

Transition Guide: Employment



Soft Skills vs. Hard Skills

Your first few days on the job may determine how long you keep your job. Make a good first impression!

Employers are usually ready to teach you the hard skills - those functional skills specifically related to your job, however, they expect that you will come prepared with soft skills ready to work. Your personal skills can often make the difference between hiring or keeping you and another employee.



Take This Job and Keep It! Making a Good First Impression in the Workplace

- ❖ Think about your first appearance. Are you dressed for success? Good hygiene is crucial.
- ❖ Make good use of your time. Do not make personal phone calls or texts during your time on the clock. Stay on task and finish on time.
- ❖ Communicate well with your boss and your peers. Negotiate respectfully when there is a conflict. Ask for help when you need it, but know who is your job coach or mentor.
- ❖ Work as a team! Collaborate with others and compete against yourself. Set high expectations and each day attempt to do better than you did the day before. Be willing to take instruction and direction. Accept criticism humbly and strive to grow with new ideas. Know how and when to apologize to maintain your relationships.
- ❖ Sharpen your critical thinking skills. Solve problems logically and clearly.
- ❖ Be friendly, courteous and respectful. Respect others and their property and space.
- ❖ Manage your responses. Handle anger or frustration by exhibiting self-control.
- ❖ Feel personally responsible for your job. Take initiative and persevere even though your first few days or weeks may seem overwhelming. Growth occurs one day at a time.

“He Does a Great Job, BUT...”

- ◆ You don’t want your employer to say “but”. You want to hear “He does a great job, BECAUSE...” Go to your first job prepared.
- ◆ Most soft skills are not taught as part of high school curriculum. Make sure your transition plan includes role playing, social skills training and practicing other soft skills.
- ◆ Volunteering is a great way to practice in a work environment before you get a paid job.

Rate Your Soft Skills

How well do you communicate verbally? In writing?

How well do you negotiate when there is a conflict?

Can you listen to others' side of the story and rethink your position?

Are you a team player? Do you work well with others or do you want all of the attention for yourself? Does it always have to be your way?

How are your critical thinking skills? Are you a problem solver?

Can you think through a situation and arrive at a conclusion?

How well do you manage your time?

Can you pace your assignments to get them finished on time?

Can your employer count on you to be there, be prepared, and do your best?

Get a view from a trusted friend or teacher.

Ask them to be honest with you about...

- ◆ **What is your best attribute that would make you employable?**
- ◆ **What is something they noticed that you need to work on?**



Supports to Gainful Employment

Benefits to Work promotes self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities by helping to lessen some of the obstacles faced when going to work including concern about losing healthcare coverage and others benefits. BTW assists individuals with understanding the Social Security employment supports such as Ticket to Work. www.tndisability.org/benefits-work

Tennessee Department of Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) offers support services for persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities, including employment supports. www.tn.gov/content/tn/didd.html

Tennessee Works encourages employment reform by engaging stakeholders in identifying barriers and working toward change. www.tennesseeworks.org/