

First-day survival guide

Simple ways to arrive prepared, build trust and find your feet

Before you arrive

1. Know the setting

Review the school or centre website, annual report and newsletters. Note the community, site type, key programmes and current priorities.

2. Plan the practical details

Confirm where to go, when to arrive, who to report to and what you need to bring. Aim to arrive early enough to settle in.

3. Prepare a simple plan

Have a clear learning intention, a small number of activities and a flexible backup. Do not try to solve everything on day one.

4. Bring a professional attitude

Dress appropriately, be approachable and show genuine interest in students, colleagues and the wider school community.

Your first-day mindset

Be prepared, but stay curious. Ask questions, listen carefully and treat the first day as the beginning of your learning rather than a test of perfection.

During the day

5. Learn names and routines

Notice how students move, learn and interact. Ask about routines, expectations, communication systems and support processes.

6. Build relationships

Be warm, calm and respectful. Small moments of connection help students and colleagues feel that you are present and ready to contribute.

7. Find your people

Introduce yourself to your team and identify your mentor, supervisor or key contact. Learn who to ask for help with different questions.

8. Take useful notes

Write down questions, important procedures, names and follow-up tasks. Review them at the end of the day.

You do not need to know everything on the first day. You do need to be ready to learn.

YOUR FIRST WEEKS

Set yourself up well

Use support, reflect often and build confidence one step at a time

9. Ask about mentoring

Find out what support is available for new staff, how often you can check in and who can help you review your planning and practice.

10. Understand the team

Ask how colleagues collaborate, share resources, communicate with families and support consistent approaches for students.

11. Connect learning to the role

Identify professional learning opportunities and the skills or knowledge that will help you contribute confidently.

12. Protect your capacity

Ask sensible questions about priorities, workload and work-life balance. Sustainable practice helps you support students well.

End-of-day reflection

Notice	Next step
What went well today?	What do I need to clarify?
Who did I connect with?	What will I prepare next?
What did I learn about the setting?	Who can help me?

When something feels difficult

Pause, identify the specific issue and ask for guidance. Being willing to seek feedback is a sign of professional maturity, not failure.

Your first-week checklist

Meet your key contacts • Learn the main routines • Understand communication channels • Ask about mentoring • Identify one professional learning goal • Reflect and adjust

Based on Crafting Your Path to Success session notes, presented by Switch Education.