

Work Skills

Find a Job and Achieve Career Success

TIP # 1

It's no longer about the grades you make; it's whether or not you make the grade.

Congratulations graduate! The time has come for you to say goodbye to your life as a student and hello to your life as an adult. As an adult, you don't have teachers to answer to, tests to study for, or grades to make. Your year isn't divided into quarters or semesters, and, unless you go back to school, you don't have to look at a report card *ever* again.

Welcome to the real world! In the real world, you'll find that success isn't measured with an A or a B; success is about learning, then living, your new ABCs.

Real world ABCs: Your code of conduct for life.

A is for **Adult**: You're an adult now for the rest of your life. As an adult, people expect you to *look, act, and dress* professionally and appropriately. It *does* matter what people think of you now. Maintaining your individuality is great—and encouraged. But a certain amount of conformity and maturity in appearance and behavior is expected.

B is for **Better**: Be better than you need to be. You are a work in progress—become a student of life. Be someone for whom good isn't good enough. Look for new ways of doing things, and don't be afraid of change. Strive to improve yourself professionally and personally every single day.

C is for **Control**: Take control of your life; don't let life control you. Decide what you want. Don't be wishy-washy. Life is not a dress rehearsal; every decision you make will either move you toward your goals or push you away from them. Make good decisions. As comedian Tim Allen once said, "If you don't make decisions in life, life will make decisions for you."

D is for **Dream**: Dare to *dream*. Dare to dream the *impossible* dream. If you dream it, you can create it; it depends on what you're *willing* to do. Don't listen to people who try to destroy your dreams. Most likely, someone tried to spoil theirs and probably succeeded. If you don't think dreams are possible, ask anyone whose impossible dreams came true. They'll tell you dreams really do come true.

E is for **Enthusiasm**: Enthusiasm matters a great deal. Enthusiasm is contagious. Infect the people you work with; create a more pleasurable, meaningful work environment. If you aren't enthusiastic about what you're doing, consider doing something else. Life is too short to curb your enthusiasm.

F is for **Failure**: When you fail in school, you are *held* back; when you fail in life, you are *set* back. Failure is temporary and is nothing to be embarrassed about. Some of the greatest victories are a result of the worst defeats. Everyone faces personal struggles, failures, and moments of truth. Be a student of your own failure. There's no shame in failing; the shame is in not trying.

G is for **Give**: Be known as a giver, not a taker. Make a difference in someone's life; pay a compliment, do something nice, and volunteer. When you give to simply give, with no strings attached, you always end up getting more back. Try it and see for yourself.

His for **Happy**: If you can wake up every day and be happy with yourself, your relationships, and your job, you are living life at its best. I know it isn't easy; there's always something to gripe about or problems that get in the way. Abraham Lincoln once said most people are about as happy as they make their minds up to be. Don't complain; forget about your problems. Make your mind up to be happy.

Iis for **Invest**: Invest in your future *now*. Just because you're making money doesn't mean you have to spend it all. Learn from the millions of people who wish they had *invested* their money rather than thrown it away. Don't spend *more* than you earn; spend less. Stay out of debt and *invest in yourself*.

Jis for **Joyfulness**: Find joy and meaning in everything you do. Find joy making others joyful; make your day by making someone else's day. Call the store clerk, the driver, or the receptionist by name, and ask about his or her day. Then watch the response you receive. Reach out to others and make a personal connection; then feel and see joyfulness at its best.

Kis for **Knowledge**: You may be done with your formal education, but some of your best lessons are yet to be learned. Become a *lifelong* learner; be a student of *life*. I heard this saying years ago: *The more you know, the more you know you don't know*. The older I get, the more I understand it. Know that you don't yet know all you need to know. Seek knowledge and learn something new every chance you get.

Lis for **Listen**: There is a reason we all have two ears and only one mouth. Use yours proportionately. Listening is more than hearing. You are responsible for getting what someone's telling you, so listen carefully.

M is for **Mistake**: Make mistakes; make *lots* of *new* mistakes. It's the best way for you to learn. Don't be afraid—*everyone makes mistakes*. Let your mistakes get you down. Take some time to grieve over, not *gloss* over, what you learned from your mistake. Then get back up, and strive to never repeat the same mistake.

N is for **No**: Know how to say no. Say no to overindulgence, say no to risky behavior, say no to your bad habits, and say no to the toxic people you meet. Know when and how to say no and *mean* it.

O is for **Opportunity**: Opportunity sometimes knocks very quietly. If you listen, you will hear when opportunity knocks at your door. Pay attention to everything you see and hear. Take risks, seize opportunities, and create your own good fortune.

P is for **Patience**: Like Rome, your career won't be built in a day. Everyone starts somewhere, and everything takes time. Although it may be difficult to understand now, you really will enjoy and appreciate what you have much more if you have to work for it and toward it. Patience really is a virtue. Be patient. The best is yet to come.

Q is for **Quality**: Put a stamp of quality on *everything* you do. Seek quality relationships, buy quality clothes, eat quality food, get a quality job, be a quality person, turn in quality work, and think quality thoughts. Remember, it's not quantity you want; it's quality. Live a quality life.

R is for **Reputation**: Your permanent record, for the rest of your life, begins *now*. Think about what kind of person you want to be known as in your personal and professional life. A gossip? A backbiter? Someone who will step on others to get where he or she wants to be? Think of your reputation as your little shadow, because it will follow you

wherever you go. Take care to cultivate a reputation that you can live with for the rest of your life.

S is for **Success**: Success isn't measured by the title you have, the money you make, or the value of your possessions. Success is what you make of your *life*. If you compare yourself to others, you will always fall short. Compare yourself to *your* goals and desires; you have everything you need to succeed.

T is for **Thankful**: Be thankful; appreciate the opportunity to work, and do your best, regardless of the position. No job is beneath you. Any job that's legal is honorable and probably pays you more in a month than people in many parts of the world make in a year. Be thankful for your health, your family, and all the goodness you see every day.

U is for **Understanding people**: Understand that people matter; *all* people. Always remember the people who helped you. Always try to help others. Treat *everyone* with respect, regardless of status or position. As you mature, you will come to realize that it's not who you *know* but who you *are*.

V is for **Values**: Identify your values; know what's important to you in life, and never compromise the things you value most. Take a stand for what you believe. If you *stand* for nothing, you'll *fall* for everything.

W is for **Willing**: Be willing to stay late, come in early, skip going out for lunch, or whatever it takes to get the job done well and on time. Most important, be willing to start at the bottom and work your way up; everyone has to start somewhere.

X is for **"X"traordinary**: Some things happen for no reason at all, with no warning and no explanation. You can think

you've got the world in the palm of your hand, but when something unexpected happens, you learn you do not. Never become so smug that you think you're infallible. You are not. Live your life and go for your dreams, but never take your health, your family, your country, your job, or *anything* for granted.

Y is for **You**: You are enough. Don't focus on those who have more than you; help out those who have less. Don't feel bad for what you *don't* get to do; be glad for what you get. Don't live your life regretfully; envision a bright future ahead.

Z is for **Zoom**: Get ready, get set... zoom! Enjoy the ride of your life. There's a wide-open road ahead of you now; follow the road to your dreams.

TIP # 2

Your first job is finding a job.

If you aren't working, technically you are unemployed, but theoretically, you do have a job; your job is to find a job. Whether you realize it or not, you are now self-employed; you've got a job to do, but there's no time clock you need to punch or supervisor you must report to. You're free to begin and end your day as early or as late as you choose and are responsible for setting your goals and tracking your progress. You can put as much or as little effort into your job search as you want, because the only person you have to answer to is yourself. Your success (or lack of it) is up to you, and if things don't go well, there's no one to blame but yourself.

Think of your job search as one of your first entrepreneurial experiences. You are about to begin an adventure in which you'll experience good days and bad days, highs and lows, and ups and downs. Your moods are likely to fluctuate, and your feelings of exuberance, empowerment, and excitement will probably be intertwined with feelings of rejection, loneliness, and, at times,