



Ready Reference H-8 Life After College

Tips for Adjusting to Post-College Life and Work

Life school is not “freedom”: It's worth noting that when still in college, you really didn't have too many responsibilities. When you were still on campus you'd at least have extra time between commitments to enjoy yourself and not worry too much about tomorrow. But when tomorrow is the day after your graduation and you get out into the real world, everything changes. You have to pay your bills, move to new places, work forty hour weeks, and be completely responsible for yourself.

Find out what makes you happy: Getting new responsibilities doesn't mean that life has to become overly serious all of a sudden. Even though you'll have new responsibilities and less time to enjoy yourself, you'll still have the need to be happy and achieve the perfect balance in life. Set aside time to do the things you love. Hold your passions close as you work to define your post-college self. Through any turmoil or transition in your career, education, or relationships, saying “yes” to a project or opportunity that fulfills you will keep you close to your core values.

Continuously strive to better yourself: After graduation we tend to get the feeling that we've accomplished one of our life's primary goals. Don't let this be the last time you seek out learning something new. It doesn't matter that you're not being graded anymore, learning is a continuous cycle and your new job will still require that you learn new skills. To keep up with life it's imperative that you find ways to expand your knowledge and learn new skills. Books are extremely useful. Don't be afraid to take on new challenges, as they will help gear you up for more success in the future.

Getting and keeping a good job is key: Even more important than getting a good job is keeping that job. It is important to always work hard, be on time, be a team player, be flexible, don't complain, offer to help, and stay positive. It is also important to know what is expected of you and be enthusiastic. Another strategy for keeping your job is to be an essential, even crucial, employee. Never wait to be told what to do; know what to do. Take on responsibility, even when you're not asked. There is no such thing as a “stupid question.” Your supervisor wants you to become productive as soon as possible, as a productive person is regarded as a good employee. One of the most common causes of poor job performance is employee fear of asking questions.



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Keep in touch with people that matter: Upon graduation, it can be harder to stay in touch with family you are used to talking to everyday or friends who you regularly saw in your room, dorm, or classes. Stay close to those who value you just because you're you—not because of your contributions at work or otherwise. Focus on nurturing deep relationships, even if you just have a few. These are the people who will encourage and support you through good and trying times.

Take ownership of your work: Taking ownership is about taking initiative. We take ownership when we believe that taking action is not someone else's responsibility. You, as an individual, are accountable for the quality and timeliness of an outcome, even when you're working with others. You care about the outcome the same way you would care as an owner of the organization. It is okay to make mistakes, but own up to them, fix and learn from them, and move on. It is important to take ownership of all your work, whether it is your mistakes or your successes.

Manage your own schedule: Scheduling is the art of planning your activities so that you can achieve your goals and priorities in the time you have available. When it's done effectively, it helps you

- Understand what you can realistically achieve with your time.
- Make sure you have enough time for essential tasks.
- Add contingency time for "the unexpected."
- Avoid taking on more than you can handle.
- Work steadily toward your personal and career goals.
- Have enough time for family and friends, exercise and hobbies.
- Achieve a good work-life balance.

Time is the one resource that we can't buy, but we often waste it or use it ineffectively. Scheduling helps you think about what you want to achieve in a day, week or month, and it keeps you on track to accomplish your goals.



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Turn your uncertainty into opportunity: Proactively choose to take a positive outlook on the challenges you come across. Realize that any turmoil you feel is natural, but focus on the opportunity areas. Remember, true happiness is a result of personal excellence, not professional prestige or praise. Don't overanalyze your situation. Are you struggling to grasp complex concepts on the job? View it as a learning opportunity and seek out advice if you need it—you'll have a new skill set under your belt before you know it. Swimming in grueling job applications and facing rejection? The most successful people enlist their network to ask for feedback and help when they need it. It may take some time and very hard work, but who knows what exciting role lies ahead for you?