographers, game designers)

**Investigative Group:** You prefer investigating and researching biological, physical, or cultural phenomena. You may have scientific or mathematical ability. Avoid activities and situations requiring business and enterprise expertise. (geologists, chemists, physicists, mathematicians, laboratory workers, medical technicians, biologists, research doctors, detectives, forensic investigators, park rangers)

**Realistic Group:** You prefer physical work and working with tools, machines, or animals, usually outdoors. You may have mechanical or athletic ability. Avoid situations or occupations that involve dealing with people very much. (auto mechanics, aircraft controllers, electricians, plumbers, farmers, fishermen, surveyors, factory workers, carpenters, construction workers, athletes, pilots, some first responders)

**Social Group:** You prefer working with people to inform, develop, help, or cure. You may have caretaking, Interpersonal, and educational abilities. Avoid situations or occupations that focus on mechanical things or don’t directly involve people. (clinical psychologists, social workers, speech or physical therapists, nurses, doctors, teachers, counselors, religious workers, event planners, social activists, politicians, coaches, some first responders)

**Enterprising Group:** You prefer influencing and leading others to achieve organizational goals or economic gains. You may have leadership or sales abilities. Avoid investigative occupations or situations. (entrepreneurs, business executives, executive directors, sales people, travel agents, managers, buyers, real estate sales people)

http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/nov/11/-sp-questionnaire-what-job-would-make-you-happiest
(There’s even a free App called “Happy for Life” that you can download on the same page.)
The Truth: About Money, Work, & Happiness

I make a lot of money.

I make very little money.

I hate the work I do.

I love the work I do.

People who both love what they do and make a lot of money doing it report being the happiest. But, people who don’t make a lot of money, but are doing work they love, are also pretty happy. On the other hand, people who hate what they do, even while making a lot of money are seldom very happy, and hating what you do and not making much money is a recipe for being miserable.

What impacts how much money you are likely to make over your entire lifetime? (In this order)

1. How much wealth your parents have accumulated. It’s no guarantee of course, and items 2 and 3 can compensate for not coming from a wealthy family, but if your parents make a lot of money, you’re statistically more likely to make a lot of money.

2. How much society values your chosen profession. This is just supply and demand. It doesn’t matter how good you are at something. If society doesn’t value it, you won’t make much money doing it.

3. Your level of education and/or mastery or excellence at your chosen profession. How good you are doesn’t always matter as much as how determined you are, but there’s no getting around the need for talent and effort applied toward mastery. So pick something you like to do that society values and learn to do it really well.

What impacts how you feel about the work you do? (In this order)

1. Your “affective style” or optimism. That’s generally what your happiness set-point is, or how happy and at peace you are with whatever shows up in your life.

2. Do you feel like the work you do matters? People who report being generally happier do work that they believe makes a real difference in the world and helps or serves people, animals, the planet itself, or some greater cause.

3. Do you feel like you’re part of a nurturing community at work? Happy people often report feeling like their work community is a second family.

4. Does the work you do most days challenge you and use your best gifts? The happiest people find their work challenging and engaging and feel like they are giving the best of their talents and passion.

“Will money make me happy?”

The jury is still out on this question. Our spiritual traditions tend to teach us that money can’t buy happiness, but recent psycho-social research into happiness suggests some exceptions to this rule.

Money spent on material possessions and status symbols of power and wealth have only a very short-term impact on our happiness, and have an addicting quality, in that our continued happiness always depends on acquiring more and more stuff just to keep us even moderately happy. While many people around the world have next to nothing, we need storage units to store the stuff we don’t have room for.

On the other hand, money spent on others tends to lead to much longer and much greater levels of happiness. It also seems to be true that money spent or invested in experiences like travel seem to generate much stronger and more persistent feelings of happiness.

“So do I make a donation to save endangered polar bears or do I take trip to see endangered polar bears? Or, maybe both.
1. **Find A Mentor:** A mentor is a kind of coach for your life and career. It’s someone without a personal agenda for your life, who just wants to see you succeed and be happy. Ask almost any really successful person and they will tell you about the mentor or mentors who have guided them through particularly rough moments of their lives and careers.

2. **Take Risks:** No one likes to fail, but if you don’t fail occasionally it just means you aren’t living at your edge. Again, successful people will tell you that they learned much more from the things in their lives that failed than from those that succeeded easily.

3. **Be A Lifelong Learner:** Every person who has been successful for more than a moment has this in common: they’ve become lifelong learners. They are always studying, learning, practicing, and pushing themselves to get better and learn new skills. Take advantage of training opportunities at work or school.

4. **Keep Your Work Life And Family Life In Balance:** Successful people are often driven people. They have a strong desire to succeed, but sometimes this can come at the expense of family and relationship. Find a balance between work and family. The time that your children will actually be children is amazingly brief and you will never get those moments back. Cherish them. No one, on their death bed, ever wishes they’d made more money or spent more time at the office.

5. **Find A Way To Give Back:** Happy people are grateful people. They know they did not earn their success on their own. Express your gratitude. Compliment the people in your life. Find ways to be of service to those in need. Billionaire British entrepreneur, Sir Richard Branson has said “There is no greater thing you can do with your life and your work than follow your passions in a way that serves the world and you.”
Work-Life
Check out the Get Set website at: www.getsetguide.org for more resources.

Take charge of your future and play an active role in becoming the adult you want to be.

Get Work: A Smart Guide to Work
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