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**Office Worker's Survival
Guide**

The modern office is fraught with dangers. From the risk of getting fired, to stress, repetitive strain injury (RSI), mindnumbing boredom and more. This helpful guide from libcom.org will help you navigate these hazards to a happy work life, and perhaps a slightly better world... Of course not all of the tips will be appropriate in every setting so pick and choose the right ones for you, depending on how safe your job is how much you care about it.



Appearance

A vitally important aspect of office life is how you come across to management and colleagues. If you want the kudos of being a hard worker, without all the bothersome hard work, then you need to look the part:

- Always look busy.
- Keep your desk covered in piles of paperwork.
- Don't say yes to meeting invitations right away, always check your diary first (even if you know you don't have anything in it) and frequently say you can't make certain times, and suggest others instead.
- Have loads of programme windows open on your computer. This helps mask your web browser windows!
- Often have your voicemail box be full. Fill it with messages yourself if necessary.
- Wherever you go, take files with you. If you walk briskly with files, you can go chat to colleagues, go for a walk, etc but it will look like you are going to do something important.
- Instead of actually working late, just leave your monitor on and leave a cardigan on the back of your office chair to make it look like you are still at the office when actually you're already at home with your feet up watching Gossip Girl. You could even leave a half

empty cup of tea/coffee on occasion, and maybe even a half-eaten bourbon biscuit (or other crappy biscuit, you wouldn't want to waste a good one).

- Eat lunch at your desk - but after actually taking your full lunch break off. Thus maximising your free time and looking like a dedicated employee.
- Help out workmates with little jobs. It makes you look helpful, and can make you popular, while not causing too much stress, and it makes life easier for them. And of course it makes others more likely to help you out when you're overloaded or don't know how to do something.

Taking it easy

Making the most of your pay



As wage slaves, the money is why we turn up each day. Obviously, the more of it for the least work the better for workers, although of course the opposite is true for our

employers (here lies the central contradiction of capitalism). So they are always coming up with ways to try to get us to do more work for less. Here are some ways of turning the tables...

- Eat breakfast at work. Why get up earlier and eat at home, when you could be getting paid to have breakfast?! (Depending on your workplace there may also be free coffee and milk)
- Steal as much as humanly possible. Work steals our whole lives, so never feel bad about this, as we could never steal back everything which is taken from us. From time (doing what we want to do, rather than what the boss wants us to do) to stationery, to tea and coffee to computer equipment and beyond - get everything you can making sure you don't get caught.
- If management don't always see when you get in or when you leave, arrange with your workmates to take it in turns to get in late and leave early. If you use time cards, punch each other in.
- Try not to work any unpaid overtime, and encourage colleagues to do the same so "troublemakers" can't be victimised.
- Go to the toilet in work time when possible. Don't go in your lunch break, as you probably won't be getting paid for it. And you'll save money on toilet paper.

- Make the most of your work printers and photocopiers. Print out your personal photos, long texts you've downloaded and would like to read, photocopy revolutionary pamphlets, leaflets, posters and anything else you can think of.
- Take a look at our sabotage section which is full of accounts of workers slacking off on the job and getting the most out of their employers.

Not getting fired

Some jobs are more secure than others. Your risk of getting fired also varies greatly depending on the country you live in and your employment status (agency, permanent, etc). So here are some general tips to make it less likely as whatever your situation:

- Try to make yourself indispensable. Try to either get or hold onto some important responsibilities. If you are the only one who knows how to do something, guard this knowledge closely. Keep shortcuts you know for doing things quickly to yourself.
- Know your rights. Read up on your employment rights in your area and for your type of contract, and your employer's procedures. The more you know the better position you will be in to protect yourself from

dismissal.



- Join a union. If there is a recognised union at your workplace, you should join it as an insurance policy. Look into their track record first to see if it is worthwhile. If there isn't a recognised union depending on where you are you could join a general union which might be able to represent you if you got in trouble.
- Get to know your employer's code of conduct and acceptable behaviour, so you know what lines not cross.
- Hide the fact you're a slacker!
- The best defence against redundancy or disciplinary firing is the solidarity of your workmates. If you can get your co-workers to stick together and take action to defend each other this is the most effective way of stopping dismissals. See our [workplace organising](#)

guide for suggestions on how to do this, or our workplace activity section to read the organising experiences of others.

The internet

The internet can be a bit of a minefield at work. On the one hand it offers more opportunities for rewarding shirking than ever before (I have often wondered what office workers did in the days before the net, just stare at their typewriters?). On the other hand, it is easy for employers to monitor and can get you fired. In general you could take your cues from other colleagues, especially more long serving staff. If you know that lots of people surf the web all the time, and no one has ever been disciplined then maybe you can relax. But you should be aware that employers can easily track all internet and e-mail use, and can discipline or dismiss workers easily for personal use of them. These tips are based on it being better safe than sorry:

- If you are someone who management doesn't like, or if your employer is going to be making redundancies, it can be advisable to be on best behaviour with respect to internet use, because some employers can use workers' web use to sack people they don't like, or to

make redundancies on the cheap. Pointing out others being worse than you won't help you.

- Steer clear of any indecent/profane material. This can definitely get you sacked, and many employers use software which automatically looks for swear words on your screen or in e-mails, so stay away from it.
- If you have a smart phone or tablet computer with mobile internet you can either legitimately or sneakily use, that would be a safer way of browsing without your boss being able to track it.
- If you are going to browse the net at work, be aware of who can see your screen. You can even put a mirror on your desk (or leave mirrored sunglasses) to watch for your boss coming with your fingers ready on the alt and tab keys!
- To be safest of all, you could just copy and paste websites you want to read into Word documents, then either bring them to work on a USB stick to read them, or upload them to your personal e-mail account's drafts folder and download them from there, but don't save them to your work computer. You can also do other personal projects like this, such as work on your own blog or help format articles for our library. Better still, write your own account of your working life or your one woman/man workplace rebellion and post it up on libcom!

