

How can I excel as an employee?

# Chapter 13

## Good Employee Skills

### Key Terms

*work ethic  
penalty  
reprimand  
termination  
punctual  
dependable  
privilege  
mentor*

### Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- **determine** what you may gain as an employee if you succeed in winning at work.
- **identify** expectations of employers.
- **describe** how you can do your best as an employee.

### Key Concepts

- Having a good work ethic will help you win your employer's approval.
- Doing your best as an employee involves meeting your employer's expectations, having a good attitude, and accepting responsibility for your work.

## Winning at Work

“Winning at work” means that you gain something from your job. You may feel you have won just by getting a job. That is an accomplishment. As you work, however, you will have many more chances to win. You will be able to win respect if your work pleases your employer. You also win self-esteem when your work meets your personal standards.

In order for you to win at work, it is not necessary for someone else to lose. When you win, you will be a contented employee. This will allow your company to win through your contributions of effort and ideas. See 13-1.

### Consider Your Employer’s Expectations

To give an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay is a common work ethic. A **work ethic** is a standard of conduct and values for job performance. Having a good work ethic will help you win your employer’s approval.

When you win with your employer, you may be rewarded with job security, raises, and promotions. The best way to win with your employer is to meet his or her expectations.

Imagine yourself as an employer. What traits would you want your employees to have? How would you expect them to behave? What kind of employees would you reward with raises and promotions? Your answers to these questions should help you understand how employers think and act. Your answers are probably similar to the list of employer expectations in 13-2.



## Community Connections

Select a local employer and ask if it has an employee awards program. If the employer has such a program, find out answers to the following questions: Of what does it consist? In what special way are award-winners treated? Why does the company sponsor the program? Share your findings with the class.

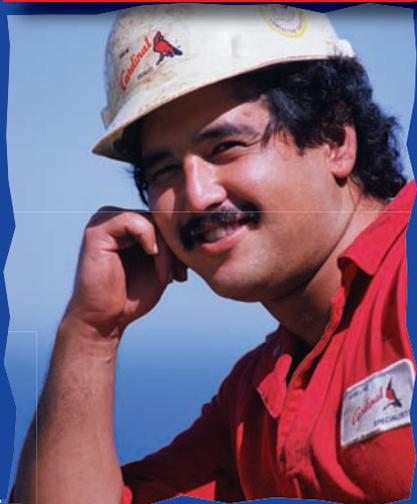
**work ethic**  
A standard of conduct and values for job performance.

Employee of the  
Month Award  
given to

**Bill  
Martinez**

In recognition of outstanding  
performance during the  
month of April

*Cardinal Engineering Services*



### 13-1

Employees gain self-esteem when they excel, and companies gain profits.

**13-2**

Considering your employer's expectations will help you become a winning employee.



## Making a Difference

Form teams of four to develop a plan to make chocolate chip cookies faster and better than anyone else. Write out your strategy. You will be judged on how well your plan reflects teamwork. On the following day, put your chocolate chip cookie company strategy to work, making the cookies and donating them to a kitchen that feeds the needy in your community. Evaluate how well the strategies of the teams worked.

### The Work Ethic

Employers expect employees to:

- come to work every day on time
- work hard
- follow company rules and policies
- get along with coworkers
- lend a helping hand whenever asked
- appreciate privileges without abusing them
- have a good attitude
- be honest
- show loyalty
- do the work correctly, completely, and on time
- take pride in their work
- make an effort to improve
- accept responsibility for their work
- show initiative

Employers want what you want. They want to be treated fairly and with respect. They want employees who can get along with others and make the company a success.

### Getting Along with Others

You will be expected to get along with your employer. Getting promoted is not likely if you can't get along with your employer. You might even be fired in such a case.

All employers are different so their personalities differ. Their styles of supervision also vary. The best way to get along with your employer is to do your job well.

As a new employee, don't try to tell your employer how to change the operation. You should get to know your employer and the operation before making suggestions for change. If you don't know how to handle a task, ask questions and be willing to learn. Let your employer know that you want to do a good job.

Your employer will expect you to get along with your coworkers. If you are unable to cooperate with others, you will reduce the productivity of your department. Employers cannot afford to keep employees who interfere with the company's ability to get a job done.

Your employer will also expect you to get along with customers and business contacts, 13-3. You need to deal with people outside the company in a helpful, friendly, professional way. If you fail to treat these people with respect, they are likely to get a bad impression of your company. They may even stop doing business with your company. If your attitude or actions hurt your company's business, they will hurt your chances of keeping your job.

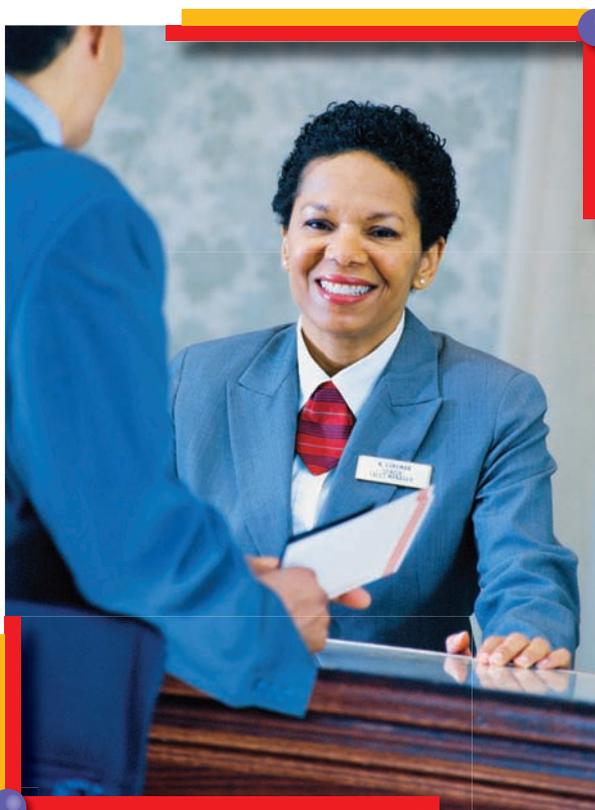
## Compliance

Complying with company rules and policies is another employer expectation. As a new employee, you may be told these rules and policies, or you may receive a written copy. It is your responsibility to learn the rules and policies and follow them. Ask your employer to explain any company rule or policy that you do not understand.

Breaking company rules and policies usually results in a penalty. A **penalty** is a loss or hardship due to some action. The specific penalties that apply to different cases are detailed

### penalty

A loss or hardship due to some action, such as breaking company rules or policies.



### 13-3

Smiling and being courteous to customers are requirements for service-oriented jobs.

in a company's rules and policies manual. For instance, a construction company may require you to wear a hard hat at all times when on the job. If you failed to comply with this company policy, you could be penalized in the following way:

### reprimand

A severe expression of disapproval.

- First offense is a verbal reprimand. A **reprimand** is a severe expression of disapproval.
- Second offense is a written reprimand and a fine. The written reprimand goes into your personnel file. It affects future decisions about your pay level and job opportunities.
- Third offense is termination. **Termination** is the end of employment or the loss of a job.

### termination

The end of employment or the loss of a job.

### punctual

On time.

## Punctuality

One company policy is likely to involve your working hours. Employers expect their employees to put in a full day's work. To do so, you must be **punctual**. This means being on time. You should try to be at your workstation at least five to ten minutes early. You should not leave before the official quitting time.

Employers have many ways of checking on the starting and quitting times of employees. Some companies use time clocks. You punch your time card when arriving and when leaving work, as well as when taking your breaks. See 13-4. Many offices use sign in/sign out sheets. Employees are required to sign a logbook when entering or leaving the building.

### 13-4

Some employers record employees' punctuality by using time cards punched by a time clock.



No matter what system is used at your place of employment, you should get into the habit of being early. Then, you will not need to worry about being late.

## Dependability

Employers, coworkers, family, and friends expect you to be dependable. Being **dependable** means being reliable. This means workers expect you to be a person of your word. Not only must you be punctual, you must also stay busy at doing your assignments. Being dependable means not taking time off for nonessential purposes.

Many people depend on you to do the job you were hired to do. This means accomplishing the tasks you were expected to complete, as outlined in your job description. It also means doing tasks according to your supervisor's directions.

Employers and coworkers appreciate dependable people. Dependable workers are usually the first to be considered for job advancements and raises.

**dependable**  
Being reliable.

## Do Not Abuse Privileges

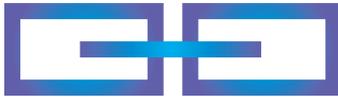
Some company policies may concern certain privileges for employees. A **privilege** is a right that is given as a benefit or favor. Most employees have several privileges at work. Two examples are breaks and the use of office equipment. Do not abuse or take advantage of such privileges.

Breaks from work allow employees to relax and return to work refreshed. If you are given a 15-minute break, do not stretch it into a 20-minute break. Your supervisor depends on you to return to work promptly.

Your company may allow you to use the telephone to make some important local telephone calls. Don't abuse this privilege. Keep your personal calls to a minimum. Use this privilege to call home when you'll be late or to take care of an urgent personal matter. Don't chat with family members and friends, and don't allow them to call you at work just to chat.

Likewise, do not send personal faxes or e-mails on company equipment. To prevent this from occurring, many companies have strict rules regarding the use of office equipment. Abusing these privileges robs your employer of your work time. It also creates unfair expenses for your employer. More importantly, your activities may tie up communication

**privilege**  
A right that is given as a benefit or favor.



## Community Connections

Interview a company supervisor or manager. Ask him or her for answers to these questions: How are employee evaluations handled? What happens if an employee is not honest? What happens if an employee does not get along with others? What is done to an employee who is caught stealing? Share your findings with the class.

channels and prevent customers from easily reaching the company. This could result in lost sales and customers.

## Honesty

Your employer expects you to be an honest employee. One type of dishonesty that is a problem in some workplaces is stealing. Stealing does not always involve taking money from your employer. Stealing also includes taking company supplies, tools, or equipment for personal use.

Stealing *any* amount of your employer's property is dishonest. Even taking something as minor as a package of pencils is considered stealing. This is just like taking money from the cash register. Your employer must replace the stolen pencils at a cost to the company.

Another form of dishonesty is taking too much time for breaks. Doing so cheats the employer out of time that workers should be devoting to work. It also cheats the employer out of wages that are not earned. Most companies have a definite starting and quitting time. Don't arrive at work late, and don't quit work early. Coming in late or sneaking out early is unfair to the company. Also, it will cause discontent among coworkers and could be grounds for dismissal.

You should be honest in all your dealings with your employer. An employer is likely to go to great lengths to keep an employee who is honest. See 13-5.

## Loyalty

Would you remain friends with a person who always tells others about your faults and secrets? Would you continue to like a person who always "puts you down"? You probably wouldn't. You want friends who are loyal. You want friends who talk about your strengths, not your weaknesses.

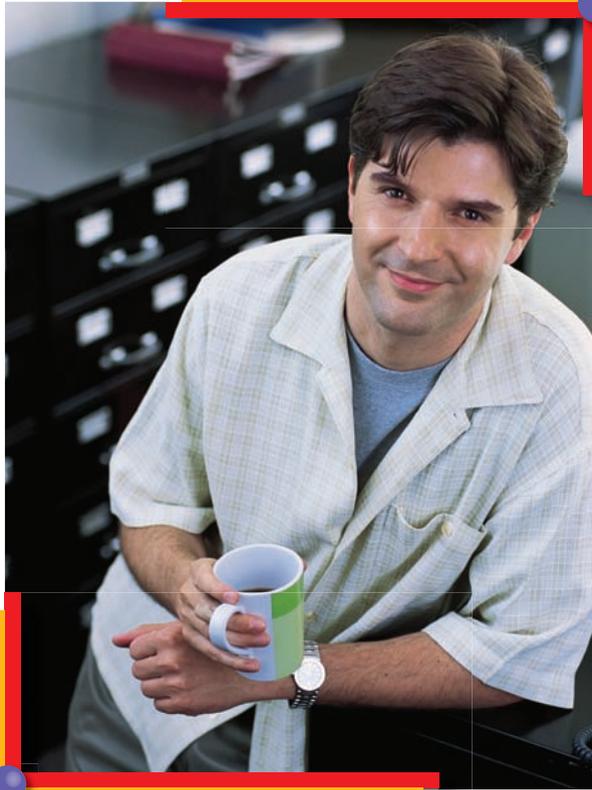
Employers are very much like you. Employers expect their employees to be loyal. They want employees who speak highly of the company and their employers. They want employees who will not give away company secrets or grumble about decisions the employer makes.

Being loyal to your employer, however, means keeping company business within the company. It does not mean you must ignore those things that should be improved. Instead, loyalty means always working to make the company better. As a loyal employee, you earn the respect of your employer.



## Your Reading

How can you win at work and meet your employer's expectations?

**13-5**

Honest employees do not stretch their breaks beyond the specified time allowed.

## Do Your Best as an Employee

To win at work, you must do your very best as an employee. This means doing your job to the best of your ability. It means looking for ways to improve and being willing to learn new skills. Doing your best as an employee involves accepting responsibility for your work and having a good attitude. If you make a true effort at this, you will win. You'll win self-esteem by knowing you're doing the best job you can do.

## Use All Your Abilities

Your first challenge is getting a job. Your next challenge is keeping the job. Many people spend a lot of time working to get a job. Once they have the job, they relax. Don't let this happen to you. You should put your best foot forward at all times. "Do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay" is an old saying that still applies. Your employers and your coworkers expect you to do the job you were hired to do. Doing your job to the

best of your ability has another benefit, too. It allows you to feel good about yourself and build your self-esteem.

Some employees do only what they are told to do and no more. Employees who work to the best of their abilities, however, notice other tasks that need to be done. These employees do extra tasks without being asked. For instance, your assigned task may be to dust the shelves. While dusting, you may find items like rubber bands and paper clips lying on the shelves. If these items do not belong there, remove them. To simply dust around these items is not doing the job to the best of your ability.

Don't simply ignore other tasks that need to be done while doing an assigned task. On the other hand, if the extra tasks require considerably more time or expertise, first check with your employer. Always make sure you are using your time on the job in the way your employer wants.

Take pride in what you do. If you are sweeping floors, sweep them as clean as you can. If you are baking pastries, try to make them perfect in shape, texture, and taste. If you are writing a report, try to write it without a single error. Treat each task like the most important task the company could give you. See 13-6.

There is truth in the old saying "practice makes perfect." Visualize each step of your job. Work at perfecting whatever you do. Go over each detail until the steps become automatic. Be patient. Developing skill takes determination and practice.

### 13-6

Take pride in your work to do the best job you can do.



## Watch for Ways to Improve

Your first obligation to your employer is to do the job you were hired to do. When your end result does not meet your employer's standards, seek your employer's help. Try to improve your skills. A positive attitude, training, and practice will help you improve.

After you master your job, look for new skills to develop. This will help you become more valuable to your employer. Watch the more experienced workers do their jobs. Ask them to show you how to do some advanced tasks. Don't be afraid to try new assignments.

Let your employer know that you want to handle additional responsibilities. Volunteer for extra training and other job assignments. Take self-improvement courses that help you advance on the job. The more you learn and do on the job, the more valuable you become to your employer.

## Be Willing to Learn

You must be willing to learn your company's way of operating. Every company operates somewhat differently. For instance, the style of typing a letter for one company may differ from the style used by another company.

Your willingness to learn and keep your skills updated is important to your company. Your company will provide you with on-the-job training. It might even send you to seminars or school to improve your skills. Skilled workers help the company earn higher profits. Higher profits help pay for more jobs and higher wages. See 13-7.

## Mentors

Perhaps you will be fortunate to have a mentor. A **mentor** is a more experienced person who provides his or her expertise in order to help less-experienced workers advance in their careers, enhance their education, and build networks. A mentor can be a friend, counselor, or teacher. Some companies often pair new employees with a mentor who can guide the new employee through advice and example as the new employee advances in the company.

### **mentor**

A more experienced person who provides his or her expertise in order to help less-experienced workers advance in their careers, enhance their education, and build networks.

**13-7**

Be willing to learn the skills needed to keep up with your company's changing needs.



## Accept Responsibility for Your Work

There will be times when you make mistakes on the job. Don't be afraid to admit your mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes at one time or another. Learn from your mistakes. Try not to make the same mistake twice. Whatever you do, don't blame others for your errors. Rather, accept responsibility for them. You will get more respect from your employer and your coworkers when you do.



## Your Reading

What are ways you can do your best as an employee?

## Have a Good Attitude

A positive attitude will help you accomplish your tasks to the best of your ability. Try to develop a "can do" attitude. This attitude shows you are willing to try any task. It also shows your belief in your own ability to succeed.

Having a good attitude ranks high with most employers. Many prefer workers with positive attitudes to workers with perfect skills. Employers can teach workers the skills they need. The workers themselves, on the other hand, must develop a positive attitude. See 13-8.

### Signs of a Good Attitude

- Listen to the suggestions of others.
- Avoid making excuses for mistakes or blaming others for them.
- Live up to the expectations of supervisors and coworkers.
- Try to see things from the other person's point of view.
- Respect the opinions of others.
- Give a day's work for a day's pay willingly.

### 13-8

An employee with a good attitude will win an employer's respect.



## Making a Difference

Contact a local hospital, nursing home, or Meals on Wheels group. Ask the group to recommend noteworthy volunteers who have shown loyalty and a positive attitude. Ask if individuals would be willing to discuss their volunteer experiences with you or the class.

A circular graphic with a purple background and a white glow effect. The word "Chapter" is written in a light orange, cursive font at the top, and the number "13" is written in a large, bold, orange font in the center.

## Chapter 13

### Summary

Winning at work means benefiting from your job. You do this by meeting your employer's expectations and doing your best as an employee. It means having a good work ethic.

Employers seek employees who will comply with company rules and policies. They also seek employees who will be honest, dependable, and loyal. Employers know that employees who meet these expectations will help the company be successful.

You should always excel in your role as an employee. Living up to your personal standards will allow you to develop pride in your work. Your self-esteem and self-confidence will grow. You will be a winner at work!

### Reviewing Key Concepts

1. List 10 expectations employers have regarding their employees.
2. Why is it important to comply with company rules and policies?
3. Why must an employee be punctual?
4. Give two examples of abusing company privileges.
5. Describe honesty on the job.
6. Explain how an employee can show loyalty at work.
7. Explain why it is important to do your job to the best of your ability.
8. Describe two ways you can improve on the job.
9. What should you do when you make a mistake on the job?
10. List five characteristics of a person with a good attitude.

### Building Academic Skills

**Writing, speaking.** Write a speech on the importance of honesty in the workplace and the effect it has on the work environment. Present your speech to the class.

### Building Technology Skills

1. Use the computer to create a flowchart. Imagine yourself as an employer as you tackle the following tasks: Write down the name of your company and the services it provides or the products it produces. List job titles in your company, and below them, the qualities that employees holding them should have.
2. Search the Internet for *positive attitude*. (You might be surprised at the number of Web sites that appear.) Use several sites to create a PowerPoint presentation or a Web page on what happens to people with positive attitudes.
3. Use the computer to develop a list of common employee work rules that would be applied to a chocolate chip cookie manufacturer. You may use the Internet to research *work rules*. Also, list the consequences of breaking any rules.

### Building Career Knowledge and Skills

1. Interview three workers from different companies. Ask them about the workplace importance of dependability, honesty, and getting along with others. Summarize your findings in a brief report.
2. Interview an employer to learn his or her idea of a good employee. Report your findings to the class.
3. Obtain a company's rules and policies manual. Make a list of all actions that lead to penalties. Beside each action, describe its penalty. Put a check mark beside actions that can lead to termination.

### Building Workplace Skills

Working with three or four classmates, develop two short skits depicting "good" and "bad" employer/employee interactions over an employer expectation discussed in this chapter. (Two examples are honesty and compliance.) Develop a two-minute script for each skit. Decide as a team what the performers should say and do to deliver a memorable message. Together determine who should do which tasks. Present the skits to the class live or videotape the skits and play them back during class. Summarize the point of the message at the end of the skits.