



As you begin your first day on your new assignment, keep professional demeanor uppermost in your mind at all times. That's what sets you apart, often from the full-time employees. Indeed, it calms, as well, the apprehensions of those who look askance at "temps."

Shake hands when you meet anyone at the new company—from the receptionist to your supervisor. At the end of the shift, make it a point to say good-bye to people and thank them for the courtesies extended to you, if appropriate.

### **The three most important questions**

1. Whom do I work for?  
Get names, locations, telephone numbers.
2. Who will answer my questions?  
Don't assume that other department members will have information you need. Get a designated question-answerer.
3. Which telephone number is mine and how does the system work?  
Find out the correct prefix if there is a direct line. Don't assume you can be reached by 592-8132 because 592-8000 is the general number. Direct lines can be, and often are, a different prefix.  
If the company's telephone calls come through a receptionist, call reception to give your name, location and extension. You don't want to run the risk of creating problems on returned phone calls because the receptionist never heard of you and swore you didn't work there!

### **More important questions**

The questions that follow will need to be asked at some point during the day.

1. Whose telephones should I answer? What would you like me to say?
2. Who are my co-workers? Get a telephone list for the department as well as an internal telephone directory.
3. Will I need a special card or number combination to enter and leave the building, use the lavatories or use the copier and fax machines?
4. If your job might require it, what is the name of the messenger/courier service? What overnight service is used?
5. Will forms or account numbers be needed to use the messenger/courier and overnight services? What is the last pickup of the day? Does service pick up automatically or do I need to call?
6. What is the number for technical support or the LAN administrator?
7. Am I supposed to cover for anyone at lunch?
8. How is the mail handled? Will I be expected to pick it up? Is there mail coming to me that I should open or handle in some way? When is the last pickup of the day?
9. Computers/word processing: What are the company's document naming protocol and the directory/subdirectory paths for retrieval?
10. Who signs the timesheet at the end of the day/week/assignment?

In addition, you'll want to make sure you know where to find a variety of locations within the building. Be sure to ask where the following are:

Copy machine	Fax machine
Mail room	Bathroom
Water fountain	Refrigerator (to store lunch)
Coffee	Vending machines
Cafeteria	Paper and other supplies

### Potential On-the-Job Problems

Here are some situations that crop up from time to time—along with some possible solutions that have worked for others in the past.

***Everyone tries to give you work.*** Ask your supervisor to prioritize the work. Tell anyone who proffers work to give it to your supervisor, who will render a decision on its relative importance before passing it along to you. This works every time.

***Fielding questions about your hourly rate.*** When other temps ask how much an hour you're paid, give them a range that should be paid for the work you're performing. If permanent employees ask, tell them different work pays different rates. You don't want to talk money with your co-workers, temp or full-time.

***Curious employees.*** Employees sometimes let their curiosity override good manners to ask rude, personal questions. New temps can have mixed feelings and a certain amount of discomfiture about temping. Be as friendly as you choose to be. But you don't owe anyone the story of your life or to the circumstances that led you to temporary work.

***Personality conflict.*** Every now and then, you can run into a situation where the people you are working for don't like you and you know it. Maybe it's because you are self-confident and do the work quickly. Maybe it's because they had attachments to the person who did your job previously. Whatever the reason, we are aware of the phenomenon. It is not pleasant when it happens, but it's not the end of the world either.

***Socializing.*** In friendly companies, co-workers often include temps in their conversations, office parties and lunch plans. Although it's nice to be included, it can be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, you want to appear friendly, helpful and pleasant to work with. Yet you want to avoid the perception of spending too much time chatting with co-workers when you have a lot of work to complete.