

What you need to know about work in Germany

Some tips with starting work at an interning company

- *Get there early.* On your first day, it's important to make a good impression and to show up on time. Make sure you're there early enough to get fully prepared and changed, if necessary, to start your shift.
- Be there ready to go 10–15 minutes before your shift starts.
- *Budget your time well in advance,* giving yourself an extra 30–40 minutes as a buffer for things like traffic, getting lost, and finding parking.
- If you have to take public transportation, or your new workplace is somewhere you're unfamiliar with, take the trip a few days ahead of time to make sure you know exactly how long it will take, and where it is.
- Once you are there, at your workplace, shake hands with your new colleagues, but don't be intrusive.
- Don't stay beyond the time you're scheduled. Leaving late may indicate that you aren't able to budget your time effectively. Impress your employer by arriving early enough to prepare for the day, then leave when you're finished.

Listen and apply what you hear

- Listen and apply what you hear. You won't be expected to excel right away at most jobs, and most employers know that there will be a learning curve with new hires. So, don't worry so much about making mistakes and messing up your first day, but focus on learning as much as possible and listening closely to make sure you don't miss things. Don't be aloof!
- *Be conscious of your learning style.* If you are a hands-on learner, for example, ask the person training you to walk you through a task rather than having you watch them.
- Take a notepad or notebook with you so that you can take down important points during your training. Ask questions and be sure to jot down the answers.
- Make it your goal to only make a mistake once. If your boss tells you how to do something, listen and remember so you won't have to ask again.

Don't be afraid to ask questions

- Don't be afraid to ask questions. Lots of new employees will be too sheepish to ask questions, and will blunder into doing things incorrectly. Know enough to know when you need help.
- *There's no shame in asking for help,* especially on your first day. It'll be better to have it explained once and be sure you'll do it right than to try to guess and get exposed late

Try to anticipate what needs to happen next

- Try to anticipate what needs to happen next. The process of every workplace is very different. Even if you're skilled and talented, it takes some time to figure out what needs to happen, and in what order.
- The best way to stand out on your first day as a good worker is to try to analyse the situation and figure out what needs to happen next.
- At some jobs, your first day can involve a lot of standing around and watching. Jump in when you see an opening. If you see another employee carrying a big stack of bags from one place to another, you don't need to be told that you could help out.
- At some jobs, you'll need to ask instead of just acting.

Clean up without being asked

- Clean up without being asked. One thing that's consistent at every workplace is cleanliness and safety.
- Straightening up doesn't usually need to be coached. Look out for things you can organise, or ways that you can clean up to make the workplace much easier.
- If you work in an office, change out the coffee filter and make a fresh pot. Clean up the cups and spoons and throw away the refuse. Take the trash to the bin. Help straighten up other public areas if they need straightening.

It's your attitude and behaviour

- *Just be yourself.* It's not what you know, how talented you are, or even what you do on the first day that will make it a success.
- It's your attitude and behaviour and your language skills. Your employer hired you because there was something about your combination of skills and personality that will benefit your workplace. Have faith in your ability to succeed as yourself, and don't think you need to be someone you're not.
- You don't have to act like your co-workers act, for good or for worse. It takes time for people to adjust to a new person in the workplace, so give your co-workers time to adjust to your personality rather than changing your behaviour to match theirs.

Set short-term work goals

- Set short-term work goals.
- Being a good employee involves going above and beyond the call of duty. Try to be the best intern that you can be by setting personal goals in the short term to help yourself stand out.
- After a few days of work, try to identify the things you need to work on the most and make it your goal to get where you want to be.
- Focus more on the quality of your work and less on your efficiency in your first couple of weeks.

Be willing and realistic about what you can do

- Be willing and realistic about what you can do. Good interns are volunteers, willing to take on extra responsibilities and tasks when asked.
- If you want to cultivate a reputation as a reliable intern, then be willing to do things that need to be done. *It's also important to know your limits.* If you've already got 10 things to do before you leave today, don't volunteer to do one more thing that's going to take several hours. Budget your time effectively.
- Be cautious. If an employee (work colleague) asks you to do something you're not sure about, it may be more helpful to think up an alternative plan. Be tactful and defer to your person in charge for help, if necessary.

Just do your work, don't do anyone else's

- Just do your work, don't do anyone else's. A good employee is committed to doing their job well without trying to manage the way others work. When you're at work, stay focused on doing what you need to do to the best of your abilities. *Don't spend time getting into other people's work unless they specifically ask for your advice or help.* Stand out by getting everything done that you need to do. Try to avoid workplace gossip. It's easy to group into little work cliques that can distract you from your responsibilities. Just focus on doing your work, not how well other people do their work.

Be active

- Be active.
- If you see debris littering the floor of your workplace, don't walk around it, then inform your boss that someone needs to do a little picking up.
- Just pick it up yourself. Do things for the sake of creating a better work environment, not looking like you're a better employee.

Speak well of other people

- Speak well of other people. Employers appreciate interns who support other workers. When you work consistently help further your company's goals, you become a trusted voice. Use your voice to help others who are worthy of praise and advancement.
- If other employees mock or criticise a fellow intern or an employee, don't participate. It can be easy to form snarky cliques at work, but it can create a toxic work culture. Don't be a part of it.
- If you gossip, lie, or cheat in order to gain position in the company, you may gain ground in the short term, but lose it in the long term as you built up bad relationships with the company.
- Allow your employer to evaluate your work and skills, and determine where you fit best in the company

Treat everyone you encounter with dignity and respect

- Treat everyone you encounter with dignity and respect. While some people can be very difficult to interact with in the workplace, when you treat them poorly you should remember that you are negatively affecting your career opportunities with the company. Your co-workers were as carefully selected as you were, so showing contempt for and disrespect for any co-worker you encounter shows a disregard for the intellect of your employer.

Warning

- *Beware the fishermen/women.* In nearly every workplace, you'll find at least one man or woman who constantly fishes for information about your pay/schedule/personal life or what you think of other colleagues; it's best to avoid answering questions like these.
- Often, they are trying to stir up drama and will report to the colleagues what you said about them or who you are. They may be unhappy about your religious ideas or political opinion. Stay away from those people.