



Module: Starting a New Job

This module covers how to accept a job offer and navigate the onboarding process, including understanding what is expected in a new role and building relationships with coworkers.

About CanWork BC

CanWork BC aims to make it easier for youth with disabilities ages 15 to 30 years old to find and keep employment. There are a series of tools and resources for youth, employers, service providers, educators, and caregivers.

CanAssist at the University of Victoria, with the support of the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, wrote the Provincial Employment Strategy for Youth with Disabilities (ESYD). This strategy informed the tools and resources.

The Youth Tool

The CanWork BC youth tool is available as an interactive online platform at portal.canworkbc.ca and through PDF workbooks such as this one. There are five dimensions of content available.

For the full PDF workbook content and accompanying facilitator guides, as well as other CanWork BC tools and resources, go to canworkbc.ca.

Introduction

This module has three sections to help you navigate all the processes involved in starting a new job. You'll explore:

- Applying steps to manage the onboarding process when starting a new job.
- Identifying workplace expectations, including company culture and your role.
- Developing positive professional relationships and practice effective communication skills.

Each section will take around 15-30 minutes to complete, and you're welcome to take breaks in between.

Each section has activities that connect employment essentials to your own life to make sure this is useful for you. Be prepared to think about and record your answers in whatever way works best. That could be writing your answers in this workbook or using a different format that works for you like voice recording or typing in a notes app.

At the end of the module, you'll have the chance to put what you've learned into practice with reflection questions. Let's get started!

Section 1: Navigating Onboarding Processes

Navigating the onboarding process is crucial because it sets the stage for your success in the workplace and helps you feel more comfortable and prepared.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Understanding what to expect when you start a new job.
- Identifying key questions to ask to clarify company policies.
- Sharing your needs comfortably.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of what to expect on your first days, which will help you feel more confident about starting your new role.

Engage and Explore

What to Expect in a New Job

Onboarding is the process that helps you settle into your new job. It usually includes orientation sessions, training programs, and meetings with your team. Here's what you can generally expect:

- **Orientation**

Different employers approach orientation differently. You might attend an in person or online session with other

coworkers where you learn about the company culture, values, and mission. Or you might be asked to watch videos and read materials on your own. No matter the format, the important thing here is that you understand what your employer expects from you, and you have the information you need to get started on your work. It can also be an opportunity to get a feel for your workplace and start to meet your coworkers.

- **Training**

Depending on your role, you might go through specific training to help you understand your tasks and responsibilities better. This could include hands-on training or online courses.

Questions to Ask

Asking questions is an important part of the onboarding process. Don't hesitate to ask these questions during orientation or in your first few days. It shows that you're engaged and eager to learn.

Here are some questions you might consider:

- What are my key responsibilities?
- Who should I reach out to if I need help?
- What are the company's policies on remote work, dress code, and hours?
- Are there opportunities for growth and professional development?

Completing Onboarding Paperwork

One of the first steps in onboarding is completing paperwork. Read everything carefully and ask for help if you're unsure about anything. This often includes:

- **Tax forms**

These help the company take out the correct amount of tax from your paycheck.

- **Direct deposit forms**

You'll provide your banking information, so your salary goes directly into your account.

- **Benefits enrollment**

If the company offers benefits, you must fill out forms to enroll in health insurance, retirement plans, etc.

Understanding Company Policies

Understanding company policies is key for a smooth start at your new job. Keep in mind that rules can be different at each company or organization. If you have questions, ask your supervisor or Human Resources (HR) manager for help. Make sure to review the following:

- **Workplace behavior**

Understand the rules and expectations for acting, talking, and working with others.

- **Leave policies**

Find out about vacation days, sick leave, and how to ask for time off.

- **Rules and consequences**

Know what actions could lead to warnings or losing your job.

Disclosing Disabilities

You have the right to disclose a disability to your employer if you need support or adjustments at work. Share only what you feel comfortable with and focus on how your employer can assist you. Here are some things to consider:

- **Know your rights**

Under the **British Columbia Human Rights Code**, you are protected by law. This means your employer must make reasonable changes to help you do your job, as long as it doesn't create too much difficulty for them.

- *Example: If you have a vision impairment, your employer might provide special equipment such as a larger monitor or screen reader software to help you see your computer screen better.*

- **Decide when to disclose**

You can choose when to share information about your disability. It's important to do this only when you feel **comfortable** and **ready**. You don't have to share this information right away.

- *Example: If you're starting a new job with a learning disability, consider waiting until you feel settled before discussing it with your supervisor. You can share this when you need extra help or support.*
- **Benefits of disclosing**

Disclosing your disability can lead to better support and understanding from your employer. When your employer knows about your needs, they can provide resources to help you succeed at work.

 - *Example: If you have ADHD, letting your employer know might lead to strategies to help you focus better, like using noise-canceling headphones or having a quieter workspace.*

Make it Personal

Reflection Journal

Starting a new job is an exciting opportunity to gain experience and learn. To help you through this experience, let's create an onboarding journal where you can reflect on your thoughts and feelings.

Follow the steps below to create your journal. Consider the questions and write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Step 1: Choose your focus

If you've worked before: Think about your last job. What did you expect from that role? What challenges did you face, and how did you handle them?

If this is your first job: Imagine what it will be like. What do you expect? What concerns do you have?

Step 2: Think on it

Question: What are your expectations for this new role?

Question: What challenges might you face?

Question: How do you plan to overcome those challenges?

Question: What skills or experiences do you want to build on in this job?

Optional Step 3: Sharing your insights

If you care comfortable, feel free to share your insights with a friend or group if you're comfortable. Sharing can give you new perspectives and help you learn.

Remember

This journal is a personal space for your thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers. Take the time to explore how you feel about starting a new job and keep these reflections as you grow in your career!

Section 2: Understanding Workplace Expectations

Understanding workplace expectations can make starting a new job easier. It helps you adjust quickly, get along with coworkers, and perform your role well.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Understanding your role.
- Asking for accommodations.
- Identifying where to go for support when you need it.

By the end of this section, you'll have a better understanding of how to learn more about your specific role and the supports available to you to make you feel more comfortable in your new workplace.

Engage and Explore

Understanding Your Role

It's important to know your job responsibilities. Make sure you understand what tasks you need to complete, who you report to, and how your role fits into the company.

Knowing the roles of other staff members can also be helpful, as it will guide you on who to contact for support when you need it. Here are some more tips you can use to help you understand your role:

- **Set clear expectations:** Schedule a meeting with your supervisor to discuss your role and responsibilities and ask about any specific goals or projects you should focus on.
- **Where to go for help:** If you have questions or need help, it's important to know who to ask. In most workplaces, you can contact your supervisor or the Human Resources (HR) department. They can help with questions about company policies, your role, or any issues you might face.
- **Keep a list of contacts:** Write down names and contact information for your supervisor, HR, and any other key people in the company who can assist you.

Company Culture

Company culture refers to the shared values, behaviors, and ways of working in a company. Every workplace is a bit different. Some are formal, while others are more relaxed. Check out these ways to understand company culture:

- **Observe your surroundings:** Watch how coworkers interact. Do they chat casually, or is communication more formal?
- **Ask questions:** If you're unsure about how things are done, don't hesitate to ask a friendly coworker or your supervisor.
- **Participate in team activities:** Attend team meetings or social events to get a feel for the company's values and how people behave at work.

What are Workplace Accommodations?

Workplace accommodations are changes or adjustments made to help you do your job. This could include special equipment, a flexible schedule, or changes to your workspace. Here are a few examples of workplace accommodations:

- **Adjustable workstations:** For employees who need to stand or sit while working.
- **Assistive technology:** Such as screen readers, speech-to-text software, or adaptive mice for those who use computers in their job.
- **Flexible hours:** For those who may have childcare responsibilities or health appointments.

Requesting Accommodation

The steps below can support you through the process of requesting workplace accommodations.

Step 1: Reach out

Reach out to your supervisor or HR to discuss your accommodation needs.

Step 2: Approach the discussion

Choose a good time for a private meeting.

Be clear and direct about your needs. For example, say, “I would like to discuss flexible hours to manage my workload better.”

You may need to prepare documentation, like a note from a healthcare professional, to support your request.

Step 3: Follow-up

After your meeting, send a follow-up email summarizing what was discussed to ensure clarity and understanding.

Make it Personal

Explore Workplace Expectations

Workplace expectations can be different in each sector. In this activity, you will look into two or more sectors that interest you. You'll find out the workplace expectations and think about whether they would be a good fit for you. The steps below will help you complete the activity. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Step 1: Choose your sectors

Pick at least two sectors you want to explore and make note of them.

- *Examples: Healthcare, technology, education, retail, or manufacturing.*



Step 2: Research workplace expectations

Find information about the workplace expectations in each sector. Here are some tips to help you:

- **Visit company websites:** Look for sections like "About Us" or "Careers." They often share their company culture and values.
- **Read job descriptions:** Look at job postings in your chosen industries. They usually explain the responsibilities and expectations for different roles.
- **Use professional networking sites:** Websites like [LinkedIn](#) can help you see how people describe their jobs and the workplace culture in different industries.
- **Search for articles or reports:** Use search engines to find articles about workplace culture in specific industries. Look for industry reports or blogs that discuss trends and expectations.

Step 2: Make a list and compare

Create a list that shows the expectations you found for each sector and compare them. If it's helpful, you can record your findings in the table below. Include things like:

- What is the company culture like?
- What are common job responsibilities?
- How do people communicate at work?
- What accommodations are usually available?

Here's an example comparing **retail** and **technology**:

Type of Expectations	Retail	Technology
Company culture	Fast-paced, customer-focused, teamwork-oriented	Innovative, casual, encourages brainstorming
Common job responsibilities	Innovative, casual, encourages brainstorming	Developing software, troubleshooting tech issues
Communication style	Friendly and informal, Communicate clearly and directly with customers	Casual and open, often uses messaging apps

Accommodations available	Flexible schedules for shifts	Remote work options, ergonomic equipment
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Type of Expectations		
Company culture		
Common job responsibilities		
Communication style		
Accommodations available		

Section 3: Building Professional Relationships

Strong professional relationships can open doors to new opportunities, help you learn from others, and make your work life more enjoyable.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Making great first impressions.
- Developing effective communication skills
- Building professional relationships that benefit your career.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of how strong relationships can improve teamwork and collaboration and how making connections at work can create networking opportunities and future job leads.

Engage and Explore

First Impressions

When you meet someone new at work, how you present yourself can influence your future interactions. Here are some tips to make a great impression.

- **Be friendly**

Smile and greet people warmly. A simple "Hello!" creates a welcoming vibe.

- *Example: When meeting a new team member, say, "Hi, I'm [Your Name]. It's great to meet you!" This shows you're open and approachable.*

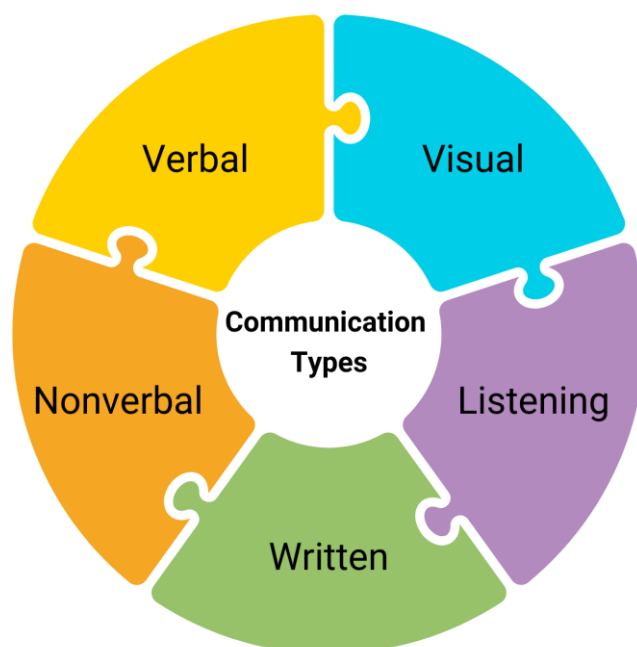
- **Dress appropriately**

Wear clothes that fit the workplace culture. Looking neat shows you take your job seriously.

- *Example: wearing clean jeans and a nice shirt works if your workplace is casual. For a more formal setting, wear a button-up shirt, dress pants, and dress shoes.*

Effective Communication

Good communication is essential for building strong relationships at work. Here are some types of communication. Check out the tips to improve them below.



- **Verbal communication**

Use simple language to communicate your ideas. For example, instead of saying, "Let's leverage our synergies," say, "Let's work together to make this project better."

- **Visual communication**

Use charts or images to support your message. For example, presenting data with a graph can help clarify your point.

- **Listening communication**

Listening means paying attention to what others say. It shows you care. For example, if a colleague shares an idea, say, "That sounds interesting! Can you tell me more?" This shows you value their input.

- **Written communication**

Make sure your emails and messages are clear and professional. For example, start emails with a friendly greeting, keep your message focused, and end politely. For instance, "Hi [name], I hope you're doing well. I wanted to check in on the project. Let me know how I can help. Thanks! [your name]."

- **Nonverbal communication**

Your body language, facial expressions, and gestures matter too. For example, instead of crossing your arms while listening, keep an open posture to show you're friendly and willing to hear someone's ideas.

Positive Communication Practices

In the workplace, it's important to use positive communication styles that build trust and collaboration. Here are some effective styles to consider:

- **Direct communication**

This style is clear and respectful. You express your thoughts while considering others.

- *Example: Instead of saying, "Everything is going well," when it's not, you could say, "I feel overwhelmed with my workload and need help." This is direct and constructive. Use this style to express your needs clearly.*

- **Collaborative communication**

This style focuses on teamwork and finding solutions together.

- *Example: Instead of saying, "Let's do it my way," you might say, "Let's brainstorm ideas together and see what we can come up with." This encourages cooperation and creativity.*

- **Empathetic communication**

This style shows understanding and care for others' feelings.

- *Example: If a colleague is stressed, you might say, "I understand this is a tough time. I'm here if you need to talk." This builds a supportive environment.*

- **"I" statements**

Using "I" statements helps express your feelings without blaming others.

- *Example: Instead of saying, "You shouldn't keep changing the deadlines," you might say, "I feel frustrated when deadlines change unexpectedly. I would prefer more consistency in our timelines or insight into why they are changing." This can lead to a more productive conversation and helps others understand your perspective.*

Building Professional Relationships

Creating strong professional connections takes time and effort. Here's how to keep those relationships growing. Check out the strategies in the chart below.

Strategy	Description	Example
Follow up	After meeting someone, send a quick thank-you or continue the conversation.	If you had a good chat with a coworker, send a message like, "Thanks for the great conversation earlier! I enjoyed hearing your thoughts on the project."
Offer help	Let coworkers know you're available if they need support.	If you see a team member having a hard time, say, "I have some free time this

		afternoon. Do you need help with your project?"
Join social activities	Participate in team lunches or outings.	If your team is having lunch together, join in! It's a great way to connect and get to know each other outside of work.

Make it Personal

Personal Action Plan

Now that you understand the importance of first impressions and strategies to build professional relationships at work, it's time to create a personal action plan. This plan will help you put your knowledge into practice.

For each topic below, read the prompt, think about a couple relevant actions you would take, and consider the questions. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

Topic 1: Making good first impressions

Question: What are some strategies you can use to make a strong first impression?

- Example: Say “Hello, nice to meet you” or dress appropriately for the situation.

Question: Who is someone who recently made a good first impression on me?

Question: What can I do that they did?

Topic 2: Improving my communication skills

Question: What are some strategies you could use to enhance your verbal and nonverbal communication?

- *Example: Ask questions to show you are interested or maintain open body language.*

Question: What specific communication skills do I want to work on?

Question: How can I practice these skills in everyday situations?

Topic 3: Places to apply these skills

Question: What are some situations where you could use your strategies to make a good first impression and practice effective communication?

- *Example: Attending a networking event, meeting new team members, and participating in team meetings.*

Question: What upcoming events can I practice these skills at?

Question: How will I measure my success in these situations?

Reflect and Connect

Great work! We've covered a lot in this module including:

- Understand the steps involved in onboarding when starting a new job.
- Know what to expect at work, including company culture and your role.
- Identify ways to communicate effectively and build professional relationships.

Take a moment to think about the questions below and how they relate to your experiences. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you. Think of this as a reflective journal for yourself, which you can refer to later.

Happy reflecting!

What can you do to feel more comfortable when starting a new job?

What can you do to better understand a workplace environment?

Think about things like workplace culture, expectations, or how people interact with each other.

How do workplace expectations affect how you feel about a job?

How can understanding workplace expectations help you when looking for a job or starting a new position?

How comfortable do you feel communicating in professional settings? Are there any areas you'd like to improve?

Keep Going

There is so much more to learn! Access the full CanWork BC content and learn more about the program at **canworkbc.ca**.

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