

Preparing Your Students for Practice: Strategies, Tips, and Advice for Ensuring Student Success in Their Transition to the Workforce



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Transitioning from student to the workplace can be a challenge for new graduates. With little experience on which to gauge the future, many new graduates treat the workplace similarly to a school environment (looking for guidance from instructors, lack of respect for fellow students, or decreased responsibility for their actions — just to name a few). **Consider sharing the following tips with your students to help them succeed in today's workforce.**

1 Understand different communication styles.

As a student, it's easy to be consumed by your own daily needs. Study habits, research, schedule, and family needs are critical, making it easy to "tune others out," especially when they are "different" than you. However, in the workplace, tuning out others is not an option; it now becomes a priority to learn how to communicate with coworkers for the best outcome. We don't all think or communicate alike, and that's a good thing. There are four main communication styles: analytical, intuitive, functional, and personal.¹ Each has their strengths and weaknesses. When we can understand this about one another, the workplace becomes a much easier place to integrate into.

► **Educator Tip:** Have your students complete a communication assessment. I like the one cited [in this article](#).

2 Work? What is that?

As a student, you often prioritize your schedule to accommodate your studies. Once you enter the workforce, it is time to exhibit a strong work ethic and conform to another's schedule (likely the company in which you have accepted a position). Workplace schedules are often non-negotiable, especially when first starting in a position. This is a critical time to learn and absorb real-life experiences — the piece you often don't learn in school. Show up on time, don't leave early, and give 100% during your entire shift.

► **Educator Tip:** Ask students to write down 10 skills they would expect of someone whom they have hired to work in their own company. (The goal is for them to then model that behavior in their new place of employment).

3 Don't be a fly on the wall. Have initiative.

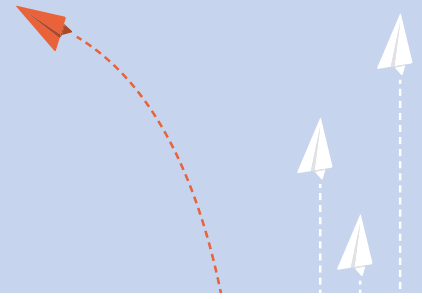
Initiative is a soft skill that requires YOU to jump and complete tasks without being asked to do so. If a manager or colleague is always having to ask you to do something, you are likely lacking initiative and need to step up your game. If you don't know **how** to do something, ask! As a student, you may have been taught one way to complete required tasks and skills. However, a majority of the time, there is more than one way to complete the task. In addition, different workplaces may have different procedures in place. Learn how your workplace operates and adapt to their style.

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4 Remove the entitlement attitude.

Graduating with your degree does not automatically grant entitlement. Entitlement is earned with hard work, high work ethic, respect for one another, and proven responsibility. It is up to you to respect others, communicate well, and do your fair share of work on the job.

5 It's all about the customers.

Regardless of what profession you enter, there are always customers to serve. Each company may have a different type of customer, or consider shareholders to be customers. This means you must provide the best customer service for every client, every time. It is no longer about you, but rather who you are serving.

6 Seek feedback.

It is helpful to know what you are or are not doing to contribute to workplace goals. Be open to feedback and ready to implement any recommended changes. You can only get better when others bring issues to your attention.

7 Enjoy work.

While many of these recommendations are related to working hard, respecting others, and communicating well, you must also enjoy your job. When you love your job, everything else is easy. Occasionally, you can do everything listed here, and the workplace culture prevents you from enjoying your job. If that is the case, maybe it's not the right place for you. Analyze the situation. Speak with your manager and identify if there are areas where you can improve. Implement those changes, and if it is still not enjoyable, it's okay to seek employment elsewhere.



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► **Educator Tip:** Have students role-play with one another, asking for feedback (both positive and negative).

1. Which of These 4 Communication Styles Are You?

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/markmurphy/2015/08/06/which-of-these-4-communication-styles-are-you/#5818993b3adb>.

Accessed October 2018.



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