Section 9: Succeeding in the Workplace

While most of the first sections of the job readiness curriculum focus extensively on the skills it takes to find a job, this section covers what clients need to expect once they start working. This section covers practical details such as knowing your supervisor’s name and phone number, U.S. workplace culture and etiquette, and tips for on-the-job success that will benefit clients entering any field. First jobs in the U.S. give clients their first U.S. professional reference for
Section 9: Succeeding in the Workplace

their resumes and are an important building block for their careers. This section also focuses on the professional environment clients enter after starting their first job.

After clients have been in a job for six months and have earned a good reference, they may be ready for a job upgrade to another field of work, for a higher salary, or for better benefits. A change in job is a step along a client’s career ladder; this is an opportunity for employment programs to reengage clients. This section also explores factors to consider when clients are thinking about changing jobs and the importance of following proper procedures when leaving a job. Following these steps will position clients on their way to a long and healthy career here in the U.S.

Learning Objectives
After completing the activities in Section 9: Succeeding in the Workplace, participants will be able to:

- Record essential details about a new job.
- Identify appropriate times to call in sick and successfully practice doing so.
- Interpret a basic work schedule and understand schedule-related terminology.
- Model at least five attitudes or behaviors essential to success in a U.S. workplace.
- Give specific examples of professionalism in the workplace.
- Consider good and bad reasons to change jobs.
- Demonstrate a professional attitude and behavior when leaving a job.
- Identify the purpose of a resignation letter.

Key Vocabulary
- **Work Schedule**: days and times you need to be at your job
- **Break**: Short break/rest at work
- **Clock in and out**: Recording the time you get to work and the time you leave. Also called “punching” in and out
- **Professionalism**: Behavior of a person who can do a good job and make appropriate workplace choices
- **Resign**: To choose to leave a job
- **Two Weeks’ Notice**: Informing an employer of a job resignation two weeks before the last day of work; this is the standard timeframe in the U.S.
• **Resignation Letter**: note written by an employee informing the employer of his or her last day of work

• **Promotion**: advancement of an employee within a company to a position which might entail new job tasks. A job promotion may be the result of an employee's proactive pursuit of a higher ranking position or as a reward by employers for good performance. It is also typically associated with a higher rate of pay or financial bonus.
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*Indicates activity either works well for a wide range of English levels or that a beginner English level extension option is included. Non-asterisked activities are appropriate for participants with intermediate to advanced English levels.
9.1 What to Know about Starting Work

Activity Overview
There are several logistics clients need to know when starting a new job: where to go, how to get there, the schedule, to whom to report, etc. In addition to ongoing cultural adjustments, navigating a new transportation system, and using a new language, refugee clients need to keep track of all of these details. This activity reviews what information is important and provides clients with a tool to keep track of critical details.

Materials Needed
- Whiteboard and markers
- One copy of *Listening Comprehension: First Day of Work Worksheet* (9.1A)
- *My Job Cards* (9.1B)
- Pens or pencils
- Blank paper

Procedures
1. Ask participants, “When you get a job, what do you need to know for your first day of work?” Solicit answers and write them on the board. Examples are:
   - Where will I go?
   - How will I get there?
   - What time should I be there?
   - Who will I look for?
   - What should I wear?

   Ask participants, “Who will answer these questions?” Make sure participants understand that their boss or employment specialist will give them necessary details for their first day at work. Tell participants, “It can be challenging to remember all these details. Let’s practice listening and writing down important information about going to work.”

2. Provide paper and pens to participants. Read the story on the *Listening Comprehension: First Day of Work Worksheet* (9.1A) aloud twice. If possible, have a participant read the part of the second character. Alternatively, create a voice recording ahead of time with two people using a cell phone, and play the recording in class.

3. Check comprehension using these questions:
   - What is Juan’s new job?
• What day and time should he go to work? (Emphasize being early for your first day.)
• Where will he go? How will he get there?
• What should he wear?
• What is his manager’s name?
• What could he ask on the phone if he doesn’t understand?

4. Pass out one My Job Card (9.1B) to each participant. Explain that this is one way to keep important information with them at all times. Review each of the information fields, providing time for participants to complete the “Personal Info” section. Let participants know someone at the resettlement agency can help them complete the remaining sections when they get a job. Use the blank side to include agency contact information, then fold up the papers to show how it can fit in a wallet or purse.

Remind participants of the need to keep personal information protected. If they choose to write their social security number on this form, it is particularly essential that they do not lose it or openly share it with others.

5. Discussion question:
• What are some other ways you can be ready for your first day at work? (Examples: get enough sleep, drink plenty of water, have comfortable shoes, practice the bus ride, set an alarm, pack a lunch, etc.)
Listening Comprehension:

First Day of Work

Juan is excited to start his first day of work as a dishwasher. His employment specialist calls him to go over the details:

(Telephone ringing)

Juan: Hello.

Amy: Hi Juan, this is your employment specialist, Amy. How are you today?

Juan: Fine, thank you. How are you?

Amy: Just fine. Your new manager would like you to come to work this Saturday at 8:30 a.m. for your first day of work. You need to wear black pants, black shoes and a white shirt.

Juan: Okay, I will. Where should I go?

Amy: You will go to the Marriott Hotel at 1532 Main St., where you interviewed. Do you know how to get there?

Juan: Yes, you showed me the bus stop. I will take bus 94 from my house. Can you repeat the address?

Amy: 1532 Main St.

Juan: Okay, 1532 Main St., right?

Amy: Yes, that’s correct. Tell the receptionist you are starting a new job and ask for David. David is your new manager.

Juan: Thank you, Amy.

Amy: You’re welcome. Good luck at your first day of work! Bye.

Juan: Good-bye.
9.2 Work Schedule

Activity Overview
Participants will learn key terminology and expectations related to work schedules, break times, and clocking in and out.

Meal and rest break requirements vary by state, so check your state’s specific laws below before going through this lesson:

- Meal breaks
- Rest breaks

Materials Needed
- Whiteboard and markers
- Picture vocabulary cards from the Additional Resources section
- True or False Signs (9.2C)
- Work Schedule Worksheets (9.2D)

Procedures
1. Introduce/review key vocabulary about time at work using the picture vocabulary cards:
   - Work Schedule: days and times you need to be at your job
   - Break: Short time of rest at work
   - Clock in and out: Recording the time you get to work and the time you leave. Also called “punching” in and out

2. Tape up the True or False Signs (9.2C) on either end of a wall or board. Check comprehension of these terms with a couple of examples, like “Today is Tuesday: true or false? My name is Joe: true or false?”

3. Ask participants to stand up. Explain that in this activity there will be several statements about work schedules. They should stand under the “True” side if the statement is accurate, or the “False” side if they do not believe the statement is correct. Give time for discussion after each statement.

4. Read and discuss each statement below:
   - You can take a rest break at work whenever you need one. (False – you should check with a supervisor before you take your break.)
• You need to record the time you work by “clocking” or “punching” in when you arrive and out when you leave work. (True. It is important to do this correctly because it is how your time is recorded for your paycheck.)

• You will receive one hour of pay for one hour of work. (True. You are paid only for the time that you work.)

• You should not make personal phone calls when you are at work. (True. When you are “on the clock,” you should not make phone calls or send text messages to friends or family unless it is an emergency.)

• You are on time for work if you walk in the front door when your shift starts. (False. You should be clocked in and at your work station when your shift starts. Walking in the door at that time means you are late!)

• If your bus is running ten minutes late, you should call your supervisor. (True. You should always call your supervisor if you are running even a few minutes late. Keep your supervisor’s name and phone number with you at all times.)

5. Pass out copies of the Work Schedule Worksheet (9.2D). Ask participants to review the example schedule. Remind participants of the differences between full time and part time, along with regulations that employees can work every day of the week. Review each employee’s schedule as a group and answer the questions.

6. Discussion questions:

• Who decides your work schedule? (Remind participants that their work schedule might change from day to day or week to week. The manager will decide the schedule, and they should always follow it.)

• When will you get a break at work? You will usually get a 10- or 15-minute rest break after about four hours of work. (Check your state’s individual laws as mentioned in the activity overview.)

Extension Options

• Clocking in and out practice: You can practice the habit of clocking in and out by having participants sign their names, arrival and departure times from job readiness class each day. Not only will it help you keep track of attendance, participants will become accustomed to looking at the time to record information related to their schedule.

• Beginner activity: If you have participants who need extra practice with telling time, days of the week, or months of the year, there are some free, downloadable activities at K5Learning or Education.com.
Read the sample work schedule and answer the questions below.

### Restaurant Schedule for Week of August 1 - 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Sunday 8/1</th>
<th>Monday 8/2</th>
<th>Tuesday 8/3</th>
<th>Wednesday 8/4</th>
<th>Thursday 8/5</th>
<th>Friday 8/6</th>
<th>Saturday 8/7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balek, L.</td>
<td>8 a.m.–4 p.m.</td>
<td>10 a.m.–6 p.m.</td>
<td>10 a.m.–6 p.m.</td>
<td>4 p.m.–12 a.m.</td>
<td>8 a.m.–4 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu, M.</td>
<td>10 a.m.–6 p.m.</td>
<td>10 a.m.–6 p.m.</td>
<td>10 a.m.–6 p.m.</td>
<td>10 a.m.–6 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, E.</td>
<td>8 a.m.–4 p.m.</td>
<td>8 a.m.–4 p.m.</td>
<td>4 p.m.–12 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Which employees work part-time?  

2. Who works on August 1?  

3. Who works on Tuesday?  

4. How many hours will L. Balek work this week?  

5. Which days will E. Smith work this week?  

What is your class schedule? Fill in the times that you will have class this week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Name</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Class Schedule for Week of ________________________
Activity Overview
A common reason for losing a job is an employee not showing up to work without any advance notice. Use this activity to reinforce that there are only a few emergency situations where it is okay not to go to work, and even in those situations, clients must call their supervisors.

Materials Needed
- Whiteboard and markers
- Go to Work or Call in Sick Picture Cards from (9.3E)

Procedures
1. Write “Go to Work” on one side of the board and “Call in Sick” on the other side. Briefly act out calling in sick by showing a telephone, coughing/being sick, and calling a supervisor to say you cannot go to work today.

2. Pass out the Go to Work or Call in Sick Picture Cards (9.3E). Ask participants to look at their cards and think about the situation shown. They should decide what the right thing is to do: go to work or call in sick.

3. After giving participants a couple of minutes to think about their card, have them take turns showing their pictures to the class and sharing whether they would go to work or call in sick in that situation. Take time to brainstorm as a group about solutions for several of the challenging situations shown (i.e., What can you do if your child is sick? Who can help you? What’s another way you can get to work if your car won’t start?)

4. Remind participants that they should always have their supervisor’s name and phone number with them in case of an emergency. Let them know they must call their supervisor every day they are out sick (calling one time is not enough).

5. Discussion question:
   - Will you get paid if you don’t go to work?
   - What are some other things that might happen if you don’t go to work?

Extension Options
- Calling in sick practice: Set the expectation for participants that they should call if they will be late or absent from a job readiness class and hold them accountable to this standard. Publicly commend students who call in for appropriate reasons.
My bus is late.

I need to take my child to school.

Today is my birthday.

There is a problem with my car.
I am at the hospital.

There is a lot of snow.

My child is sick.

I have a doctor’s appointment.
9.4 Calling Your Supervisor

Activity Overview
Talking on the phone in a second language can be intimidating. Take extra time provide realistic practice because calling in sick or calling a supervisor when running late is such an important thing to do. This is a lesson worth repeating!

Materials Needed
- Whiteboard and markers
- Go to Work or Call in Sick Picture Cards (9.3E)

Procedures
1. Ask participants what they should say if they have to call their supervisor in an emergency situation. What information should they include in the conversation?
   - First and last name
   - What the problem is
   - When you will be at work (if you know)

2. Explain that participants will practice talking on the phone to a “supervisor” (you or a volunteer). They should say their first and last name, what the problem is, and when they will be at work (if applicable). Pass out the following cards from the Go to Work or Call in Sick Picture Cards (9.3E):
   - There is a problem with my car.
   - I am at the hospital.
   - My bus is late.
   Participants can share these cards or think of additional emergency situations when they might need to call their supervisor.

3. Leave the instructor cell phone in the classroom and go use a landline or other cell phone outside the classroom. This works best when a volunteer can stay in the classroom to help with answering the phone, passing it around to participants, etc. The instructor calls the cell phone and asks for different participants, giving each an opportunity to explain their situation about why they will late or absent from work.

4. Discussion questions:
   - Is it easy or difficult for you to talk on the phone in English? Why or why not?
   - Why is calling your supervisor important?
9.5 U.S. Workplace Tips

Activity Overview
Participants will practice modeling attitudes and behaviors valued in U.S. workplace culture by reviewing tips and applying them to a real-life situation in a short skit.

Materials Needed
- U.S. Workplace Tips Cards (9.5F)

Procedures
1. Ask participants, “What helped you be successful at your past job(s)?” Explain that all of these examples would be considered “tips” on how to succeed in that workplace.

2. Explain that a “tip” is a piece of advice; something you tell someone to be helpful. (If this is a new term, provide an example, such as, “A tip for doing well in Job Club is to be on time every day.”) Let participants know that there are several tips about working in the U.S. to share.

3. Ask participants to find a partner. Pass out at least one U.S. Workplace Tip Card (9.5F) to each pair. Give participants several minutes to read their U.S. workplace tips and prepare a short skit to demonstrate this idea, attitude, or behavior through a situation that might happen at work. Each pair will then teach the tip to their other classmates by acting it out.

4. Ask for participants to share their skits and read the tips. Ask clarifying and comprehension questions between participant “performances.”

5. Discussion questions:
   - What advice would you offer someone starting a job in your home country? Are these tips similar or different to the U.S.?
   - Were any of the tips surprising?
   - Have you noticed other things about American culture that is important for the workplace?
   - What are other ways you can learn the “culture” at your new workplace?

Extension Options
- Beginner English Option: Participants can use the cards on page 18 to match situational photos with workplace tips.
**U.S. Workplace Tips**

Take every opportunity you can to learn.

Show up early, stay late and volunteer to help.

Get to know your coworkers.

If you are finished with your work, look for other work to do.

Do not be afraid to ask questions.

Admit if you don’t understand something.

Never quit a job without having another.

Be enthusiastic.

Keep good relationships with all of your bosses and coworkers.
### U.S. Workplace Tips

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tip</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Take every opportunity you can to learn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get to know your coworkers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not be afraid to ask questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admit if you don’t understand something.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be enthusiastic.</td>
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Professionalism in the Workplace

Activity Overview
A 2012 study cited interpersonal skills, communication skills, appearance, time management, and work ethic as top traits of professionalism in the workplace.¹ This advanced activity reviews U.S. workplace tips and how they relate to qualities of professionalism.

Materials needed
- Whiteboard and markers
- U.S. Workplace Tips Cards (9.5F)
- Professionalism in the Workplace Infographic (9.6G)
- Showing Professionalism at Work Worksheet (9.6H)
- Pens and pencils

Procedures
1. Ask participants, “What is professionalism?” Professionalism is the “skill, good judgment, and polite behavior that is expected from a person who is trained to do a job well.” How is professionalism demonstrated at work? Solicit answers.

2. Share the Professionalism in the Workplace Infographic (9.6G) with participants and go over it together.

3. Write the characteristics of professionalism on the board in a horizontal line to allow room for additional writing and cards to be taped up underneath:
   - Interpersonal skills
   - Communication skills
   - Appearance
   - Time management
   - Work ethic

4. Pass out the U.S. Workplace Tips Cards (9.5F) and ask participants to consider which professional behavior the tip matches. Invite them to tape up their tips under the matching category. Review and correct placement of any tip cards if necessary.

5. Pass out copies of the Showing Professionalism at Work Worksheet (9.6H) so participants can take notes of ways to show each trait. As you review each

¹ 2012 Professionalism in the Workplace Study, Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania, retrieved from https://www.ycp.edu/media/york-website/cpe/2012-Professionalism-in-the-Workplace-Study.pdf
professionalism trait, break into groups for each skill and have participants brainstorm characteristics to demonstrate personal skills in the workplace. If needed, include these additional tips\(^2\) as supplementary answers for demonstrating professionalism in the workplace.

**Interpersonal Skills:**
- Get to know your coworkers. Use time before work, during breaks, and when leaving to make friends with your coworkers. A smile and introduction go a long way!
- Keep good relationships with all of your bosses and coworkers. Do not engage in workplace gossip. Show respect and kindness to everyone.
- Don’t hide or avoid your boss. Even if you don’t speak much English, it is good if your boss sees you and talks to you. This will help your boss know that you want to learn and you like your job.

**Communication Skills:**
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. This shows that you are interested in the work, that you want to learn more, and that you care about doing things the right way.
- Admit if you don’t understand something. This will ensure that you do things correctly and safely.
- Show confidence. Especially when you are starting a job, try to show confidence in your body language. Say “Hi,” introduce yourself, keep your back straight, make eye contact. Show people that you want to be friendly.
- Use the American handshake. It is important to practice the “American” handshake. Look people in the eyes at interviews and when starting a new job. The less you know English, the more important it is to learn and practice these nonverbal skills.

**Appearance:**
- Dress for an interview. Wear clean clothes, avoid strong-smelling soaps, lotions or colognes, and avoid wearing hats.
- Follow the dress code at work. A dress code is a set of rules about what to wear. It can be written in a handbook or unspoken. Some jobs may expect everyone, including women, to wear pants. If you have a uniform, keep it clean. Be careful to use required safety equipment (gloves, hairnets, goggles).

\(^2\) Adapted from Higher’s Online Institute for Learning Workplace Culture Module, Part 2.
• Dress for safety. Most jobs require closed-toe shoes or boots. Don’t wear flip flops. If a job requires physical work, then protecting your toes is an important way to be safe.

• Always wear deodorant! Use deodorant every day. Another word for deodorant is antiperspirant. Your coworkers will be too embarrassed to tell you if they don’t like body odor, but some of them will stay away from you or complain to your boss if they are offended.

• Wash your clothes often. Avoid wearing the same clothes two days in a row. Try to wash clothes often so they smell fresh.

• Learn from coworkers by watching and asking questions. Pay attention to what other people are wearing. If you have questions about what to wear, it is always okay to ask your boss or a coworker.

Time Management:

• Show up a few minutes early, stay late and volunteer to help. You should always arrive a few minutes early for work, especially when you are new. If you are late for work, your boss may believe that you don’t care about your job or that you are lazy.

• If you need to miss work, talk to your boss in advance. If you have an important reason to miss work, like a doctor’s appointment, you should ask your boss as soon as you know about the appointment. This includes going to work late or leaving work early.

• Call if you are going to be late. If the bus or bad traffic are going to make you even a few minutes late, call as soon as you know. Make sure you keep your supervisor’s phone number with you.

• Work quickly and carefully. Be sure that you are doing the job as quickly as you can while doing the job correctly. If there is a quicker way to do a task, your boss will want you to learn it.

• It is better to wear a watch than keep looking at your cell phone.

• Make appointments. If you need to talk to your boss about something that takes time to discuss, you should make an appointment.

Work Ethic:

• Take every opportunity you can to learn. This shows you want to know more about the company and the work.

• Be enthusiastic. Show you are energetic about the work you are doing.

• If you are finished with your work, look for something to do. Ask a coworker if you can help with their work, or look for something that you know should be done and do it.
• Never quit a job without having another. Hiring managers do not like to see “gaps” in work history, and it will be difficult for you to pay your rent without steady income.

• Do personal things only when you are off the clock. Save personal things—eating, smoking, phone calls, talking to a friend—for breaks.

• Don’t take longer breaks than you are supposed to. Many work places have very strict schedules. Take breaks only when they are scheduled or when your boss tells you.

• Don’t make personal phone calls at work. Don’t make or accept personal phone calls from work unless it there is an emergency. If you have a cell phone, turn the ringer off during work or put it away.

6. Discussion questions:

• How is time management different in your home country?

• Can you think of more ways to show that you want to do a good job?
Section 9: Succeeding in the Workplace

**Professionalism in the Workplace**

---BY THE NUMBERS---

- **96%** of HR executives/managers believe that professionalism relates to the person, not the job title.
- **92%** of HR executives/managers believe that colleges and universities should develop professionalism in students regardless of their field of study.
- **51%** of HR executives/managers believe that the sense of entitlement has increased among employees.
- **96%** of the HR executives/managers reported that a job applicant's professionalism affects the likelihood of being hired.

**Top Characteristics of Today’s Professional**

- **34%** Interpersonal Skills
- **21%** Time Management
- **25%** Communication Skills
- **9%** Knowledgeable
- **27%** Work Ethic
- **25%** Appearance

**IT Misuse on the Job**

- **83%** Excessive use of social media
- **82%** Text messaging at inappropriate times
- **78%** Inappropriate Internet use
- **65%** Excessive personal cell phone usage
- **8%** Unauthorized access of company files

**Deadly Interview Mistakes**

- **40%** Inappropriate Attire
- **29%** Late for interview
- **26%** Lack of Preparation
- **23%** Poor Verbal Skills/Grammar

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Source: Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania's 2012 Professionalism in the Workplace Study. To download a copy of the full report, visit: www.ycp.edu/cpe.
Showing Professionalism at Work

Interpersonal skills, communication skills, appearance, time management, and work ethic are all ways to show professionalism at work. How can you show these characteristics at your job in the United States?

**Interpersonal Skills**

1.____________________________________________________________________________
2.____________________________________________________________________________
3.____________________________________________________________________________

**Communication Skills**

1.____________________________________________________________________________
2.____________________________________________________________________________
3.____________________________________________________________________________
4.____________________________________________________________________________

**Appearance**

1.____________________________________________________________________________
2.____________________________________________________________________________
3.____________________________________________________________________________
4.____________________________________________________________________________
5.____________________________________________________________________________
6.____________________________________________________________________________
Time Management

1. ______________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________________
6. ______________________________________________________________

Work Ethic

1. ______________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________________
6. ______________________________________________________________
7. ______________________________________________________________
9.7 Workplace Situations\(^3\)

Activity Overview
Workplace etiquette is different in every culture. Participants will review several situations encountered by employed refugees on the job in the U.S. and discuss appropriate solutions.

This activity was created and shared by International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Materials Needed
- Workplace Etiquette Situation Cards (9.7I)

Procedures

1. Divide participants into five small groups. Tell them they will receive some problems to consider and that their answers/solutions will be presented to the whole class. When reading the situations, participants should begin by discussing if the incident is acceptable in their past country and then determine if they think if it would be acceptable in the United States.

2. Distribute one Workplace Etiquette Situation Cards (9.7I) to each group and allow them five minutes to come up with solutions. When ready, have each group present their situation and solution.

3. Encourage participants to comment on the solutions that other groups have presented and share any relevant personal experiences. Reinforce the material by asking the participants to share one workplace etiquette tip they learned through the situation cards.

Extension Options
- **Homework:** Print out this American Business Etiquette article from New York International as a reading assignment for advanced English speakers. Ask them to present what they learned to the class the following day.

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\(^3\) Lesson created by International Rescue Committee (IRC), with permission granted for use.
Workplace Etiquette Situation Cards

The resettlement agency employment specialist accompanied Sai Thong for an interview at a small sewing factory in town. After a successful interview, the factory hired Sai Thong and asked him to begin work the next day. Sai Thong thought that sewing jobs aren’t suitable for male workers, so he sent his wife in his place the next day.

Maung Htun works as a prep cook in a restaurant. Today, Maung Htun woke up with a fever and could not go to work. Instead of calling in sick, Maung Htun asked his brother to work for him at the restaurant for a day.

April Paw goes to work by bus on a daily basis. Today she woke up ten minutes late and missed her usual bus. When she arrived at the bus stop, she had to wait 45 minutes for the next bus to arrive. She was very late. At work, she told her boss that it was the bus’s fault for making her late.

Mumu works as a maid in a hotel. She doesn’t speak much English, but she is taking a beginner’s ESL class. This morning, Mumu felt very sick, but she was too shy to call her supervisor. Mumu thought this was all right because she planned to apologize to her supervisor the next day when returning to work.

Maung Oo’s family has four children. He works as a bell boy at the hotel in town. His wife is taking care of their three-year-old daughter at home. Maung Oo wants to be the breadwinner as he has always been in his culture; however, it is very hard for the family to make ends meet. Fatima, Maung Oo’s wife, wants a job of her own to help to support the family, but he is not comfortable with this.
9.8 Asking Questions at Work

Activity Overview
Clients often hesitate to ask questions or admit when they don’t understand. They might feel shy about speaking English, hesitate because of cultural differences, or simply feel it’s inappropriate to ask questions. This activity reinforces that in the U.S., managers and coworkers expect employees to clarify instructions and ask questions at work.

Materials Needed
- Whiteboard and markers
- Asking Questions in the Workplace Situational Stories (9.8J)

Procedures
1. Ask participants what questions they use when they don’t understand something. What questions do they use when they need help? Write examples on the board.
   - Can you please speak slower?
   - Can you please repeat the instructions?
   - Can you please help me?
   - I don’t understand. Can you please explain?
   - Repeating to confirm (for example, “Let me make sure I understand. You want me to move the blue chairs against the wall and put five together, right?”)

2. Pass out the Asking Questions at Work Situational Stories (9.8J). Ask participants to take turns reading and answering the questions about each situation.

3. Discussion questions:
   - Do you feel comfortable asking for help? Why or why not?
   - If someone doesn’t ask for help or explanation at work when they don’t understand, what might happen?
Asking Questions at Work

1. Soe Reh started a job as a meat-cutter. On his first day of training, he notices that his manager talks very fast. Soe Reh is paying attention but can’t understand everything.

   What should he do?

2. Genet started a new job in laundry services. She went through training and thought she understood all of the instructions, but now she is having trouble operating one of the machines.

   What should she do?

3. Hana is a housekeeper at a hotel. A guest stops her in the hallway and says something, but she does not understand.

   What should she do?

4. Emmanuel is a cashier. A customer asks him, “Can you give me change in $1 bills?” Emmanuel thinks he understands, but he’s not 100% confident.

   What should he do?
Activity Overview
In this activity, participants will explore changing jobs based on income and benefits. Given limited background information about a new job, participants will weigh the “pros” and “cons” of taking the new job, then make a decision regarding the job and their reasons for taking or not taking the job offered.

This lesson was created by the International Catholic Migration Commission, Overseas Processing Entity, Zagreb, with permission granted for use.

Materials Needed
- Changing Jobs Situation Cards (9.9K)
- Whiteboard and markers

Procedures
1. Tell participants that it is very common to change jobs after working for at least six months with a company. What are some reasons they might change jobs in the future? Solicit answers. Example answers include: interested in another type of work, better pay, closer to home, and more opportunities for promotion.

2. Before a client changes jobs, they should make sure the new job has the following:

   **Positive Work Environment**
   - Have you walked around the workplace? How do people interact? What is the professional atmosphere? Will you fit in?
   - Will you be able to communicate openly with various levels of management? Is the environment collaborative?
   - Are you going to be challenged at the new workplace? Will you be able to advance? Will you have the opportunity to earn more if you attain a higher degree or certification?

   **Good Benefits**
   - Does the employer offer good health benefits for your family?
   - Does the employer offer other benefits that may be important to you? Examples of additional benefits include dental insurance, a vision plan, life insurance, tuition reimbursement, continuing-education reimbursement, on-site continuing...
education, disability insurance, maternity leave, flexible working hours, on-site child care or reimbursement for child care, and job-sharing.

**Time Off**
- How many vacation, sick and personal days will you receive annually? How many paid holidays? How quickly will you accrue more vacation time?
- What is the employer’s policy on leaves for the birth or adoption of a child or the illness of a close family member? Does the employer offer more than the twelve weeks of unpaid leave mandated under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)? Can you take additional time off if the need arises?

**Improved Lifestyle**
- Will your new commute be less time-consuming or less expensive than your old one?
- How will the new job fit into your lifestyle? Will the job interfere with more important commitments or priorities in your life?
- Does the new job put you closer to achieving your long-term goals?

3. Split the class into four groups and give each group one *Changing Jobs* Situation Cards (9.9K). Each group should discuss the situation on the card and answer the question asked. Remind the groups to think about the consequences of taking or not taking the new job.

4. Give groups time for discussion, and then ask them to take turns reporting on their situation and decision. Ask groups questions such as:
   - How did you reach that decision? Did everyone in your group agree?
   - How do you know you made the right decision?
   - What are some other ideas for the person in this situation?

5. Additional discussion questions:
   - Should you leave a job just because you don’t like it?
   - What are some other reasons when it is good to look for a new job?
   - Should you tell your current boss when you are looking for a new job? Why or why not?

**Extension Options**
- **Planned and Unplanned Consequences coin game**: Play this game from Higher’s website with participants in your class for an interactive way to discuss how decisions like whether or not to change a job affect our path in life.
- **Guest speaker opportunity**: Invite clients who have been working in the U.S. for a few years to come back to class and share their stories of how they left their first jobs. There is nothing more powerful than testimony from a peer who has been through the process.
Changing Jobs: Situation 1
You are a computer programmer by profession and have a wife and two children. Right now you work as a driver, making $12 an hour. It is a full-time job but offers no health coverage. You are offered a job as an assistant programmer. You will make $9.50/hour and have health coverage for you and your family. The job offers the possibility of a promotion in the future.

Should you take the assistant programmer job? Why? Why not?

Changing Jobs: Situation 2
You are a mechanic by profession but are presently unemployed. You still have some money that you brought with you from Germany. You are offered a job in a fast food restaurant making $7.35/hour.

Should you take the restaurant job? Why? Why not?

Changing Jobs: Situation 3
You work as a dishwasher at a Pizza Kitchen. One day someone calls you offering a job; the person says it will be a high-paying job. On the 5th of every month, you will receive $2,500 in cash. To get the job, all you need to do is send an application fee of $56.

Should you send an application? Why? Why not?

Changing Jobs: Situation 4
You are a certified nursing assistant (CNA) working in a hospital three blocks from your apartment. You are married with three children. Your husband is an electrician but is unemployed. He has been offered a job in another state. You could also work as a CNA there. Your children have made a lot of friends in your community. Your paycheck is not enough to support you without public assistance.

Should you and your husband move for new jobs? Why? Why not?
9.10 Don’t Burn Bridges!

Activity Overview
Participants will learn appropriate ways to leave a job in the U.S. through professional communication and considerate timing.

Materials Needed
- Resignation Tip Cards (9.10L)
- Whiteboard and markers

Procedures
1. Write the phrase, “Don’t burn bridges,” on the board and ask participants if they have heard this English idiom. Explain that this phrase is often said about changing jobs. It means that it is best to leave a job professionally without damaging your work relationships or reputation. Ask participants why this is important.

2. Explain that a letter of resignation is submitted when an employee resigns, and includes the last day the person will work. The last day should be at least two weeks into the future. This gives the old company time to find a replacement. Leaving in good standing means the company will be willing to hire another refugee, giving another person the opportunity to start a life here in the U.S. and also serve as a reference for the former employee.

3. Pass out at least one Resignation Tip Card (9.10L) to each participant; if there are not enough cards to go around, ask participants to work in pairs. Give participants several minutes to read their cards and think about how to explain their tip to the class.

4. Invite participants to take turns reading their tip card and explaining what they think it means and why it is important. Ask comprehension questions between cards, such as an example of the appropriate or inappropriate behavior related to each tip.

5. Discussion questions:
   - What other tips could help you leave a job on good terms?
   - How did you change jobs in your country?
   - What would you like coworkers to say about you after you have left a job?
   - Why is it important to make sure your new job is finalized before starting a new one? What do you need to have as “proof” that the new job will come through?
1. Don’t quit your current job until all the details of your new job are finalized. You should have a signed offer letter or employment contract and a start date before resigning from your current job.

2. Tell your employer about your decision at least two weeks before your last day of work. This will help your employer start looking for your replacement.

3. Write a resignation letter. A resignation letter is a brief thank-you note that makes your resignation official. It should explain your gratitude for the opportunity to work at the company and with your boss. It should also include the date of your last day at work.

4. Tell your manager about your decision before anyone else. Do not say anything to coworkers until you’ve met with your boss. Also, think about what you will do if your boss offers you more money or a promotion to stay in your job.

5. Quit in person and bring your resignation letter with you. It’s always best and most respectful if you resign in person. If your boss works in a different location, make a telephone appointment and then follow up with a brief email, attaching your resignation letter.

6. Ask your manager how he or she would like others to be told. Suggest that you tell coworkers individually and volunteer to write a short email your boss can send to your coworkers.

7. If you have mentors within the company, quickly schedule time to let them know you’re leaving and why.

8. Stay professional. Be on your best behavior so you’ll leave the company on a positive note, with the door open for future employment and having a good job reference.

9. Wait until after you’ve notified your boss and coworkers to clean out your workspace. Take personal items home and leave your workspace neat and clean for the next person.

10. Work as hard as you can until the final minute of your last day. This is the best way to leave on a positive note.
9.11 Writing a Resignation Letter

Activity Overview
Participants will examine three sample resignation letters and discuss qualities of a professional two weeks’ notice that maintains a positive work reputation. An extension option provides participants with the opportunity to try writing a resignation letter on their own.

Materials Needed
- Resignation Tip Cards (9.10L)
- Resignation Letter Examples (9.11M)
- Whiteboard and markers

Procedures
1. Review the previous lesson by asking participants what advice they would give a friend who is leaving their job. What resignation tips do participants remember? Review the Resignation Tip Cards (9.10L) as needed.

2. Explain that participants will read three example resignation letters. A resignation letter is a note written by an employee informing the employer of his or her last day of work. Here are several points to further explain a resignation letter:
   - A resignation letter should include your job title, the date of your last day of work, gratitude to your employer for the opportunity to work there, and your contact information.
   - The grammar and spelling in a resignation letter should be perfect. Have someone proofread it.
   - A resignation letter should be brief, typically not more than one typed page.

3. Pass out copies of the Resignation Letter Examples (9.11M). Ask participants to take turns reading each example aloud, and discuss these questions:
   - Which letters “burn bridges”? Why do you think that?
   - Which letter is most professional? Why?
   - What information should be included in a resignation letter? Is that information in the example letters? Where?
   - When is each employee’s last day of work? Did he or she tell her employer early enough? How do you know?
   - Did Tessa explain what she will do for work in the future? Is that okay?
Extension Options

- **Practice Resignation Letter**: Give participants a hypothetical situation, such as the one below, and ask them to practice writing or typing up a resignation letter.

  You have been working at Papa John’s Pizza as a delivery driver for 9 months but just accepted a new job as a driver at a retirement community. Write a resignation letter to your current manager, Tolu Yania, to let her know you are leaving your job.
Resignation Letter Example #1

Dear Lisa,

I found a job with more money so sadly I am leaving after today. It’s been 3 months since I started this job, but you have been a good friend to me. I liked the people here but I do need more money so I can buy a car. I wish you all the good luck. I will call you sometime soon.

Thank you,
Sonja

Resignation Letter Example #2

Dear Manager,

I quit. I hate my job here.

Good luck without me!

- Toby
Resignation Letter Example #3

Tessa Walu
900 Walker St.
Tampa, FL 32084
(200) 123-0000

June 1, 2018

Mr. Kevin Jones
Safeway Store
132 Main St.
Tampa, FL 32084

Dear Mr. Jones:

Please accept this letter as my notice of resignation from my position of head cashier at the Safeway Store. My last day on the job will be June 15, 2018.

I appreciate the opportunity to work with you over the past year. I really enjoyed serving customers as a cashier and was honored to receive the “Employee of the Month” award last January. Your strong management skills and the friendly team of cashiers will continue to help Safeway serve customers well in the months and years to come.

I wish you all the best in the future and will work hard so there is a smooth transition. I hope you may be willing to serve as a reference for me someday if the opportunity arises. You can contact me any time at tessawalu@gmail.com or (200) 123-0000. Thank you again, Mr. Jones.

Sincerely,

Tessa Walu
9.12 Additional Resources

Higher Resources:

- The Online Learning Institute provides two interactive modules on workplace culture, which can be viewed as a class or is ideal for self-paced participants with strong English and computer skills
- Communication Skills in 9 Workplace Situations
- Body Language in the U.S. Workplace
- Job Readiness 101: The Importance of Body Language
- Characteristics of Good Employees
- Practical Strategy for Working With Clients around Soft Skills
- Job Hopping and Upward Mobility
- Job Upgrade Strategies for Employment Professionals
- A Focused Approach on Job Upgrades and Skills Certifications
- Research Study Measures Economic Benefits of Job Upgrades into Professional Career Tracks
- Lateral Moves and the Definition of a “Good Job”
- Higher online course: From Short to Long Term Economic Integration for Refugee Employment: How to Use Theories of Change to Design a Job Upgrade Program

Cultural Orientation Resource (COR) Center has several lesson plans related U.S. workplace success, including:

- Dilemmas, a lesson prompting problem-solving and reflection on several workplace situations
- Hassan’s story
- Integrating Religious Clothing and Work Uniforms
- Employment and Professional Status
- Socializing at Work
- Additional Responsibilities on the Job
- Adjusting to Job Realities and Solving Problems
- Hard Work

Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success is a curriculum developed by Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to equip youth with soft skills necessary for job searches. Chapters related to success in the workplace include:

- Communication

Top 10 skills for the successful 21st-century worker
• **Enthusiasm & Attitude**
• **Teamwork**
• **Problem Solving & Critical Thinking**
• **Professionalism**

eDiplomat: Global Portraits for Diplomats

The Refugee Center offers several tips for being successful at work.

University of Phoenix has developed an infographic highlighting their top ten skills for the successful 21st century worker.

JenniferESL offers two short videos on work schedules as part of an English for Professionals series:
  • [Part one](#)
  • [Part two](#)

The Muse offers an infographic on the pros and cons of job hopping (see image at right).

Two Minute English presents a business English lesson video, “I’ve Decided to Leave My Job.”