

The First Day

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” – Will Rogers



Warm up

- What’s the scariest thing about starting a new school, job, or role?
- What are some unspoken rules about making a good first impression?
- What small actions can help you build relationships quickly when you’re new?
- What mistakes do new people often make in their first week?
- How can you tell if a workplace or class has a good “culture”?



1. Look at the actions below and rank them 1–5 (1 = very important, 5 = not important) for making a good first impression. Then answer the follow-up questions.

a. Introduce yourself to everyone you meet	
b. Find a mentor or friendly guide	
c. Learn the unspoken rules of the place	
d. Show you can do your tasks well	
e. Ask your manager/teacher about their expectations	
f. Join colleagues/classmates for lunch or coffee	
g. Volunteer to help with something small	
h. Observe who really influences the group	
i. Organise or decorate your own workspace/study space	
j. Speak up with a new idea or suggestion	

- Which action would you absolutely hate doing on your first day? Why?
- Is there an action that looks unimportant at first but could actually make or break your first week?
- Is there anything missing from the list that you think every newcomer should do?



2. Match these words to their definitions. You will use these words in this worksheet and hear them at the end of the lesson in a short video.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| a. mentor | 1. The ability to do your job well. |
| b. competence | 2. Dedication and willingness to work hard |
| c. commitment | 3. A diagram showing who reports to whom |
| d. compatibility | 4. To go too far or cross limits |
| e. org chart | 5. Shared habits and values of a group |
| f. team culture | 6. How well you get along with others |
| g. to overstep | 7. An experienced guide who supports a newcomer |



3. Fill in the gaps with the correct vocab from exercise 2.

- When you're new, finding a trusted _____ can save you from weeks of silent confusion.
- During your first weeks, showing your _____ with the team is just as important as showing your skills.
- Staying late once or twice shows effort, but true _____ is about being reliable every day.
- Technical _____ will get you the job interview; emotional intelligence will help you keep the job.
- The company's _____ shows who officially reports to whom—but it rarely reveals who actually has influence.
- Every workplace has its own unwritten rules; understanding the _____ can take months if nobody explains it.
- Offering ideas is great, but be careful not to _____ in your first week by making promises you can't deliver.



4. Discuss in pairs/small groups.

- If you could choose any famous person as a mentor (living or dead), who would it be and what would you hope to learn?
- Do you think companies should *assign* mentors, or should mentoring happen naturally?
- Can someone look competent on paper but lack real capability? Share an example.
- Is someone committed if they get great results without long hours, or does real commitment mean working extra hard?
- Would you rather work where the boss and roles are clear, or where no one has titles and everyone is equal? Why?



Giving Advice: should / ought to / had better

We use these expressions to give advice or recommendations. They all mean “it’s a good idea,” but they have different strengths.

should – general advice

✓ *good idea / normal recommendation*

You **should find** a mentor in your first week.

New hires **should learn** the team culture before they try to overstep.

ought to – a little stronger (formal)

✓ *good idea, slightly more serious*

You **ought to ask** your manager about the org chart so you know who really has influence.

You **ought to show** your competence by giving others something to react to.

had better – strong advice / warning

✓ *very strong recommendation; if you don't do it, there may be a bad result*

You **had better show** commitment in the first few days, or people may doubt you.

You **had better greet** your team on day one, or they might think you’re unfriendly.

💡 Note: Had better is often contracted to ‘d better in everyday English (e.g. You’d better, She’d better).

Negative forms

shouldn't / ought not to / had better not

You **shouldn't judge** the team culture too quickly.

You **had better not promise** things you can't deliver.

💡 Note: ‘Ought not to’ is possible, but sounds old-fashioned. People usually just say ‘shouldn’t’.

 Tip:

- *should* and *ought to* are almost the same; *had better* is stronger and sounds like a warning.
- All three are followed by the base verb: should find, ought to ask, had better show.



5. Good or bad advice? Complete the list and compare with your partner.

	Good ✓	Bad ✗
You'd better arrive at least 15 minutes early on your first day.		
You should dress more formally than you think is needed.		
You ought to eat lunch with a different person each day of your first week.		
You'd better not share a new idea before you understand the team culture.		
You should bring a small snack or treat to share on your first day.		
You ought to study the org chart before you talk to anyone important.		
You'd better avoid checking your phone in meetings, even during breaks.		
You'd better not post anything about your new job on social media until you know the company rules.		
You ought to ask for feedback before your first week is over.		
You'd better not send a work email without checking it twice.		
You'd better prepare a short self-introduction before your first meeting.		
You ought to ask your manager how they prefer to communicate (email, chat, etc.).		
You should volunteer to help with something small, even if it isn't in your job description.		
You'd better remember everyone's name by the end of the first week.		
You ought to find out quickly who really makes decisions, not just who's on the org chart.		
You'd better not promise to finish a task unless you're sure you can deliver.		



6. Watch the TED Talk [“How to Succeed in Your New Job”¹](#) and answer.

- a. What three “Cs” does the speaker say are key on your first day?
.....
- b. What does the speaker suggest you show to prove competence?
.....
- c. Before asking for help, what should you give yourself?
.....
- d. During your first week, what three questions does she recommend asking your manager? (list briefly)
.....
.....
.....
- e. What small question can you ask teammates to turn a “Hi” into a conversation?
.....
- f. What does she call the invisible divisions of responsibility inside a team?
.....
- g. Name two things you should watch for in meetings or chats to understand the team culture.
.....
.....
- h. What kind of unfilled “swim lane” does she advise you to look for?
.....
- i. According to the speaker, doing your job is only part of success. What is the “rest” about?
.....



8. Create a short “First-Week Survival Guide” (about 100–120 words) for newcomers to your school/workplace.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgR6mUSsEig>