

YOU'RE FIRED!

YOU'RE FIRED!

CREDITS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Anson W. Schloat

PRODUCER

John O'Neill

TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

Elisabeth Kwak Hefferan

Copyright 2004
Human Relations Media, Inc.

YOU'RE FIRED!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Learning Objectives	2
Program Summary	3

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Strengths and Weaknesses	7
2. How Can I Improve?	8
3. Real-Life Interview	10
4. How to Lose Your Job	11
5. What Would You Say?	12
6. Role-Playing	14
7. Communication is Key	15
8. Dress Code Blue	17
9. What Went Wrong?	18
10. Ethics, Ethics, Ethics	20

FACT SHEETS

1. Tips for the Workplace	21
2. How to Be a Terrible Worker	22
3. Getting Along with the Boss	23
4. Dress for Success	25
5. Sexual Harassment Q&A	26
6. Barriers to Communication	27
7. Ethics on the Job	28
8. Bibliography	29
Other Career Education Products from HRM Video	30

Many young people assume the words “You’re hired” mean that the hard part is over—they have combed through job listings, prepared a resume, and performed admirably during an interview, so now they can relax, right? Unfortunately, keeping a job requires just as much effort as getting a job, a fact that new workers sometimes learn the hard way. Without a solid understanding of what it takes to be a great employee, young people risk hearing the dreaded words: “You’re fired!”

Even the most capable employee can be fired if he or she does not understand the rules of basic workplace conduct. Teenagers must learn that what they might consider acceptable behavior at school or with friends often has no place on the job—and it can cost them their positions if they are not careful. Even things that they consider to be “no big deal,” such as arriving a few minutes late or being disorganized, can have major consequences.

The straight-A student who was hired quickly may be dismissed just as quickly if she stretches the truth or continually makes grammatical errors in her written work. The promising new employee may fail if he exhibits a negative attitude or is rude to customers and coworkers. In the workforce, the bottom line is that intelligence and potential are not enough to keep someone employed if he or she disrupts the business, disrespects the boss, and creates problems with coworkers.

It is vital that young people understand the proper way to conduct themselves on the job. Fortunately, by following a few simple guidelines, they can pave the way for career success and earn the praise of their employers. The employee that uses mature judgment and solves problems efficiently will likely go far.

Educators should warn their students to avoid common workplace pitfalls. For example, chronic tardiness can easily lead to an employee’s dismissal. An unkempt appearance, sloppiness, and substance abuse on the job can quickly derail a young person’s career plans. Similarly, a negative attitude, incompetent behavior, and insubordination have no place on the job. A dishonest or unreliable employee can expect to be fired quickly.

The good news is that young people who master the rules of workplace behavior put themselves in the best possible position for their futures. With a good attitude, respect, and politeness, new employees need never hear the unpleasant words, “You’re fired!”

After watching the video *You're Fired!* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- understand the importance of proper workplace behavior
- identify personal habits that may prove troublesome on the job and create a plan to overcome them
- explain what constitutes an acceptable appearance for work
- recognize the importance of open, respectful communication
- avoid simple job mistakes such as tardiness, incompetence and insubordination
- handle conflicts with employers or coworkers in a respectful, efficient manner
- distinguish between ethically correct behavior and ethically wrong behavior as it relates to their careers
- consider their employer's point of view during disagreements
- understand that substance abuse is unacceptable on the job
- explain what it means to behave honestly and reliably at work

You're Fired! opens with the narrator giving examples of different ways that employers may phrase the dreaded words, "You're fired!" However the words are expressed—"We need to cut back," or "Come to my office after lunch"—the meaning is undeniable and undesirable. Although teens often feel that they will never have to worry about being fired, this is not the case. According to career specialist Christina Edwards, "The most common mistake that young people make about work is they don't think they can be fired." However, the fact is that young people are fired every day.

Teens are encouraged to think about jobs from the employer's perspective. Several experts reveal that bosses want "someone who they can rely on," "quality people to do the job that needs to be done." Career specialist Rosa Rodriguez explains, "Employers want someone they don't have to baby-sit." The narrator emphasizes that employees must be dependable and must avoid some common mistakes if they want to keep their jobs.

Viewers are told that one of the most damaging mistakes a new employee can make is to be late. The narrator puts it bluntly: "What employers don't need are excuses." Some teens may think that excuses such as "my alarm clock didn't go off" and "traffic was heavy" will get them off the hook, but the narrator reminds them that punctuality is very important. As career specialist Rosa Rodriguez points out, "You would get upset if the employer didn't give you your check on time... Well, then it's important that you do your part." A related mistake is simply not showing up for work at all. Christina Edwards tells teens that skipping work "shows that you have a lack of responsibility for yourself and you just have no enthusiasm or respect for the employer."

Next, the narrator outlines some simple tips that help employees avoid being late and jeopardizing their jobs. Viewers are advised to come to work at least ten minutes early, to be ready to start work when their shifts start, and to call their employers ahead of time if they know they will be late.

The next mistake young employees often make is behaving unreliably by missing deadlines. Teens are reminded that deadlines cannot be changed to fit their own schedules, so they should take care to have their work completed on time. Career specialist Evangeliah Tsui puts it in a perspective that any employee can appreciate: "It's important for employees to turn in their time sheets on time because if you submit it late then you don't get your paycheck."

The video offers several hints to help employees do this: first, they should define their responsibilities and make sure they understand exactly what is required of them. Then they should break tasks down into smaller, more manageable parts. Finally, they should stay on task by coming back from breaks on time and avoiding too much socializing. Evangeliah Tsui says, "When you're at work, you're not socializing anymore, you're not there to make friends, you're there for a different purpose now."

The video moves on to another mistake: a sloppy appearance. Although young people may say that they don't care what other people think, personal appearance is very important on the job. As career specialist Dave Clemen points out, "There are standards. Those standards are there because that's the image that that employer wants to project." Christina Edwards adds that "dressing well and neat appearance shows the respect that you have for the employer, the customers that are visiting that employer, and also yourself."

In order to appear professional, teens are encouraged to take care of their uniforms and arrive early in order to straighten up before they begin work. They are also advised to wear appropriate clothing if they don't have a uniform, to stay neat and clean, and to keep their makeup understated. Wearing the right clothes is not only necessary, it's also useful to project the image that you are conscientious and career-minded. The narrator says, "The right clothes help create the image that you want to project."

The next big mistake that often traps young employees is a bad attitude. Career specialists tell viewers that no employer wants to deal with a rude, irritable or unpleasant worker. "Why should they keep you around when they can have someone who can make things go, flow nicely, and keep customers happy?"

Employees with positive attitudes, on the other hand, can go a long way. Even if a young worker does not have perfect skills yet but does have a great outlook on the job, employers will want to make an investment in that worker to help him or her gain the required skills. In order to project a good attitude, teens are advised to separate their personal issues from the workplace, be a team player, and avoid criticizing others. Career specialist Dave Clemen advises viewers, "You have to put on your game face, you have to put on that smile when you don't always want to put on that smile, you know, have that upbeat attitude, have that can-do attitude."

Another problem faced by many new employees is the issue of competence. Teens may make mistakes on the job because no one explained the proper way to do a task or they misunderstood directions, but the narrator emphasizes that incompetent or unskilled behavior can easily get a worker fired. Teens are advised to ask a supervisor if they don't understand how to complete a task, even if they fear they will look stupid, because as Dave Clemen says, "An employer would much rather you say, 'Hey, I have no clue how to do this,' than say, 'Okay, I'll do it' and then do a horrible job or cause major problems."

To avoid this mistake, the specialists and the narrator tell viewers to notify their employers if they don't feel ready to do a certain task. In many cases, part of a job involves learning. The video goes on to suggest that teens practice problem-solving, research tasks on the Internet and using local resources, and to ask questions when they don't immediately understand. Rosa Rodriguez underscores the importance of reaching out to others for help. "People love to teach other people. Especially if they take pride in what they do, they enjoy teaching someone else how to do it."

The next pitfall addressed is being disorganized. The specialists list reasons that an organized work area is essential: a messy desk may lead to lost files which can make others distrust you, you may spend too much time inefficiently looking for important items, and you or someone else may even be injured because of sloppy work. Instead, viewers are counseled to give themselves time to organize their work areas, to submit, file, or discard paperwork, and to keep the workplace neat and clean.

The video then turns to the mistake of breaking workplace rules. As Christina Edwards says, “order and rules are put into place for a specific reason.” Teens should remember that the rules apply to everyone—including them. Insisting on “doing it my own way” can cause major problems for an employee and the entire company. Adds Rosa Rodriguez, “You have to follow orders. If not, you don’t know that you’re doing the job right.”

Viewers are advised to follow all workplace rules and orders and to offer constructive suggestions if they don’t agree with all the rules. The narrator also points out that “You may be within your rights to refuse an order if you are asked to do something illegal, immoral or harmful to another individual.”

The next trait that can get a young employee fired is inappropriate behavior at the office. Drinking or using drugs on the job, swearing, sexual harassment, and stealing can all end a job quickly. The specialists tell teens that “when you’re at work you act in a professional manner and do as the environment accords you to do,” and that unruly behavior can not only get an employee fired, but can also “make it difficult for young workers to get good references” for future jobs. To be a success, employees should always be honest and treat others with respect.

The video then addresses an overarching problem: it can be easier for a young person to make mistakes on the job if they feel bored or that they are working too much. Rosa Rodriguez reminds teens that “Work is not play! It’s not always easy. That’s why you have to put a spin on it and make the best of the situation because it’s not always easy.” Evangeliah Tsui comments that “You have to learn through experience after experience. It’s better that you have a good attitude.” As Christina Edwards says, “We might as well get used to the fact of working because it’s the way that we will make a living for the rest of our lives, so get comfortable with it, get used to it, and...you’ll do well in life.”

Finally, the narrator reviews the traits that will lead to success in the workplace: being on time, appearance, attitude, following rules, neatness, competence, good personal behavior, and reliability. The experts finish by encouraging teens to look at the benefits of working hard: it offers them a chance to excel at something, allows them to earn the respect of their employers and coworkers, lets them be worthy of greater responsibility and freedom, and garners admiration from others.

The narrator sums it up this way: “Work is more than just a place to put in your time and earn a paycheck. For most of us, it’s also where we can make a contribution and distinguish ourselves. It’s our chance to shine.”

As the video draws to a close, viewers are reassured—”just put in a good honest effort, and you will do well.” By following the video’s tips, young people may never have to hear those dreaded words, “You’re fired.”

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

What are your best personal traits? Where could you improve? Read through each column below and circle the statements that apply to you. Then, think of at least four more of your own strengths and weaknesses and write them in at the bottom.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
"I'm very organized."	"I tend to procrastinate on my homework and chores."
"I ask for extra help when I need it."	"I can be a slow or sloppy worker"
"I work well with my classmates and coworkers."	"I'm not very good at grammar and writing skills."
"I'm always on time."	"I stretch the truth to make myself look better."
"I stick with things even when they are difficult."	"I tend to talk back to teachers and bosses"
"I can take criticism without getting angry or sad."	"I try to do things myself even when I need help."
"I treat my teachers and bosses with respect."	"I'm always running late."
"I always do my homework right away."	"I'm not always open to new ways of doing things."
"I have strong writing and grammar skills."	"I tend to argue with classmates when working on group projects."
"I ask questions when I don't understand homework or a task at work."	"I lose my temper easily."
"I'm open to learning new things."	"I'm disorganized."
"I can control my emotions."	"I always have to do things my way."
"I'm flexible and willing to compromise."	"I give up when things become difficult."
"I'm honest, even if the truth makes me look bad."	"I'm too shy to ask questions when I don't understand homework or a task at work."
"I'm efficient and get things done quickly."	"I take criticism personally."

Name: _____

We all have a few tendencies that could use improvement. Maybe you have a weakness that is already getting you into trouble, or maybe your weaknesses haven't affected your life very much—yet. Remember, what seems like an insignificant trait now can turn into a big deal when you're on the job!

Using your answers to Activity 1 (*Strengths and Weaknesses*), choose the five weaknesses that need the most work. Consider how each weakness could affect you in the workplace, then come up with a plan for improvement. You can save yourself a lot of trouble in the future if you set goals for improving today.

My first weakness is:	_____ _____ _____
------------------------------	-------------------------

How can this be a problem in the workplace?	_____ _____ _____
--	-------------------------

How will I improve?	_____ _____ _____
----------------------------	-------------------------

My second weakness is:	_____ _____ _____
-------------------------------	-------------------------

How can this be a problem in the workplace?	_____ _____ _____
--	-------------------------

How will I improve?	_____ _____ _____
----------------------------	-------------------------

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

My third weakness is:	_____ _____ _____
------------------------------	-------------------------

How can this be a problem in the workplace?	_____ _____ _____
--	-------------------------

How will I improve?	_____ _____ _____
----------------------------	-------------------------

My fourth weakness is:	_____ _____ _____
-------------------------------	-------------------------

How can this be a problem in the workplace?	_____ _____ _____
--	-------------------------

How will I improve?	_____ _____ _____
----------------------------	-------------------------

My fifth weakness is:	_____ _____ _____
------------------------------	-------------------------

How can this be a problem in the workplace?	_____ _____ _____
--	-------------------------

How will I improve?	_____ _____ _____
----------------------------	-------------------------

Name: _____

What could each of the following people do that would cause him or her to be fired? For each person, think of different ways to lose a job. The first one has been done for you.

Lifeguard	<i>Flirt with the girls at the beach instead of watching the water. A child has trouble swimming in the waves and he reacts late.</i>
------------------	---

Office Assistant	_____ _____ _____
-------------------------	-------------------------

Teacher	_____ _____ _____
----------------	-------------------------

Mechanic	_____ _____ _____
-----------------	-------------------------

Camp Counselor	_____ _____ _____
-----------------------	-------------------------

Computer Programmer	_____ _____ _____
----------------------------	-------------------------

TV Reporter	_____ _____ _____
--------------------	-------------------------

Banker	_____ _____ _____
---------------	-------------------------

Cashier	_____ _____ _____
----------------	-------------------------

Name: _____

Imagine you are an employer who supervises several young people. Most of your workers are great, but sometimes you have to deal with employees who behave inappropriately. You need to let these young workers know that they will be fired if they don't shape up. What will you tell each one? How will you make each one understand how his or her behavior is hurting your business?

1.

Susie works at the concession stand of your movie theater. She is never on time. If her shift starts at 7, she will walk in at 7:10 or 7:15. When one of her coworkers mentions her tardiness, you overhear her saying, "Who cares? It's only 15 minutes, and nobody ever wants to buy popcorn this early anyway."

2.

Brandon is an assistant in your office. Sometimes when you walk by his desk, you notice him quickly closing a window on his computer. You suspect that he is surfing the Internet or using his personal email on the job, but when you ask him about it he denies it. However, he continues to hide what he is doing on the computer when you pass by.

3.

Marie is an intern at your advertising agency. She is in charge of writing sample ads for clients to look over. Although Marie always delivers her work in on time, you keep finding grammatical and spelling errors in her samples. You have to spend your own time to correct her sloppy work.

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

4.

Steve works at your clothing store. He is friendly and a good salesman, but when you ask him to do something he often talks back to you jokingly, even in front of customers. When another employee comments on his sarcasm, he says, “Oh, the boss knows I’m just kidding.”

5.

Jill works at your music store. She does a good job when you are in the store with her, but lately you notice certain tasks are not being done when you leave her in charge—for example, the guitar strings will not be restocked or the windows will not be cleaned when she is alone on the job. You cannot supervise her all the time.

Name: _____

Read over the following conflicts. With a partner, role-play a conversation between the employer and the employee. Take turns with your partner so that each of you have a chance to play the boss and the worker. Consider each person's perspective and be polite as you work through each problem.

Conflict 1:

The boss thinks: Mandy's appearance is totally inappropriate for work. Her sleeveless shirts, above-the-knee skirts, big earrings and open-toed sandals would fit in better at a party than at the office. I can't believe her parents let her leave the house like that.

Mandy thinks: My boss is way too conservative. My clothes are fashionable, but they are fine for work—all of my friends can dress however they want for their jobs. The boss needs to realize times have changed.

Conflict 2:

The boss thinks: Diego has a real attitude problem. Whenever I ask him to do something that he doesn't enjoy, like change the price tags, he rolls his eyes and works slowly in protest. He seems to think that this job is all fun and games, but I have a business to run and sometimes he has to do the unpleasant tasks too.

Diego thinks: My boss is so unfair. I didn't apply for this job so that I could do all the dirty work. I would rather wait on customers and work at the cash register than all the other stuff I'm forced to do.

Conflict 3:

The boss thinks: Even though she is 21, I can't allow Deborah to have drinks when she is waiting tables at the restaurant. I know she occasionally has a cocktail at the bar when there aren't many customers, but this behavior is unprofessional and I don't want to risk her being clumsy or making mistakes with the orders.

Deborah thinks: Having a drink or two at work isn't a big deal. I don't get drunk, and I'm sure none of my customers would care if they saw it. I'm allowed to have free food when I'm working, so how are drinks any different?

Conflict 4:

The boss thinks: Jim doesn't really know what he's doing on the job. I wouldn't mind teaching him, but he never admits when he doesn't know how to do something. He just tries to figure things out himself and usually makes big mistakes. He's really proving himself incompetent.

Jim thinks: I don't want the boss standing over me all the time. I'm a quick learner and I can figure most things out on my own. Even when I do make mistakes, it's okay because I always learn from them and never make the same mistake twice.

Name: _____

Open, respectful communication is the quickest way to solve any problems at work, whether the dilemma is with customers, coworkers, or your employer. On the other hand, being rude, not listening to others, or refusing to compromise are quick ways to get fired. Read each of the conversations below, then re-write them on a separate sheet of paper so that both people are communicating clearly and solving their conflict.

- 1.** **Rob:** Jack, I'm sorry, but I'm going to need you to stay late again. There was a problem with one of the shipments and you need to sort it out tonight.
Jack: No way. Didn't I tell you my sister's birthday party is tonight?
Rob: I don't remember that. Anyway, this is more important.
Jack: Says who? This is a big family event and I have to be there.
Rob: You really need to get your priorities straight!

- 2.** **Customer:** Hi, I need to return this CD player.
Beth: I don't know, it looks like you messed it up.
Customer: I just bought it and it's already broken. Your return policy says that I can get my money back.
Beth: Yeah, but that's only if you don't break it yourself by doing something stupid.
Customer: No, I didn't! Your products are obviously poor quality and I don't appreciate your attitude. I want to speak to your manager.

- 3.** **Jen:** Ron, it looks like there are a few mistakes on this inventory sheet you gave me last night.
Ron: What are you talking about?
Jen: I think you counted the number of extra-large cups wrong...
Ron: (interrupting) I don't think so! It's not my fault, somebody must have moved some of them after I left.
Jen: Inventory is your responsibility, Ron.
Ron: Whatever. Like I'm supposed to stick around until everybody else leaves just to count the cups.

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

4. Sebastian: Are you heading home already?

Tina: Yeah, so what?

Sebastian: Well, this is the third time this week and we have a project due on Monday. You can't already be done.

Tina: Give it a rest, will you? You're not the boss.

Sebastian: I may not be the boss, but I am the one who has to stay late to make up for you slacking off. Keep this up and you'll get fired.

Tina: Don't be such a jerk! And for your information, I took some work home with me yesterday and finished my part of the project. Mind your own business!

5. Customer: Could you help me find these pants in the next size up?

Laura: That's not part of my job, but they're right over there.

Customer: Okay, but could you bring me a pair while I get a dressing room?

Laura: Well, they're about ten feet away, but fine. No wonder you need a bigger size if you can't even walk ten feet.

Customer: What is that supposed to mean?

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 8
DRESS CODE BLUE

A tidy appearance is very important in the workplace. But the clothes and accessories that you think are appropriate may be unacceptable to your employer. See how different your opinions are by filling in the left column of this chart. Write “OK” in the box if you think the item is appropriate for work and “NO” if you don’t think it is. Then, ask one of your parents and a local employer what they think and write their answers down in the other two columns.

	ME	PARENT	EMPLOYER
Open-toed sandals			
Nail polish on girls			
Sleeveless shirts			
Earrings on girls			
Earrings on boys			
Above-the-knee skirts			
Visible tattoos			
Jeans			
Perfume or cologne			
Khakis			
Low-cut pants			
Baggy pants			

Name: _____

Sometimes employees are fired because they make obvious mistakes, like stealing from the cash register or not showing up for an important meeting. But other times, people can make more subtle mistakes—they may not think that anyone notices their behavior, but it can still cost them their jobs. What went wrong in the following scenarios? What could each person have done differently to keep his or her job?

Mitch has just been hired at the ice cream shop where three of his friends work. He has a lot of fun on the job, especially when all four of them work the same shift. The hours fly by as they talk and laugh, sometimes loudly chatting to each other from across the store. Once in a while, Mitch gets so caught up talking with his friends that he doesn't notice a customer right away, but he is always polite once the customer gets his attention. One day, his boss tells him that "things just aren't working out."

What went wrong?

Maggie, a straight-A student, just started working at her aunt's law firm as a clerk. On her first day, she decides that the firm's filing system is inefficient and tells her boss that she knows a better way to organize it. Another day, Maggie suggests that one of her coworkers use a shortcut she learned in math class. The next day, she observes that the firm could use a better advertising campaign and gives her boss a list of ideas to improve it. She is shocked when her boss tells her, "I'm sorry, we're going to have to let you go."

What went wrong?

Matthew works at a bakery with several other employees. His dream is to be a stand-up comedian and he likes to try out his new jokes on his coworkers. Most of them think he is very funny, but one older woman never laughs. Once she told him she thought his jokes were sexist and offensive, but he thinks she is just being uptight. Matthew continues to test his jokes on coworkers. One day his boss tells him that he "doesn't fit in here."

What went wrong?

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

Meredith works at an office where she has her own desk and cubicle. She's surrounded by her coworkers, but she doesn't really like any of them so she doesn't talk to them much. Since she is a fast worker and usually completes her assignments early, she uses her extra time to make personal phone calls, catch up on her email, and download songs for her MP3 player. Sometimes her coworkers give her dirty looks, but Meredith ignores them. One day her boss calls her into her office and tells her "I'm sorry, but it would be best for this office if we replaced you."

What went wrong?

Mario is a junior counselor at a summer day camp. He has been paired with another boy, a senior counselor who has been working at the camp for several summers, to plan each day's activities and supervise a group of children. One day, Mario's boss praises their activities and asks who came up with the idea. It was Mario's partner's idea, but he is not around, so Mario says it was his idea. He figures that his partner is already a senior counselor and that he, Mario, stands to benefit much more by taking credit. He is surprised the next week when his boss tells him that the camp "doesn't have a place for him anymore."

What went wrong?

Name: _____

The topic of workplace ethics has received a lot of attention lately, but that doesn't mean that ethics are suddenly "in fashion." The truth is, it has always been important to do the right thing on the job. It may be tempting to cheat a little on ethical standards, especially if you think you won't be caught, but you should never give in—not only are ethical violations a sure way to lose your job, but unethical conduct can damage your reputation, hurt others, and make it very difficult for you to regain the trust of the people you work with.

***ETHICS* refers to conduct based on the guiding principles of right and wrong. If you are behaving ethically, you are acting honestly, protecting other people and their interests, and striving to "do the right thing."**

Part One:

What kind of ethical challenges can you expect to face on the job? Working in small groups of three-to-four people, think up one realistic ethical conflict that relates to each of the categories below. Write them down on a separate sheet of paper. Refer to the *Ethics On The Job* fact sheet if you need help.

- Stealing
- Lying
- Cheating
- Substance Abuse
- Gossiping/Spreading Rumors
- Taking Credit for Other's Work
- Breaking Rules

Part Two:

Working with your group, choose one of your ethical conflicts and use it as the basis for a short skit. In your skit, present your conflict clearly and come up with a satisfactory resolution. Perform it for your class.

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

Getting along with your coworkers and fitting into the culture of your new job is key for your success. You don't have to be best friends with everyone at work, but you should make an effort to be respectful to everyone—you will enjoy your time on the job much more, and your boss will notice that you get along with the company culture.

Keep these tips in mind:

- If your job involves making phone calls, be careful not to disturb others by keeping your voice down. Turn your cell phone off and avoid making personal calls while at work.
- Never “borrow” any of your coworkers’ supplies without asking, even if it’s just a paper clip.
- Don’t be nosy. Don’t try to eavesdrop on others’ conversations and don’t try to read anything over a coworker’s shoulder.
- Take some time to observe the culture of your new job. Are employees very friendly to each other, or are relationships more formal? How do other employees treat the boss? Take your cues from the behavior of others and do your best to fit in.
- Listen and observe before you suggest changing any routines. Companies usually have a good reason for doing things a certain way, and coworkers may be annoyed if you insist on changing patterns before you really understand the way things work.
- Avoid gossiping about anyone at work. If your coworkers know that you talk about others behind their backs, they won’t trust you. Don’t share information about your own personal life either—that can wait until after hours.
- Accept others’ advice with a smile. You can learn a lot from your coworkers, so be open to what they have to say.
- Be very careful about any jokes or stories you tell at work. What seems perfectly fine to you can be very offensive to a coworker.

Name: _____

Any of these behaviors could be enough to earn you a “pink slip.” Don’t fall into these bad habits!

1. Show up late, even if it’s just by five minutes each day.
2. Take a nice, long lunch break every day.
3. Wear sloppy, torn, revealing, or tight clothing to work.
4. Drink alcohol or take any kind of drug while on the job.
5. Ignore customers. Can’t they see you’re busy?
6. Blame others when you make a mistake.
7. Put assignments off until the last minute.
8. Complain about your work, your family, the boss, the weather...
9. Keep your personal space cluttered and messy.
10. Never ask for help, even if you don’t know how to do something.
11. Miss your deadlines.
12. Don’t do anything beyond what’s in your job description, even if someone really needs help.
13. Take credit for other people’s ideas.
14. Slack off when the boss isn’t looking.
15. Talk back to the boss when he or she asks you to do something.

Your supervisor or boss has the authority to give you a raise, promote you to a better position, write you a great recommendation for college or another job—or fire you. You should do your best to have a respectful, friendly relationship with your boss. Not only will this help you keep your job and enjoy your time at work, it will also put you in a good position for the future. However, it can be challenging to get along with certain types of supervisors. Read on for tips on how to deal with “problem” bosses.

THE DEMANDING BOSS

How to recognize this boss:

The Demanding Boss expects you to put work before all other things, even school or athletics. He or she loads you down with unreasonable assignments on the job. You find yourself coming in early, staying late, and bringing work home, but you still can’t get it all done.

How to deal:

Ask to meet with the Demanding Boss one on one to discuss your problems. Tell him or her why you feel overburdened. Bring up specific examples (“Last week you asked me to proofread 40 pages in 20 minutes”). Stress your positive points (“I always finish folding the sweaters when you ask me to”). If your boss still demands too much from you even after your talk, consider discussing the problem with your boss’s boss.

THE CLUELESS BOSS

How to recognize this boss:

The Clueless Boss leaves you on your own without any direction. He or she may give you a stack of work and disappear without explaining how to do it or what to do when you are finished. The Clueless Boss may also leave you in charge of the store or office without training you to help customers or operate the cash register.

How to deal:

If you only have a few questions, ask one of your coworkers quickly. If there are bigger issues, ask if you can come in early one day for some extra training. Ask the Clueless Boss if you can meet with him or her periodically so you can report on your progress, ask any questions that may have come up, and plan what to do next.

This fact sheet continues on the next page.

THE BUSYBODY BOSS

How to recognize this boss:

The Busybody boss never leaves you alone. He or she is always looking over your shoulder, watching you work and giving you pointers on your performance. You find yourself getting nervous and forgetting how to do easy tasks under the Busybody Boss's watchful eye.

How to deal:

See if any of your coworkers feel the way you do. If others have the same problem, meet with the Busybody Boss as a group. Instead of criticizing, suggest that work would be more fun for everyone if he or she backed off a bit. Offer to report back on your progress, make a list of completed tasks for the boss to review, or meet once a day or once a week to go over your assignments together.

THE JERK BOSS

How to recognize this boss:

The Jerk Boss is just plain unpleasant. He or she may insult you, make you feel stupid, criticize you in front of coworkers or customers, or continually make you do the most undesirable tasks instead of spreading them fairly among all the employees. You find yourself dreading work and fantasizing about telling him or her off.

How to deal:

Ask to meet with the Jerk Boss one on one at a time when you are both calm—don't demand to meet right after he or she has just criticized you, for example. It's possible that the Jerk Boss doesn't realize how his or her behavior is affecting you, so explain politely that you don't like to be treated that way. Bring up specific examples ("It made me very uncomfortable when you yelled at me in front of my customer last Monday") rather than general complaints ("You're always mean to me!"). If this doesn't work, consider appealing to your boss's boss. If all else fails, it's okay to quit. You don't have to put up with abuse at work and you can always find another, better job.

Name: _____

You may be a super worker, but how do others see you? We all know that dress and personal grooming are important factors in how you are judged by others. In some workplaces there are specific dress codes. It is your responsibility to make sure that you understand and follow them. In most workplaces, however, there are more subtle forces at work. It is not always so easy to know how to fit in.

Here are ten ways you can dress for success:

- 1.** Be scrupulous about personal cleanliness. Bathe daily, and keep hair and fingernails clean and conservatively trimmed.
- 2.** Be extremely sparing with perfumes and colognes. Many people are allergic to scent and others find them inappropriate for business.
- 3.** Be sure that your clothes are clean and pressed and your shoes are in good condition.
- 4.** Wear clothing that fits comfortably. Tight-fitting clothes are distracting, and overlarge clothes that hang sloppily are unattractive.
- 5.** Observe the way other people on the job dress. If no one is wearing sneakers, don't be the first. If it is customary to wear neckties or jackets, do so. If no one wears short skirts, watch your hemline.
- 6.** Although you may want to follow fashion trends, be conservative. Save the more extreme fads for social occasions. At work, wear simple, unobtrusive jewelry—nothing that jingles.
- 7.** In selecting work clothes, choose colors that are not loud or garish.
- 8.** Women should wear makeup sparingly. Men should be clean-shaven.
- 9.** Although you have the right to unusual hairstyles and unconventional piercings (nose, lips, etc), many prospective employers may be turned off by them. You may have to choose between a nose ring and a job situation you really want.
- 10.** You don't need a lot of clothes—just the right ones. Whatever your personal style, select some simple, conservative separates that you can combine into several different outfits.

Name: _____

You may have heard people talk about sexual harassment, but do you know what it really means? Do you know what to do if you encounter it yourself?

What is sexual harassment?

According to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the organization that legally deals with harassment, sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature that affects a person's employment or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

How is sexual harassment different from just being friendly?

Sexual harassment makes people feel uncomfortable. It is unwanted and unwelcome attention. In many workplace situations, coworkers are informal, friendly, and somewhat personal with each other. They may joke about each other's appearance or put arms around each other's shoulders. When this occurs within an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, there is no problem.

What are some examples of sexual harassment?

Whether or not something is sexual harassment depends on the relationship between the people involved and whether or not anyone feels uncomfortable. Behavior that is perfectly acceptable between two close friends may be sexual harassment if it occurs between two people with a different relationship. However, the following behaviors could be sexual harassment if they make you feel uncomfortable or threatened.

A coworker leans close to you and rubs your shoulders when you don't want him or her to

A boss makes sexual jokes in your presence

A coworker hangs sexually suggestive posters in the employee break room

A boss flirts with you when you are clearly not interested

What should I do if I am being sexually harassed?

First, firmly tell the person to stop. Be specific about the behavior that is making you uncomfortable. He or she might not realize that you are offended by the behavior. If the behavior continues, tell someone—many companies have certain employees who deal with cases of sexual harassment. It helps if you have a detailed record of the incidents: who was involved, what day and time it happened, and what transpired. Find out what your state's laws concerning sexual harassment are and file a complaint. Remember, you have a right to be respected and to work in a non-hostile environment.

Good communication is the simplest way to avoid conflict, get along with your coworkers and supervisors, and keep your job. Steer clear of the following barriers to communication:

Low Attention Span

If you have trouble paying attention, try taking notes.

If your thoughts wander for a moment, don't be afraid to ask the speaker to repeat the information.

When you're a new employee, try to spend more time listening than talking.

Strong Emotions

If you're feeling too frustrated or angry to communicate effectively, ask for a moment to get back on track.

Give other people space when they need it.

Don't spend all of your energy on strong emotions. Learn to vent by closing your door for a few minutes, taking a walk, or talking with someone about the problem.

Use the energy from strong emotions to get things done.

Stress or Work Overload

If you're feeling overworked or short on time, politely let other people know.

Don't feel pressured to engage in small talk when you don't have time.

If you already have more work than you can handle, try to suggest solutions for getting the work done without overloading yourself.

Know when you need to slow down. You may be able to do twice as much when you're rushed, but will the quality of your work suffer?

Harsh Judgments

Don't disregard a person because of appearance, position, or job status.

Be aware of your own biases, and work to challenge and overcome them.

Learn to respect people, even when they disagree with you.

Confusing Language

Don't use language that is too technical for your audience.

Be careful with "insider" language that may exclude some people.

Understand that impressive words don't automatically make you sound smarter.

If someone is using language you don't understand, ask the person to clarify.

Name: _____

An ethical worker has the following traits:

INTEGRITY

Standing up for what you believe is right.

LOYALTY

Being committed to certain people or groups.

HONESTY

Telling the truth.

RESPONSIBILITY

Taking care of all aspects of your job.

EMPATHY

Understanding another person's point of view.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Keeping other people's personal information private.

RESPECT

Considering the feelings and viewpoints of others when you act.

Name: _____

“Facts about Sexual Harassment.” The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission website, www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-sex.html

“How to Get Fired.” Career Planning.
<http://careerplanning.about.com/library/weekly/aa011800a.htm>

“Information on Sexual Harassment.” www.de.psu.edu/harassment

“Resume, Cover Letter, Interview Help.” Got a Job.
www.gotajob.com/brainfood.asp

“Student Worksheets.” Ministry of Education.
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/stepup/student.html

“Toward a More Civil Work Place.” Career Planning.
<http://careerplanning.about.com/library/weekly/aa102600a.htm>

Rosenberg Mckay, Dawn. “From College Campus to Corporate Climate: Career Planning.”
http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/post_grad.htm

OTHER CAREER EDUCATION PRODUCTS
FROM HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA

<i>Business Ethics on the Job</i>	Video/DVD and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Communication Skills for the Workplace</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Curriculum in a Box: Careers & Vocations</i>	10-video set with Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Developing Good Study Skills</i>	Video/DVD and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Getting Along on the Job</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Making a Good Impression: Resumes, Interviews and Appearance</i>	Video/DVD and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Ready for Work: Qualities That Count with Employers</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Taking the Initiative on the Job</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Ten Easy Ways To Keep Your Job</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>Ten Easy Ways To Lose Your Job</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>What's School Got to Do With It?</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book
<i>What's Your Attitude? Getting in the Mood to Work</i>	Video and Teacher's Resource Book

Available from
Human Relations Media
41 Kensico Drive
Mount Kisco, NY 10549

Phone: 800 / 431-2050
Fax: 914 / 244-0485
Web: www.hrmvideo.com