



## SETTLING IN NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF - QUICK TIPS

*Everyone has a first day. There are key principles for helping new staff make the best start in a new environment.*

*Orientation, sometimes described as “onboarding,” follows an investment of time and energy in the hiring process. So to the extent possible, the experience should be designed to increase the likelihood that the person will be productive and effective in your department, will stay in the post, and will build solid relationships early, and it should provide the person with the best chance of weathering the inevitable challenges of the workplace. Taking time before the person arrives to plan the first days is a wise further investment of time and energy.*

*Onboarding is used here to include the specific training of the technical elements of the job, and the introduction to the social system and the culture. These tips provide a starting point for such practices, particularly geared towards staff rather than new faculty members, who are the subject of a separate set of tips.*

### Be Prepared

1. Familiarize yourself with the person’s job role and expectations. Think about likely questions.
2. Schedule the first day for the person and potentially the first several days; there is an optimum arrangement here that will emerge for your unit.
3. Arrange particularly for the person’s immediate manager or supervisor to be available on the first day and involved with orienting the person as much as possible. In addition to the manager, specify one “point person” from whom the new employee can seek assistance for at least the first few weeks. Some staff roles involve membership of a collective bargaining unit, and there may be associated rules governing interactions; take note of the position with this role.
4. Orient your efforts towards providing clarity, establishing confidence, and initiating connection.<sup>1</sup>
5. Gather materials to show the person (see Explain the Essentials) and anything the person will be given in advance (keys, access cards, login information, work materials). Many materials may need the person’s signature; assign someone to walk the new employee around campus to the appropriate offices, and use the time for a brief tour, perhaps including a lunch or beverage break as well.

### On Arrival - and the First Day

Make the person’s first impression a good one.

- \* have someone waiting to meet the person
- \* articulate specifically that the person is welcome and wanted
- \* articulate that asking questions is encouraged
- \* introduce him or her to key colleagues
- \* give him or her a tour of the facilities if appropriate
- \* sit down in a private space together to talk through the experience

THE FIRST DAY  
sets the tone for the  
whole of the initial  
experience

<sup>1</sup> Bauer, Talya. 2016. Connections, onboarding, and the need to belong. re:Work, March 4. Retrieved from <https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/connections-onboarding-and-the-need-to-belong/>





## Explain the Essentials

To avoid a “firehose” effect, start by making it clear that the information you are presenting is also available in written or electronic form. This is the first pass through the essential steps, and the person can relax and take in only as much as he or she can.

1. How to complete essential administrative steps (setting up systems, visiting HR, keys and access, enrolling for benefits, claiming expenses, arranging purchases ...)
2. Where to look for references about how things are done in the unit
3. How and when the employee will meet key people
4. Where key facilities are (offices, restrooms, cafeteria ...)
5. What systems are involved and how they are supported
6. What equipment is involved and how it’s supported
7. Who is who in the unit
8. How and when the person gets paid

LOOK AT THE  
MATERIALS  
TOGETHER  
and ensure the  
person knows where  
to find the  
information later

## Set expectations

It’s important to touch on expectations on the first day. This is such important information that having a written or electronic reference is also essential (which might include a job description, an employee handbook, departmental procedures, or other references. In the first days or weeks, these expectations should be reinforced in a structured fashion.

Expectations might relate to a range of topics.

- \* the nature of the unit
- \* aims of unit
- \* how communication is achieved in the unit (email, or memos, or visiting offices personally, etc.)
- \* how often
- \* job description and responsibilities
- \* outline any patterns for reviews and appraisals

## Confirm a Plan for the First Days or Weeks

Have this plan ready; the new joiner can be invited to edit or adjust as needed. The person should update this plan as items get completed, and it should be reviewed with the person regularly. Include as many key people in the plan as possible: use initial meetings, tours and orientations as an opportunity for the person to begin developing the relationships that will be important in the job.

Remember that it’s important to set context for others: ensure colleagues understand what the new person will be doing and what his or her background is.

In addition to any regular staff reviews, arrange a short orientation review at the end of a given period; a key question is “what else would have been useful to know when you joined?” This then completes the loop of continuous refining and improvement of this process.

