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# Pacific Life Foundation Nonprofit Internship Experience Program

## **WELCOME!**

The Pacific Life Foundation Nonprofit Internship Experience Program is a very special opportunity for a selected group of high school students. You have been through a rigorous screening process and have been chosen because your teachers, the Pacific Life Foundation, and the nonprofit agencies involved in the program believe you can make a real contribution to the work of the nonprofit organization. They also believe that you can get some great experience that introduces you to different work opportunities and to career paths you may not have considered in planning for your future.

## THE COURSE

The units in this course are designed to help you learn some of the skills that will help you succeed in the workplace. Some of them are obvious – such as being punctual and courteous. Others are more subtle – such as email etiquette or customer service.

You will complete much of the work in this class independently and also participate in several class meetings to discuss the material and prepare for your intern placement. It is very important that you complete the independent work before the class meeting.

You were selected for this program partly because of your ability to complete assignments independently and your positive attitude toward your work. Those are both key elements in being successful in this class as well as in your intern assignment. You must complete this course successfully before you can be assigned an intern placement.

## Treat it Like a Job!

Nonprofits depend on your work just the way any business depends on its employees for their success. To be successful, you will need to be punctual, dependable, and focused on your work. Every agency will also have operating procedures as well as informal rules for “the way we do things around here.” You will need to respect all of those rules and procedures and accept guidance and supervision from more senior employees.

By working with a nonprofit agency, you are often helping to provide a very important service to your community. Even if you are occasionally asked to perform necessary tasks that are not very exciting, you can get satisfaction from knowing that you are contributing to an important goal or mission. It is a job you can be proud of.

“The best preparation for work tomorrow is to do good work today.”  
—Elbert Hubbard

**LIVE UNITED**



**American  
Red Cross**

**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

Formerly Named  
America's Second Harvest

# First Things First!

It should be simple enough: you show up the first day, someone tells you what to do and you do it. To be sure, some of that will happen. Your supervisor will give you assignments, review your work, and offer guidance and correction.

But the workplace is also a very complex social system – in some ways very much like a high school. It has groups, rules (both written and unwritten), and expectations about how you look, act and relate to other people. Your first and most important job is to learn that social system and how you fit into it.

Unfortunately, most of the “rules” for fitting into a new social system aren’t written down anywhere. You have to rely on your powers of observation and your experience in other, similar situations. But there are some things you can do even before you show up at the workplace to help to start your experience on a solid foundation.

*“You never  
get a second  
chance to  
make a  
good first  
impression.”*

## Starting Out Right

You learn all the basics in school for being able to do the work in your first job. You can read, write, calculate, and use necessary technology. You are resourceful and know how to get information if you need it. You get along with other people and enjoy challenges.

But the things they don't teach you about your first real job -- like proper dress, communicating with the boss and networking -- are just as important to your success in this internship and your future employment.

## Dress for Success

Depending on where you land your internship, you might be tempted to go on a shopping spree before your first day on the new job.

Dan Black, director of campus recruiting at Ernst & Young for the Americas, says to hold off. Many employers are business casual, but like most things at work, it's best to err on the side of caution. Take a week or so to gauge what more experienced staffers wear, and then make your fashion choices accordingly.



## More About Dress!



*“A neat, professional appearance will convey your commitment to your job and to the company you work for. It also conveys respect for yourself and your coworkers..*

Let’s face it, the way we dress and present ourselves is very important to all of us. Our clothes are a way to express our individuality that helps to tell the world who we are. Unfortunately, sometimes our clothes may send a message that doesn’t fit with the world of work.

Dressing for the workplace is all about presenting a professional appearance. It’s about telling your boss and coworkers that you understand how important your job is to you and how committed you are to working within the cultural norms of the company. What is cool at school may be wrong for the job! When in doubt, ask!

*Way too cool for work!*



**Weekend!**

**Work week!**



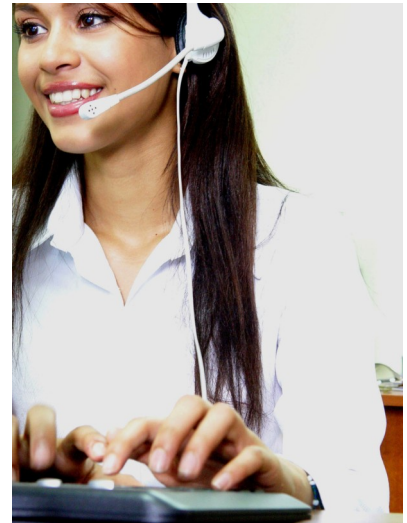
## Top of Your Game

When you arrive at work, be at the top of your game. Get a good night's sleep. "It's not like class where you can show up and hide in the back if you only got a few hours of sleep," says Black.

Look for things to do during down times and be proactive in seeking more responsibility. Show your coworkers you know how to be part of a team. A self motivated employee with a cheerful and helpful attitude is a dream come true for employers.

Once you start meeting your new colleagues, offer a good first impression. The handshake is a good place to start. "Even if you're young and feel insecure, a firm handshake is good way to show you believe you should be where you are," says Alexandra Levit, author of *How'd You Score That Gig?* and *They Don't Teach Corporate in College*.

Also, write down the names of people you meet and their job titles. (Or, collect their business cards.) It's a good trick in case you need to find the right person to help you on a project later on. Besides, they may not expect you to remember their names, so if you do, they'll be impressed.



*The best advice you can get is to be happy and productive at work! Be cheerful and alert, even if you don't feel like it at first.*

## Your Boss

Schedule a meeting with your supervisor within the first few days to discuss his or her preferred work style. When you are in school, you can work throughout the night, and you don't necessarily need to update anyone on your progress – at least until your assignment is due. The workplace is different. During that meeting ask the following questions:

- Do you prefer communicating face-to-face, over the phone or via e-mail?
- What's your in-office schedule, and what are your expectations of mine?
- Would you prefer if I ask questions as they arise, or should we set aside a time to do that daily?
- Do you want me to check in with you regularly, or would you prefer checking in with me?

Treat your superiors with respect and they will return the favor!

# Co-workers

You must respect the work habits, space and time of your co-workers. Whether they are paid workers or volunteers, each has a job to do. You should never distract them from their work by socializing inappropriately, intruding on their work space, or interfering in the way they perform their jobs.

Use the same communication skills when dealing with other more experienced co-workers that you use in working with your supervisor. During meetings, voice your opinion, but as an intern show deference and respect to your experienced colleagues. "Yes, contribute your ideas, but also take time to sit back and listen," says Levit.



Those co-workers also have a wealth of knowledge to share. Cultivate relationships with them - networking is a key adult skill you will use throughout your work life. If you meet a colleague who is smart and helpful, ask if you can pop by to pick his or her brain about ideas or questions you have.

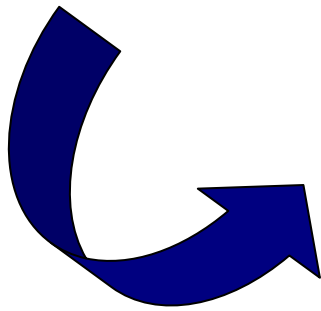
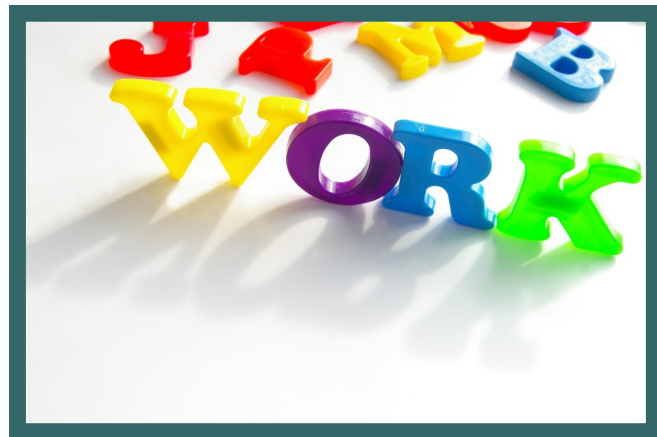
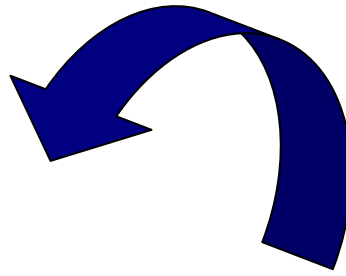
Casual office friendships are one thing, but a more intense social relationship, like dating a co-worker, is another. If you're thinking about dating someone at work, consider this: Will you be able to see the person every day if the relationship doesn't work out? If you answer no, don't even go out on that first date.

Think about your internship as one, continuous job interview. It's a chance to show what you can do and impress people who make decisions about future hiring. Even if you aren't interested in future work at the same nonprofit agency, don't forget that the people there have their own networks. Their recommendation may be the key to your next job search, and may lead to that perfect job in your future.



Adapted from, *Entering The Workforce: Give Your Career A Flying Start* by Tara Weiss, 03.27.08.  
Retrieved from the Internet, March 17, 2009.

## Getting Ready for Class



A workplace is a complex social system, like a high school. But there are important differences as well. If you have had a job before, you may already be aware of some of these differences. Even if you have done volunteer work in school or other organizations, you probably realize that there are some obvious and not-so-obvious differences between schoolwork and the work you do in a business or nonprofit agency.

These differences are most obvious in five areas: authority, accountability, task structure, expectations and rules. You probably know what all of these terms mean, but they are worth a short review.

- Authority is the power to control, command, direct or determine a course of action.
- Accountability means being responsible for something or having to answer for or explain something you have done.
- Task Structure refers to the type of work you are expected to do and the amount of guidance you receive in doing it.
- Expectations are outcomes that a person believes will result from some action.

## Now...try this

On your paper, make three columns and divide them into five rows. Label one column "School" and the other "Workplace." Then, label the rows: authority, accountability, task structure, expectations and rules.

It should look like this:

	School	Workplace
Authority		
Accountability		
Task Structure		
Expectations		
Rules		

Then, for each of the five areas (authority, accountability, task structure, expectations, rules), describe the similarities and differences between how they look in school and how you think they might look in the workplace.

For example, how does the authority system work in school? Who is in charge? What happens if someone violates that authority? Then do the same for the workplace. How does the authority system work on the job? Who is in charge? What happens when someone violates that authority?

Do this for each of the five areas on the left side of your table. How is accountability the same and different in school and the workplace? Task structure? Expectations? Rules?

**Bring this chart to your class for discussion.**