Squiggly Career Stages

Starters

How to learn and grow in your first job

Starters

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Starting your first job is a big moment.

There's a lot to take in — a new environment, new people, and new expectations.
The learning curve can feel steep, and it's normal to experience moments of uncertainty.

We want to help you to start squiggly from day one, to create a career full of possibilities and opportunities for you to develop in different directions.

This guide, supports our podcast episode Squiggly Career Starters, and brings together practical advice, expert insights, and useful tools to help you feel more confident and control in your first job.

In this guide you'll find:

- **Insights** from the Squiggly Careers Starters podcast episode.
- **Coach yourself questions** to reflect on your experiences and gain insight.
- A **tool to try out** and create focus in your first 90 days in a new job.
- **Expert advice** on how to make the most of this squiggly career stage.
- **Recommended resources** to read, watch, listen and learn from.

Episode insights

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In this episode, Helen and Sarah are joined by Yemurai Rabvukwa, cyber security specialist and advocate for careers in STEM (aka STEM Babe) and Sarah Gregory, Senior Delivery Project Manager at upReach — a social mobility charity that supports undergraduates from lower socio-economic backgrounds to access and sustain top graduate jobs.

Together they discuss actions to take **to learn and grow in your first job.**

How to:

- Navigate the organisation
- Find advice and support
- Network and seek mentorship
- Master time management
- Map out the first 100 days

Coach yourself questions

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'Coach yourself questions' are designed to create clarity. They help you to press pause and think things through so you can make more informed choices about where and what you spend your time on.
Here are 3 questions to help you think about your impact in your new role.

What do I want people say about me when I'm not in the room?

What do I want to be true in 12 months time that isn't true today?

Which are the 5 most important relationships I need to invest in?

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"Don't feel guilty if you don't know what you want to do with your life... the most interesting people I know didn't know at twenty-two what they wanted to do with their lives, some of the most interesting forty-year-olds I know still don't."

Baz Luhrmann

Tool to try out

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The 3 month starter plan

When you start a new job, the risk is that you rush into action and forget that a big part of your role is to learn. In fact, the first 5 years of your career is where your learning makes the biggest difference to your long-term career success. We've shared some learning priorities for you to create focus for what to learn in your first few months in your role.

	Learning priorities	Learning actions
Before you start	Understanding the industry, company and role expectations. Building early credibility and relationships.	Start a journal to note down trends and insights about the industry. Search news stories for any recent or significant media coverage. Follow leaders and anyone you have met in the interview process on LinkedIn.
First 30 days	Understanding the team, stakeholders and company culture. Gaining clarity on processes, workflows and expectations.	Create a list of go-to questions to ask in your first meetings. e.g. *What is my main priority over the next 3 months? How does my role help you to achieve your objectives? What are the biggest opportunities for this team?*
Next 60 days	Developing role expertise, strengthening relationships and influence. Contributing to bigger projects and team goals.	Ask for feedback on your impact from 5 people: *When have you seen me at my best over the last 3 months? What advice would you give me on increasing my impact? What is one thing you'd like to see more of from me?* Use insights from the feedback to inform your personal impact plan for the next 3-6 months.

Expert advice
Jack Parsons
CEO at Youth Group

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Stay open
When you're young, it's easy to believe you have all the right answers to the wrong questions. Stay open to learning, take advice, and embrace growth.

Be yourself
Authenticity is key — but if you're not a great dancer, it doesn't mean you should stay off the dance floor. Instead, embrace your abilities as they are and continue improving.

Find motivation from more than one thing
Finding what gets you out of bed in the morning isn't about a single passion or purpose — it's about a combination of small things that make the process easier. It could be starting a new job, working on an exciting project, or even small daily wins. It's important to have multiple sources of motivation. If you rely on just one and it fails, it becomes much harder to stay driven.

Expect challenge and respond with resilience
Success is not a straight path. Sometimes you'll move forward, sometimes sideways, and sometimes you'll fall flat on your face. What truly matters is how you respond to setbacks.

Recommended resources

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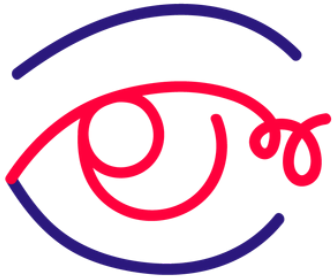


Watch

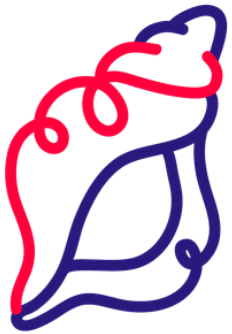
Duvet Flip

Jack Parson's inspirational career show on YouTube

Read

Better Me Workbook

Practical guide from Better@Work to support confidence & awareness



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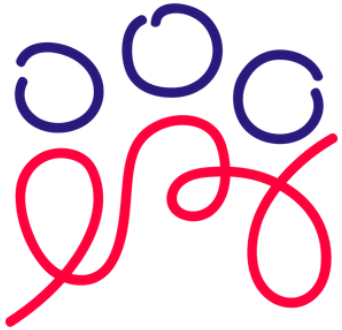

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Courses, resources and career support for 18-30 year olds

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STEM Babe

Yemurai Rabvukwa, STEM & career change advocate

Try

Poised

Improve your communication with an AI coach

Thank you

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We hope you've found this Squiggly Career Starters guide helpful.

For more squiggly career support, follow Squiggly Careers on LinkedIn or find our free resources at squigglycareers.com