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Extracts Booklet

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Turn over

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PASSAGE ONE

The following passage is an extract from the diary of a newly qualified doctor

Monday 4th August

I am scared. I know I'm supposed to be a grown-up now, someone sensible who pays taxes and worries about hair loss, but I'm still scared. I feel like I'm standing at the open door of an aeroplane, about to jump, unsure if my parachute will open and knowing that, even if it does, I will spend a significant period of time hurtling towards the ground, my stomach in my mouth, wishing the whole
5 thing were over. And the thing that's really annoying is that I have no one to blame but myself.

I was the one who ticked "medicine" in the careers box at school. If only I'd missed and ticked "media studies", I'd be well on my way to being clued up on thinking creatively and where to get the best coffee, rather than an expert on rare diseases. T. S. Eliot¹ was wrong: it's not April that's the cruellest month, it's August, because that's when final year medical students up and down the
10 country are rudely awoken to the fact that they are now doctors and introduced to exactly what this entails.

Medical school has been rather like a long holiday punctuated by the odd sick person. I can't pretend final exams were much fun: memorising whole bookshelves, devouring them like sweets only to regurgitate them back half-remembered in a sweaty exam hall, legs twitching from taking
15 too much strong coffee.

But then again, for six years things were fun. It was like playing at being a doctor. When Christmas holidays and family parties had to be attended, everyone looked lovingly at me. "Oh, he's training to be a doctor, you know," was the refrain. A collective sigh would be heard, choirs of angels would chorus from on high, and I would give out a divine light which would bathe the assembled admirers
20 with warmth.

People like doctors, or rather, they like the idea of doctors. In fact, they like the idea of knowing a doctor. They only like the *idea* of knowing a doctor because the reality is that knowing a doctor is very dull: doctors are tired and complain a lot, and are often rather boring because all they do is work.

25 But a medical student is a lovely compromise: all the status of being a doctor but without the bags under the eyes or long moaning telephone conversations about how the health service is getting worse and how if everyone had to pay for health care they'd soon realise what a bargain they were getting and shut up.

And so I have spent the last six years nicely cocooned in college. I've never had to work a night
30 shift. I've never had to make a clinical judgement. In fact, I've never even prescribed a drug in my whole life. But, as of tomorrow, this will all change. Because, as of tomorrow, I start work as a doctor. And I am scared.

¹ T. S. Eliot began one of his poems with the line "April is the cruellest month..."

PASSAGE TWO

The following passage is an extract from a magazine giving advice about how to approach the first day at work.

Surviving the First Day at Work

The first day on a new job is a lot like the first day of school. You have to find the bathrooms and the cafeteria, get all your equipment, meet new people, and maybe do some work.

Many new college graduates say that the first day of work is the hardest, because they don't know what to expect. Will I be forced to regurgitate everything I learned? Will my boss be a tyrant? Will
5 I be late and forever labelled a slacker?

That first day can seem overwhelming, but knowing some basic workplace rules will help you survive. You may be in a "probationary" period for the first few months of a new job, and watched more closely than other employees. Be ready to work – and learn – on day one. You have qualifications, but are starting at the bottom, and have a lot to learn. Accept that, and look at every
10 assignment as an opportunity to learn something.

And about your qualifications: your boss may not have checked them out but might provide a list of your skills and experience for everyone in your department. If anything you claimed isn't true, it could spell disaster.

"I claimed to be fluent in Japanese", says Kevin Donlin, founder of a consulting firm. "On my first
15 day, I was approached by a woman speaking Japanese. Fortunately, I had been truthful, and we struck up a conversation, impressing my boss."

Beyond having to prove yourself, you'll encounter office politics. Someone may immediately try to be your best friend. Be polite, but not overly friendly.

That person may be trying to impress the boss by "helping" the new person, thus being insincere.
20 Or, they could be an office outcast, and associating yourself too early on may keep you from developing other, beneficial, relationships. Let relationships develop over time.

By the end of the first day, you should:

- be able to find your way around the workplace
- know your contact numbers
- 25 • know the names and roles of your co-workers
- know your responsibilities and job description.

Carry a note pad to jot down important information.

While you are there, do you have any questions? You should have lots of them!

Ask about insurance and pension plans, holidays and leave, and how to call in late or sick.

- 30 Ask co-workers about the corporate culture. When do they take lunch? Do they eat out or at their desks? Where are the good places to eat? Watch to see if they work quietly or chat together.

When you meet with your boss, ask about your job responsibilities. Ask about the nearest deadlines, the chain of command, and where you can get information and help.

- 35 With all of the meetings and things to learn, your first day will pass quickly, and you'll likely go home feeling like you accomplished nothing. But you only have to do the first day once. You'll soon ease into a routine, and start building the career you worked towards for years.

By Kristen Gustafson

03/11/2004

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