Your Best Foot Forward

As your coop teachers, one of our most important goals is to prepare you for success in the workplace. Your first day on the job can be very exciting. We hope you are 100% ready and that you really enjoy it! Your first day will most certainly be stressful as well. As discussed in the *Personal Management* activity, you cannot avoid stress, but you can certainly prepare yourself for it.

The Day Before

ORGANIZE: Figure out how long it will take you to get ready and get to work. Then get up even earlier. Avoid making yourself more nervous by running late then hurrying to get to your coop placement on time. Pick the clothes you are going to wear and ensure they are clean. Review how to get there and how long the trip takes.

DELIVER: Be sure to bring all forms and handouts required by your placement supervisor. Required paperwork is extremely important.

The Big Day

GETTING READY: Shower, change and eat something before you leave home. Pack a lunch or take money for one. Make sure your family has you work contact information.

ARRIVAL: Ensure you know your start and finish times. If it is a large business, you may want to inquire with your teacher which door you are supposed to enter from.

ORIENTATION: Who do you ask for when you arrive? What is your supervisors name? Do you use a punch card, swipe a card or sign-in? If so, where is it located? Washroom locations? Breaks? Lunch? Snacks? Drinks? These are all legitimate questions to ask your supervisor. Be sure to read *Placement Orientation* below for further details.

EXPECTATIONS: Ask about possible uniform requirements, tool requirements and dress code. You might want to ask about any rules or routines that they expect you to follow.

RESPONSIBILITIES: You should inquire about what tasks are being expected of you. Who will give you instruction or assistance? Will you have deadlines? Who will take over your work when it becomes time for you to leave? Should you advise someone of unfinished work before you leave?

At your placement, you will be introduced to your new coworkers. You might forget their names. Don’t worry. You cannot be expected to remember everyone’s name at first. An easy trick that may help to remember is to repeat the person’s name out loud as you are introduced. Then use it again while talking to the person.

Also remember to when introducing yourself, to smile and shake hands professionally.

Placement Orientation

You have a lot to think about on your first day. Your employer will also be preparing for you. To help new employees get started, companies often provide an orientation. At small businesses, an orientation may be very informal. You may simply meet with the placement supervisor, fellow coworkers, be shown where the lunch room and washroom are and tour the workplace.

Most large companies have more elaborate orientations. You may receive a company manual and attend a formal orientation presentation. Most formal orientation sessions today are conducted online with a purpose to introduce the employee to the workplace and often include teamwork building activities.

Please ensure your orientation includes a safety component. You have to be trained before you begin to work. Your safety in the workplace is top priority. The following are a few questions to ask if the supervisor does not bring them up. These following points are taken from the Ministry of labour website.

* Will I receive job safety training? When will I get it?
* Will I be working with any chemicals? If I'm working with any chemicals, when will I get hazardous materials training before I start to use the chemicals?
* Is there any safety gear that I'll be required to wear? Does the employer provide the equipment? Will I receive training in how to wear it properly and make sure it's in good condition?
* Will I receive orientation to familiarize me with emergency procedures, first aid locations, etc.?

These are some of the safety-related matters coop employers should cover during orientation. If they don't, speak up and ask.

* What are the company safety rules that I need to know?
* Who is my regular supervisor? Is that the person I should ask if I have questions about my job?
* If it's not the person who is training you, make a note to ask to be introduced to the supervisor. Let them know that you're new to this type of work and find out if they will be close by so that you can ask questions or they can give you advice. You should judge the responses you get. A supervisor who is never around and has no one else assigned to work with you is not a good sign.
* What are the specific hazards in the job that I've been assigned and what steps do you take to make sure I don't get injured by them? What is expected of me?
* Where are the fire extinguishers, first aid kits/station and emergency exits?
* Is there a safety committee? If so, where are the names of the members posted?
* Where is the Occupational Health & Safety Act posted (it's required by law)?

Tips for First Day “Stage Fright”

The first day at your placement can be really nerve-racking. Chances are you don’t know the procedures or people. Here are some tips to make sure you get off to a good start.

* Be on time
* Make sure you give your supervisor the green copy of the Work Education Agreement
* Introduce yourself and clearly state you are a Cooperative Education student
* Find out the proper times and places to take breaks
* Find out where to keep your lunch and other personal items
* Find out who is your supervisor
* Tell people you have just started and ask for help or directions when you need it
* Be polite and courteous. Take your time in starting new friendships
* Be attentive. Watch what’s going on for clues on how to act and speak appropriately
* Say “thank you” to people who help you

What Expectations Does The Placement Supervisors Have Of You?

* Good communication skills
* Positive attitude
* Accept changes (flexibility and adaptability)
* High standards of performance
* Good work ethic
* Accepts responsibility
* Willingness to learn
* Ability to analyze and evaluate
* Accept constructive criticism