First Job Do’s and Don’ts

Preparing for that first job requires research and preparation, here are a few tips to aid you in your transition:

Watch Your Time
Be punctual. Always arrive to work on time, if not early. If you think you’re going to be late, call in and let your coworkers know.

Timeliness also applies to the work you produce. Always submit projects by deadline or before. Blow important deadlines and you may find you won't be trusted with bigger responsibilities.

Dress for Success
It is important that your appearance fits the corporate environment. Find out what the dress code is and observe what your co-workers are wearing. Even if the atmosphere calls for casual outfits, make sure to wear clothes that are clean and in good taste.

Choose accessories carefully; they should accent your appearance, not overwhelm it. Don't wear noisy jewelry or a huge amount of cologne or perfume.

Telephone Tactics
• When picking up the phone, don't just answer "hello." Use a greeting and identify yourself (e.g. "Hi, this is Jane Smith."). If at all possible, do try to answer your phone personally; voicemail is highly impersonal
• Do return all calls as soon as possible, within 24 hours.
• Keep your outgoing voice mail message current. State when you will be back if you are going to be away from the office for an extended period of time.
• Limit your personal calls. Time them for your breaks, and keep them brief and low-key. And never keep a fellow employee or client waiting while you finish a personal call.
• Unless you're waiting for an urgent call, it isn't polite to put a person on hold when you get another call. Let the voice mail pick up the other call and respond to the message as soon as you're finished with the first call.
• If a coworker is on the phone, don't hover outside their office or cubicle waiting for them to finish. Leave and come back later to talk to them.

Netiquette
• Your email messages shouldn't include anything you wouldn't want anyone else to see. E-mail can easily be forwarded and passed around.
• Because it's so easy to send email, it's just as easy to send a message that's poorly written or incomplete. Always proofread and spell-check before you hit send. And double-check to make sure you've included all attachments.
• Never use abusive or objectionable language or forward an email message that does.
• Internet access can be a big boon to business, but don't abuse it. Limit your personal Web surfing, and don't use your access to the Web to visit inappropriate sites.
• Don't write anything you would not want someone else reading, email is not confidential
• Do try to follow the form of memos and be professional.

Use the Right Words
In all office communications, use proper written and spoken language. If you need help with grammar or spelling, and spell-check doesn't always catch your mistakes, have someone check over your mail, memos, or reports before you distribute them.

Keep the Company in Mind
Remember at all times that you are an integral part of your company. How you behave impacts the organization as a whole—and reflects on you as well. Help the company and improve your professional image by following these tips:

• Maintain a positive attitude at work and when dealing with clients. Your demeanor reflects on you as well as on your company.
• Don't abuse company resources. The fax machine, printer, letterhead and office supplies are for office use only. If you have to conduct personal business, save it for lunchtime and use a calling card or credit card for long-distance calls.
• Keep all company secrets to yourself. Whether it’s good news or bad news, don't relate anything that is meant to be confidential inside or outside the company.

Other Considerations
• Do be courteous and friendly to your peers and subordinates, they can be just as important as your boss.
• Find out from your supervisor exactly what he/she expects you to do. Be sure you understand assignments and deadlines. If you feel overwhelmed with work, set priorities with your boss.
• Be willing to do some menial tasks. Even the most interesting jobs have some unexciting aspects. As you prove yourself with the menial tasks, you will have fewer of them to contend with.
• Develop an understanding of corporate politics. Doing a good job is not enough. Avoid the rap of becoming totally immersed in your job and not being aware of what is going on around you. Let the right people know the good job you are doing. Spend some non-working hours with peers, subordinates, and supervisor.
• Learn to delegate responsibility. Your success as a student was largely the result of individual effort. In the work world, it is teamwork that counts. You need to make the transition from individual to group effort.
• Solicit feedback on your performance. Try to arrange informal chats now and then.

Sources and other resources
http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/101163
http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/new_job.htm
http://www.suemorem.com/tips/index.php#etiquette
http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/New-Job-Preparation/New-Job-Proverbs/
http://www.pagepersonnel.co.uk/first-week-advice.html