The Basics:

- **Punctuality and “face time”:** According to Woody Allen, “Eighty percent of life is about showing up.” He could have added that you can never be too early for a meeting, but being late counts against you! Knowing when to arrive for work, when to leave, and how much time to take for lunch may sound basic, but a lot of recent grads get tripped up by not understanding the “face-time rules” that are unique to each organization.

- **E-mail etiquette:** Poor e-mail skills are one of the major complaints employers have about recent college hires. Write all e-mail messages in a professional manner. Personal e-mail should be handled at home. Minimize net surfing. And remember, there really is no such thing as “delete.”

- **Telephone/Cell phone etiquette:** Keep personal conversations or messages to a minimum. Tell your friends you have very little time at work to talk or text.

- **Clothing:** Inappropriate clothing is a major complaint with employers across the country. Start out conservative. Watch how your colleagues dress. If it’s a casual workplace, make sure your clothes are neat, clean, and not raggedy. No flip-flops!

Behavior:

- **Be a team player.** Companies prize teamwork and team players. You don’t have to like everyone you work with, but you do have to get along with them. This goes for informal off-site company outings, too.

- **Be enthusiastic and congenial.** Employers want congenial employees with a can-do attitude. If you have a temper, leave it at home.

- **Accept responsibility.** Everybody screws up at some time. When you make a mistake, admit it! Don’t pass the blame on to others.

- **Act responsibly:** Be careful with alcohol at office social events.

- **Volunteer.** An important part of learning any new job is volunteering for assignments. Once you feel comfortable doing the assigned tasks, volunteer for special projects. You will learn, and if you succeed, you will be noticed and, with any luck, rewarded.

- **Trust no one for several months.** This sounds grim, but you can’t be sure who your friends are, and others can’t be sure of you. Be friendly, but watch what you say and do. Don’t assume the workplace is warm and fuzzy and that people your age will be friends. Keep your personal life private. Be prudent about what you share with others.

- **Don’t gossip.** Refrain from being part of the gossip chain—whether it’s verbal or via e-mail. Err on the side of caution.

- **Don’t be afraid to say you don’t know.** Be honest. Tell them when you don’t know or when you don’t understand. No one expects you to know much in your first job!
Strategy

- **Listen and look.** Analyze the culture in which you are working. Keep your eyes open and your opinions to yourself. Doing the job is not the hard part; fitting in is. Many people are forced to leave companies because they won’t or can’t adapt to their organizations culture.

- **Make your boss look good.** This is Job No. 1. The good boss will reward you. The mediocre or bad boss will take advantage of you. However, you will learn from all of them and be a better boss when your time comes. And never go around or above your boss. Communicate directly with him or her.

- **Find a mentor.** Choose someone whom the organization respects and ask him or her to be your mentor. Most people are flattered when a junior person asks for advice. This person can teach you the ropes and help you understand the culture.

- **Realize that getting fired, downsized, or outsourced is not the worst thing.** As Steve Jobs said at Stanford’s commencement in 2005, “Getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.

  Unpleasant change is part of corporate life. Globalization ensures that almost everyone will be fired, downsized, merged, or outsourced at some point in their careers. How you respond is critical. This can unleash your creative powers and motivate you to do what you should be doing. To begin, keep your resume up-to-date with all the latest projects you have worked on. Create a work product folder and keep it at home. With each new project you complete, keep a copy in your personal folder. If you are forced to leave the company the same day, you will not have time to go through files to find this material.

- **Don’t lose your reputation.** Scandals with large corporations have shown that rarely can dishonored executives reclaim tarnished reputations. The bottom line is that honesty really does pay off.