

A First Year Corporate Survival Guide

What nobody tells you before you start your first job

1. 📖 **Before You Say Yes: Decoding Your Offer Letter**

What sounds okay may not always be okay. Here's what to look out for:

“As per business requirements”

Translation: You may be expected to work longer hours, weekends, or outside your job role without prior notice.

Ask: What are the working hours? Are weekends ever required?

“6-month/1-year probation period”

Translation: You might not be eligible for benefits, paid leaves, or job security during this time.

Ask: What benefits apply during probation? Can you be let go without reason?

“CTC (Cost to Company)”

Translation: Includes all company spendings on you, not your actual take-home salary.

Ask: What is the monthly in-hand salary after deductions?

“Performance-based bonus / Variable pay”

Translation: A part of your salary isn't guaranteed; it depends on performance.

Ask: How is it calculated? Is it monthly or annual?

“Bond / Service agreement”

Translation: You may need to pay a penalty if you leave early.

Ask: Can I view the agreement beforehand?

“Other duties as assigned”

Translation: You might be asked to do unrelated work.

Ask: What kinds of tasks fall outside the usual scope?

“Flexible working hours”

Translation: Can sometimes mean you're expected to be always available.

Ask: Are there core hours?

“Leaves as per company policy”

Translation: Leave rules may not be standard.

Ask: What is the annual leave structure?

“Non-compete clause”

Translation: You might be restricted from joining similar companies post-exit.

Ask: How long is this effective? Which sectors are included?

2. 🌀 You're Not Alone: The First-Year Reality

Your first job can be exciting, but also lonely and confusing. Many new employees experience burnout, fear, or self-doubt.

This guide is here to help you check in with yourself, understand your environment, and navigate better.

3. 🔥 It Might Be Burnout

Burnout is more than being tired. It's chronic stress without support.

Common Signs:

- ☐ Mental fog / lack of focus
- ☐ Anxiety or dread about work
- ☐ Overworking / no boundaries
- ☐ Withdrawal or isolation
- ☐ Missed deadlines
- ☐ Chronic fatigue
- ☐ Appetite or sleep changes
- ☐ Headaches or physical tension

If you ticked yes to at least 3 of the above signs, it might be time to pause.

4. First-Year Risk Factors

- No onboarding or training
 - Feeling like you have to prove yourself constantly
 - Fear of asking for help
 - Micromanagement
 - Unclear expectations with heavy workload
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5. Red Flags in a Workplace

Poor Onboarding

- No structure or mentorship
- No clarity in expectations

Lack of Work-Life Balance

- Late nights are the norm
- Vacation shaming

Bad Management

- Micromanaging or absent managers
- No feedback or support

Everything is a Fire Drill

- Everything is urgent
- Plans constantly change without clarity

No Feedback or Growth

- No reviews or mentorship
 - Learning budgets are denied
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6. Know Your Rights (India)

Your Basic Workplace Rights (Yes, Even in Your First Job)

- Contract with clear terms
- Timely salary
- Safe work environment
- Reasonable hours (48 hrs/week max)
- Paid leave (state dependent)
- Maternity leave: 26 weeks
- Grievance redressal (POSH etc.)

Note: Small firms may skip these. Still, they are legal rights.

7. Global Practices to Know

France: Right to Disconnect

Law: No after-hours work messages required.

Takeaway: Healthy boundaries matter.

Germany: Server Switch-Offs

Practice: Servers shut down after work hours.

Takeaway: Tech can protect work-life balance.

Spain: Mental Health is a Right

Law: Burnout recognized officially.

Takeaway: Mental health isn't a luxury.

Japan: Anti-Karoshi Laws

Law: Limits on overtime.

Takeaway: Overwork kills. Policy should prevent it.

Netherlands: Part-Time is Normal

Practice: 4-day weeks common.

Takeaway: Hustle culture isn't the only way.

8. 🧘 Setting Boundaries (Without Fear)

It's okay to:

- Say no to last-minute tasks
- Log off on time
- Take your earned leave
- Ask for clarity
- Push back respectfully

Fear of losing your first job often traps you in toxicity. But staying silent won't protect your peace, boundaries will.

9. 💬 Sample Email Templates

Why Email Matters:

- It's written proof
- Protects your voice
- Keeps expectations clear

When unsure, ask a trusted colleague to read your draft, we've all done it!

Few templates, tweak them to fit your voice:

1. Asking for Task Clarity

Subject: Clarification Needed on [Task Name]

"Hi [Manager], just checking if [approach] is right. Let me know."

2. Overwhelmed with Tasks

Subject: Support Required on Task Load

"Hi [Manager], I'm a bit stretched. Can we prioritise or reassign?"

3. Asking for Leave (Without Oversharing)

Subject: Leave Request for [Date]

“Hi [Manager], I’d like leave for personal reasons. Work is on track.”

4. Saying No (Politely)

Subject: Quick Check-In on Bandwidth

“Hi [Manager], should I prioritise this new task over [ongoing task]?”

5. Following Up

Subject: Gentle Reminder - [Topic]

“Hi [Manager], just checking in on this. Let me know if needed.”

10. When You Need Help

- Talk to HR (if safe)
- Find a mentor or trusted senior
- Look up mental health helplines
- It’s okay to plan an exit

11. India-Based Helplines

- iCall (TISS): 9152987821 (Mon–Sat, 10 AM–8 PM)
 - Tele MANAS: 1800 891 4416
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