

TeenBasics.com

TeenBasics First Job Prep Guide

How to Prepare, Apply, Interview, Work Responsibly - and Keep School First

Practical Guides

Parent Support

Build Confidence

Life Skills

Printable digital workbook for personal, family, classroom, church youth, or mentoring use.

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How to Use This Guide

Use this guide before a teen applies for a first job. The guide teaches readiness, applications, interviews, workplace basics, paycheck habits, taxes, and the most important rule: grades come before the job. Work through it together — a first job is a family decision, not just a teen decision.

What Is Inside

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- When to Cut Back or Quit
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Section 1: Are You Ready for a Job?

A first job can teach responsibility, money management, and confidence. But it should support growth, not pull a teen away from school, rest, family responsibility, or healthy development. Answer these honestly before applying anywhere.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My grades are stable | <input type="checkbox"/> I complete homework on time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can wake up and arrive on time | <input type="checkbox"/> I can follow instructions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can speak respectfully | <input type="checkbox"/> I have reliable transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parent/guardian supports the decision | <input type="checkbox"/> I understand that school comes before work |

TIP

If more than one of these isn't true yet, that's not a reason to give up on the idea — it's a signal to build that habit for a few weeks first, then revisit the decision.

Section 2: Grades Come Before the Job

A paycheck may feel good now, but grades, graduation, scholarships, training, and future opportunities matter more in the long run.

RULE

The School-First Rule: No job should regularly interfere with homework, studying, sleep, attendance, or grades. If a job causes grades to drop, the schedule must change.

School-First Agreement

- My grades come before my work schedule.
- Homework must be completed before extra shifts.
- I will not accept work hours that keep me from getting proper rest.
- I will tell my parent/guardian if work becomes too stressful.
- If my grades drop, I will reduce my hours or pause working until I am back on track.

Teen Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Section 3: How Many Hours Should a Teen Work?

During the school year, many teens should start with limited hours, such as weekends or a few short shifts per week. The goal is to learn responsibility without damaging school performance. Some states also legally cap work hours for minors during the school week — check local labor laws before committing to a schedule.

School Situation	My Work Limit

REMINDER

Never trade long-term opportunity for short-term spending money.

Section 4: First Job Options for Teens

Some jobs may have age restrictions, hour restrictions, or safety rules. Parents and teens should check local labor laws before accepting a job.

- Grocery store bagger or cashier
- Retail associate
- Pet sitting
- Tutoring younger students
- Lifeguard, if certified
- Family business helper
- Fast food team member
- Babysitting
- Lawn care
- Camp assistant
- Church/community event helper
- Online resale help under parent supervision

Section 5: Basic Resume for Teens

A first resume does not need to be long. It should show responsibility, skills, school involvement, volunteer work, and availability.

EXAMPLE

Objective example: Responsible student seeking a first job opportunity to learn, serve customers, follow instructions, and grow in workplace responsibility while keeping school as the top priority.

Resume Section	Information to Include

Section 6: Application Prep

Prepare information before applying so the application is honest, complete, and professional.

- Know your availability
- Use a professional email address
- Know your address if required
- Know your school schedule
- Be honest about experience
- Have parent/guardian approval
- Know your phone number
- Prepare references
- Know transportation plan

TIP

Use a professional email address, such as firstnamelastname@email.com. Avoid silly nicknames, inappropriate words, or gaming-only handles.

Section 7: Interview Prep

Interviews are easier when you practice. Speak clearly, make eye contact when appropriate, and be honest about your school-first availability.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want this job?
- What are your strengths?
- What does responsibility mean to you?
- How would you handle a difficult customer?
- What is your availability?
- How will you balance school and work?

EXAMPLE

Strong answer: My education comes first, so I am looking for a schedule that allows me to work responsibly while keeping up with school, homework, and rest. I want to be dependable at work and successful in school.

Practice Answers

Section 8: Workplace Basics

Your first job is not just about money. It is also about building a reputation that follows you into future jobs, references, and recommendations.

- Be on time
- Stay off your phone unless allowed
- Respect managers and coworkers
- Do not gossip or create drama
- Learn from correction
- Follow instructions
- Dress properly
- Ask questions when unsure
- Keep a good attitude
- Give proper notice if leaving

Section 9: Paycheck Basics

Gross pay is what you earn before deductions. Take-home pay is what you actually receive. Save from every check before spending.

Category	Percent	Amount

SUGGESTED PLAN

Suggested plan: Save 40%, spend 40%, give/help 10%, future goal 10%. A parent or guardian can help adjust the plan.

Section 10: Understanding Taxes & Your First Paycheck

Most teen jobs still withhold taxes, even at part-time hours. Understanding your pay stub now makes the whole system less confusing as income grows.

Reading a Pay Stub

- Gross pay: total earned before anything is taken out.
- Federal and state tax withholding: money set aside for income tax.
- FICA (Social Security and Medicare): a required deduction on nearly every paycheck.
- Net pay: what actually lands in your account — this is your real spending number.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you earned income during the year, you may need to file a simple tax return the following spring — ask a parent/guardian or use free IRS resources for teens with basic income.

My First Pay Stub Notes

Section 11: When to Cut Back or Quit

A teen should not feel trapped in a job. If the job damages school, health, safety, or character, it is time to adjust the schedule or step away.

- Grades dropping
- Too tired in class
- Constant stress
- Attitude changing at home
- Employer pressuring teen to work too much
- Missing homework
- Skipping important activities
- Trouble getting rides
- No time for rest
- Work interfering with church, family, school, or health

Action Plan if Work Becomes Too Much

Section 12: Growing From Your First Job

Even a simple first job teaches skills that matter for years: showing up, following through, and working with people you didn't choose. Capture what you're learning while it's fresh.

Skills I'm Building

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reliability | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handling feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time management | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving | <input type="checkbox"/> Money management |

TIP

Before leaving any job, ask your manager if they'd be willing to serve as a future reference — most will say yes if you've shown up and done the work.