



Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

A Chamber of Commerce Hawaii guide
to being successful in the workplace.



Access the digital version at the
following QR code & link:

tinyurl.com/DosandDontsGuide





Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

the interview

DO: 

- **Do research the company.** Understand the company's mission, values, and culture. Familiarize yourself with the company's website.
- **Do confirm the address and how to get there ahead of time.** Have the company's phone number handy and communicate promptly if you are running late, have a conflict, or are unsure about the interview location.
- **Do practice common interview questions.** For example, "Tell me about yourself," "Why do you want to work here?" and "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" Use AI tools or apps like Big Interview to help you prepare and build confidence. Come prepared with specific projects or work examples you can reference, especially for behavior-based interview questions.
- **Do prepare questions for the interviewer.** Have a few insightful questions ready about the role, team, or company. This shows your genuine interest and engagement.
- **Do bring necessary documents,** including extra copies of your resume and a list of references. Depending on the type of job you're interviewing for, the company may also ask you to provide additional materials, such as an online or physical portfolio of your work.
- **Do dress appropriately.** Choose professional attire that aligns with the company's culture. When in doubt, it's better to be slightly overdressed than underdressed.
- **Do arrive early.** Aim to get there at least 10–15 minutes early to account for any unforeseen delays. Remember, your interview starts the moment you step out of your car—everyone you encounter, from the parking lot to the front desk, may be asked their impression of you. Be courteous and professional with everyone, especially the administrative team!
- **Do show enthusiasm.** Demonstrate your excitement about the role and the company. A positive attitude can be very appealing to interviewers.
- **Do follow-up with a thank you email.** Send a thank you email within 24 hours of the interview, expressing gratitude for the opportunity and your interest in the position.

DON'T: 

- **Don't arrive late.** Being late can create a negative first impression and suggest poor time management skills.
- **Don't speak negatively about past employers.** Avoid criticizing former employers or coworkers, as it can come across as unprofessional and negative.
- **Don't overlook non-verbal communication.** Maintain good eye contact, a firm handshake, and appropriate body language. Do not sway your body back and forth.
- **Don't interrupt the interviewer.** Listen carefully to the questions and comments from the interviewer. Wait for them to finish before responding.
- **Don't lie or exaggerate.** Be honest about your skills, experiences, and qualifications. Dishonesty can lead to significant problems if discovered later.
- **Don't use your phone.** Ensure your phone is turned off or on silent mode. Checking your phone during the interview is unprofessional.



Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

on-the-job

DO:

- **Do figure out what organizational system works best for you right away.** Establishing an effective organizational system helps you stay on top of tasks and deadlines, improving overall productivity.
- **Do always be on time.** Punctuality shows respect for others' time and demonstrates reliability.
- **Do respond to emails within 24 – 48 hours.** Timely responses to emails help maintain efficient communication and show that you are attentive and responsible.
- **Do be conscious of talking time in meetings.** Be mindful of how much you speak during meetings to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute and the meeting stays on track.
- **Do practice active listening and ask thoughtful questions.** Ask questions or make comments that will add value to the conversation and build upon the task at hand.
- **Do be coachable and open to feedback.** Being open to feedback and willing to learn from others helps you grow and improve in your role.
- **Do keep your workspace tidy and organized.** A clean and organized workspace enhances productivity and reflects well on you as an organized professional.
- **Do meet deadlines and manage your time effectively.** Timely completion of tasks is crucial for maintaining trust and ensuring a smooth workflow.
- **Do support and collaborate with your colleagues.** Teamwork and collaboration foster a supportive work environment and lead to better outcomes.
- **Do maintain a positive attitude and be friendly.** A positive demeanor builds rapport with coworkers, creates a pleasant work environment, and helps overcome challenges.
- **Do act with the utmost character** by demonstrating integrity, showing initiative, staying resilient, and approaching challenges as a problem solver.
- **Do call ahead if you are running late.** Informing relevant parties if you are running late shows consideration and helps manage expectations.

DON'T:

- **Don't complain.** Focus on solutions rather than problems. Constructive feedback is more effective than complaining.
- **Don't take things personally.** Separate personal feelings from professional interactions to maintain objectivity and professionalism.
- **Don't engage in office gossip.** Avoiding gossip helps to maintain trust and a positive work atmosphere.
- **Don't interrupt others during meetings.** Respect others' time and ideas by listening fully before responding.
- **Don't ignore company policies.** Adhering to policies shows respect for the organization's rules and helps maintain order and fairness.
- **Don't use company resources for personal use.** Keep personal and professional boundaries clear to avoid ethical issues and misuse of resources.
- **Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know something.** Honesty about your knowledge gaps fosters a learning mindset and builds trust.
- **Don't ignore constructive feedback.** Use feedback as an opportunity for growth and improvement.
- **Don't be afraid to learn something new.** Stay curious, stay up to date with changes in your industry, and find ways to keep improving and adding to your skills.



Chamber of Commerce HAWAII
The Voice of Business

Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

email & virtual etiquette

Maintaining proper email etiquette in the workplace is crucial for clear communication and professionalism.

DO:



- **Do use a clear subject line.** Ensure the subject line is specific, concise, and relevant to the email content. This helps the recipient understand the purpose of the email at a glance.
- **Do be concise and clear.** Keep your email brief and to the point. Use short paragraphs and bullet points if necessary to enhance readability.
- **Do proofread before sending.** Check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Ensure that your email is polished and error-free.
- **Do reply promptly.** Respond to emails in a timely manner, ideally within 24 – 48 hours. Acknowledge the email if you need more time to respond.
- **Do respect privacy.** Use BCC (blind carbon copy) when emailing large groups to protect recipients' information. Never share sensitive or personally identifiable information—such as Social Security numbers or credit card details—over email. In some industries, this may violate laws like FERPA or HIPAA, and even outside those sectors, it can lead to serious legal consequences if misused.
- **Do set an agenda for virtual and in-person meetings.** Have a clear agenda with specific topics and time allocations for each item. Share the agenda in advance so participants know what to expect.
- **Do summarize and wrap up virtual meetings early.** Begin summarizing key points and action items a few minutes before the scheduled end time to allow for a timely conclusion.

DON'T:



- **Don't use all caps.** Writing in all caps is considered shouting and can be seen as aggressive or rude.
- **Don't overuse exclamation points.** Excessive use of exclamation points can be seen as unprofessional and overly emotional. Use them sparingly.
- **Don't reply all unnecessarily.** Avoid using "Reply All" unless everyone on the email thread needs to see your response. This helps prevent email clutter.
- **Don't neglect attachments.** If you mention an attachment, make sure to actually attach it. Double-check before sending.
- **Don't ignore email threads.** When replying to an email chain, make sure you have read the entire thread to avoid repeating information or asking questions that have already been answered.
- **Don't overload with information.** Avoid sending overly long emails. If your message is too lengthy, consider summarizing key points and providing detailed information in attachments or follow-up communications.
- **Don't extend a virtual or in-person meeting without agreement.** If you must extend the meeting, ensure all participants agree to the extra time. Otherwise, schedule a follow-up meeting.
- **Don't misuse communication methods —** avoid using email for complex discussions and meetings for routine information.



Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

ending the job

Ending a job professionally and respectfully is crucial for maintaining good relationships and preserving your reputation in your industry.

DO:

- **Do (when you decide to leave your job) notify your employer and give them time to adjust.** Give your employer sufficient notice according to your contract or company policy, typically two weeks. This allows for a smoother transition.
- **Do write a formal resignation letter.** Draft a professional resignation letter stating your intention to leave, your last working day, and a brief expression of gratitude for the opportunity. Give it to your supervisor in person.
- **Do complete outstanding work.** Finish any pending projects or tasks to the best of your ability. Ensure your work is up-to-date and well-documented for your successor.
- **Do create a transition plan.** Prepare detailed transition notes for the person taking over your role. This should include a detailed list of your current projects and tasks as well as key contacts and resources necessary for your work, including clients, vendors, and internal team members.
- **Do maintain professionalism.** Continue to perform your duties diligently and maintain a positive attitude until your last day.
- **Do thank your coworkers.** Express gratitude to your coworkers and supervisors for their support and collaboration. Consider writing personal thank-you notes or emails.
- **Do stay in touch.** Provide your personal contact information and stay connected with colleagues through professional networks like LinkedIn.

DON'T:

- **Don't leave abruptly.** Avoid quitting without notice unless it's an emergency.
- **Don't burn bridges.** Refrain from criticizing your employer, colleagues, or the company during your notice period or exit interview. Maintain a positive and respectful tone.
- **Don't slack off.** Continue to perform your duties diligently until your last day to demonstrate your commitment and professionalism.
- **Don't take company property.** Ensure all company-owned items are returned to avoid legal and ethical issues.
- **Don't forget to clear out personal items.** Take all personal belongings with you to leave a clean and organized space for your successor.

Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

dressing professionally

Professional dressing generally falls into several categories, each with its own set of expectations and standards. It's important to know what your company's/organization's expectations are.

Business Formal

Business Formal is the most formal professional dress code, often required in corporate, legal, or high-level business environments.



- **Do** wear a suit & dress shirt that matches your suit with a coordinated tie
- **Do** wear a pantsuit
- **Do** wear a skirtsuit
- **Do** wear a blouse or button-down shirt
- **Do** wear closed-toe heels, flats, or dress shoes (usually black or brown)



- **Don't** wear wrinkled clothing
- **Don't** wear slippers, crocs, or dirty shoes
- **Don't** wear shorts
- **Don't** neglect personal hygiene
- **Don't** wear inappropriate attire including clothing that is too revealing
- **Don't** use products that give off strong scents



Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

dressing professionally

Business Casual

Business Casual is a more relaxed version of business formal, yet still neat and professional. Common in many office environments.

DO:

- **Do** dress pants with a belt
- **Do** wear khakis
- **Do** wear dresses
- **Do** wear skirts
- **Do** wear collared shirts (button-down, polo, or Aloha)
- **Do** wear sweaters or blazers (optional)
- **Do** wear blouses
- **Do** wear flats, loafers, dress shoes, or heels

DON'T:

- **Don't** wear T-shirts with logos or graphics
- **Don't** wear sneakers or flip-flops
- **Don't** wear overly casual items like sweatpants or athletic wear
- **Don't** wear anything too tight, too loose, or overly revealing
- **Don't** wear jeans



Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

dressing professionally

Casual

Casual is the least formal category, allowing for a comfortable yet respectable look.

DO: 

- **Do** wear jeans
- **Do** wear casual trousers or pants
- **Do** wear casual midi/maxi skirts
- **Do** wear polos
- **Do** wear casual button-downs, tops, or blouses
- **Do** wear sweaters or casual jackets (optional)
- **Do** wear casual shoes including clean sneakers, flats, or loafers

DON'T: 

- **Don't** wear overly worn or distressed clothing, including jeans with holes or rips
- **Don't** wear graphic T-shirts with offensive or inappropriate images or text
- **Don't** wear beachwear or athletic wear
- **Don't** wear flip-flops or overly casual sandals
- **Don't** wear clothing that is too revealing or not suitable for a professional environment



Dos & Don'ts OF THE WORKPLACE

mahalo to our collaborators

[ANTHOLOGY]
FINN
PARTNERS

**Booz
Allen**


Healthcare Association
of Hawaii

PCATT
PACIFIC CENTER FOR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

