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## Study Factsheet Series - No 13

# Work Placement – Tips for Success

Work Placements can be stressful, especially if you are not prepared. The following are a few tips to help you manage your work placement.

## Prepare

- > Plan your travel. How will you get there? If you are driving where will you park? Is it paid parking? It's a good idea to do a practise trip a day or so before.
- > Wear **clothes that fit the job** you will be doing, e.g. Childcare workers may opt to wear pants, a shirt and comfortable shoes that allow for crouching and a broad range of movement. An office job may require more formal clothing.
- > If there is no specified uniform and you are feeling unsure then ask a teacher for help. On your first day, it's better to be slightly more formal than too casually dressed. From your second day onwards dress similarly to the co-workers performing the same duties.
- > Try to get a good night's sleep.
- > Have a good breakfast.
- > Take your lunch and water.
- > Clear your **workload**, finish any assessments, take leave or minimise paid work if possible.

**Research the organisation** - Find out as much as you can about the organisation, this helps you understand the organisation better and shows you are interested and enthusiastic e.g. check their website.

**Family and Friends** - While on your work placement you may not be able to complete all of the tasks you normally would for your family and friends. Let them know how important this work placement is for you and ask them for help and understanding. **Be specific about the help you need from them e.g. cooking, walking the dog, child care.**

## Communication

**Listen** - Listen well and show interest.

Practise your handshake. A firm handshake with eye contact is an easy way to make a good first impression.

**Ask questions** – If you are not sure what you should be doing, ask, “What would you like me to do?” or “How can I help?” Questions are expected from students on placement and show the supervisor your enthusiasm. In Australia, if you are asked “Do you understand?”, it's important that you answer honestly. It's better if you ask questions in order to understand the task better, and perform the task correctly.

Take a **notebook** and write down names of the people in the workplace and what they do as well as anything else you'll need to remember.

**Introduce yourself** to people and start conversations, e.g. “What is your job?”, “How long have you worked here?”

**Smile** – it’s an easy way to make a good first impression.

**Positive and thankful** - Be polite and display a positive attitude.

## Check your thinking

It’s **perfectly normal to be nervous**. Remember everyone at work has had a first day and felt nervous.

You could say to your supervisor or co-workers something like: “This is my first work placement and I’m feeling nervous because I really want to do well. I may need to ask you a lot of questions and please let me know if you’d like me to do something differently.”

**Everyone makes mistakes**. Take ownership of your mistakes, apologise and move forward with more knowledge and experience. Try not to be overly self-critical as this serves no purpose and may slow down your learning.

Accepting critical feedback is part of the learning process and part of being a professional. Accept the feedback gratefully and ask clarifying questions to enhance your learning. See **feedback as an opportunity to improve yourself** and try not to take it personally. The way you seek and receive feedback may also win you the respect of your supervisor and co-workers.

## Manage your Self-Care

**Make a list of things that help you relax**, like; a walk outdoors, coffee with friends, mindful meditation.

It’s normal to feel very tired whilst on placement. You are learning a lot of new information. Therefore it’s important to **care for your body and brain with nutritious food, water and sleep**.

## Finish Well

**Try to be open to whatever the experience has to offer**. If you do or don’t enjoy the organisation try to identify why. This will offer you valuable information in making your next step.

If you have enjoyed the work placement, **tell the people you have worked with what you liked** about it. This is useful information which they will probably appreciate.

If you **did not enjoy** the placement, it may be helpful to discuss this with your CIT teacher.

A **thank you card or note** on your last day is a great way to finish your work placement.

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