



Instructions for the Learner

What will you learn?

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

- Discuss the work ethic in America.
- Explain how you feel about work and work ethic.
- List at least six personal qualities that demonstrate professionalism.
- Describe at least six nursing assistant skills that demonstrate professionalism.
- Discuss how a positive attitude relates to professionalism and work ethic.
- Demonstrate professionalism in your daily work.

We hope you enjoy this Inservice, “Professionalism & Work Ethic.” It’s been prepared especially for nursing assistants like you. You work very hard, and we appreciate the effort you make to complete these educational materials. It shows your desire to continue learning and growing in your profession.

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to _____ no later than _____.
- Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be initialed.

THANK YOU!



A Professional Growth Module: Professionalism & Work Ethic

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Professionalism & Work Ethic

Do you see yourself as part of a professional health care team? You are. As a nursing assistant, you make a valuable contribution to your clients and your coworkers. This is true whether you work in a nursing home, a hospital, a client's home or some other setting.

For health care employees, being *professional* means acting in a kind, but businesslike manner. It also means that:



- **You have the knowledge to do the job**—you have studied how to be a nursing assistant.
- **You have the skills to do the job**—you have learned how to use the equipment and do the tasks needed in your work.
- **You have empathy for your clients**—you can put yourself in their shoes and understand how they are feeling.

Throughout this inservice, you will learn more about professionalism and how to put your best foot forward at work.

What does it mean to be "professional"?

"Professional" means... "to be courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in the workplace."

What is "work ethic"?

"Work Ethic" means... "a belief that work is morally good."

Do you see your job as a necessary evil that you have to put up with to get a paycheck? Or, is your job an important part of who you are and what you stand for? The way you view work is called your *work ethic*. Each individual has a work ethic and our society has an overall work ethic too. This inservice will review the work ethic of the United States and help you decide what work really means to you. You will also learn how important your *attitude* is to a successful working life and how attitude affects your professionalism.



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In the Know, Inc.

306 Brandermill Drive
Durham, NC 27713

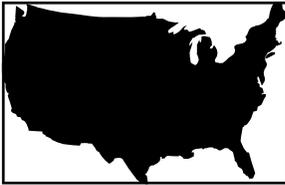
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The History of Work Ethic in the United States

The work ethic in the United States was shaped mostly by the early settlers—the immigrants that came here from many different countries around the world.



They came to this country when it was just a wilderness, and they weren't afraid of hard work. They had to build their homes, their schools and their towns. They had to grow their own food and make their own clothes. People who didn't work hard had a very rough time, so hard work was seen as the best way to have a happy life. The early settlers took great pride in their work and in the "new world" they were building.

As the United States became more developed, so did the national work ethic. Children were taught in school that it was important to work hard at reading, writing and arithmetic. "Doing nothing" was seen as a sure sign of laziness and failure.



In the late 1800's, big businesses boomed in America, and, unfortunately, some of them abused their workers. Many employees, especially women and children, were forced to work nonstop for sixteen hours a day, earning only pennies an hour. During this time, most people saw work as a drudgery, not as a pleasure.



In the last fifty years, companies have become more focused on workers' rights and have created "human resource" departments to support their employees' needs. Labor laws have helped make workplaces safer and work hours shorter. The work ethic has changed slightly to include the ideas that:



- All work is important and can give employees satisfaction.
- Supervisors should help motivate employees by encouraging them to continue learning and developing on the job.

- Employees should try to pick a job that interests them. This will help them do quality work and give them the most personal satisfaction and pleasure.

In general, though, the work ethic in the U.S. has not changed much from the beginning. Working hard is still seen as the best way to have a happy life.

How does the work ethic of other countries differ from that of the United States?

- Many eastern countries, such as China and Japan value *group* effort. Praise is often given to a team or department of people rather than an individual. However, workers still remain very focused and often strive for excellence.
- European countries, such as France, have a much more laid-back work ethic. The government is required to allow a certain amount of paid vacation. The French have frequently been quoted saying that Americans work *too hard* and *too often*. Could they be right?



How Do You Feel About Work?

To figure out how you feel about work, you might try answering these questions:



- While you were growing up, what were the messages you got about work? Did your parents work? Did they enjoy their jobs?



- Did you have to do chores as a kid? If so, how did you feel about doing these chores? Did you have summer jobs to earn spending money? Did you feel proud of earning your own money?

- When you were in school, did you have teachers who praised you when you worked hard? If you got a bad grade, did you take responsibility for it? Did you feel proud when you worked hard and got a good grade?



- Do you feel that work is an important part of your life? Do you look forward to coming to work most of the time? Do you enjoy being part of a health care team? Do you take pride in doing a good job? Do you get satisfaction from helping your clients?
- If you won a lottery and suddenly had millions of dollars, would you still want to work? If not, what do you see yourself doing all day, every day? Do you think your life would be satisfying without work?



There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Only you can understand the “messages” you got about work as you were growing up. And only you can decide what work means to you today. Just keep in mind that most employers are looking for people who have a strong work ethic—people who believe that the only job worth doing is a job done right.

The Power of a Positive Attitude

Have you ever noticed a nagging “voice” inside yourself saying things like, “*I hate doing this.*” or “*I’m no good at this.*” or “*I sure am bored.*” It’s human to have negative thoughts like these, but, with a little effort, you can stomp them out and face the world with a more positive attitude.



Generally, people who strive for a positive attitude are better able to handle stress, get sick less often and recover more quickly when they do get sick. When “armed” with a positive attitude, people are able to focus on *solutions* rather than on problems. They are open to trying new things and they believe in themselves. So, when you hear that inner voice

As author Dennis S. Brown once said, “*The only difference between a good day and a bad day is your attitude.*”

being negative, try to turn it around into a *positive* thought. Picture yourself being happy and successful each day and keep that picture in mind when stressful events happen at work. You may notice that maintaining a positive attitude helps your day go more smoothly.



What Are Some Professional Qualities?

Since no two people are alike, we all demonstrate our professionalism in different ways. However, there are certain qualities that supervisors look for when they are assessing someone's professionalism. These qualities include being:

- Helpful
- Patient
- Pleasant
- Cooperative
- Cheerful
- Friendly
- Loyal
- Efficient
- Hardworking
- Enthusiastic
- Dedicated
- Productive
- Dependable
- Reliable
- Honest
- Punctual
- Careful

"A professional is a person who can do his best at a time when he doesn't particularly feel like it."

Alistair Cooke,
journalist



What Qualities Are Unprofessional?

We all know unprofessional people when we see them. Many of them go through their work day being:

- Hostile
- Rude
- Selfish
- Irresponsible
- Careless
- Tardy
- Negligent
- Uncaring



Remember that no one is perfect. We all have bad days. But someone who is unprofessional demonstrates these negative qualities nearly every day.

"When you feel dog tired at night, it may be because you've growled all day long."

Author Unknown

Responding to an Unprofessional Co-Worker

Everyone has experienced the fury of an unprofessional co-worker. Sometimes it can be hard to respond in a rational manner. Here are a few tips for dealing with co-workers when they are being unprofessional:

- Keep that list of professional qualities in mind and try hard not to lose your cool. If both of you are upset, it will only make things worse!
- Before talking to a supervisor, sit down with your co-worker. Patiently communicate your feelings to the best of your ability.
- Have you ever heard the expression "kill them with kindness?" Try inviting the person out to lunch or to have a cup of coffee. Then, quietly discuss any misunderstandings that may have come between you.
- If you have time, ask your co-worker if he or she needs help with anything.
- Remain patient. It can be extremely hard to deal with a hostile co-worker. By responding in a friendly manner, the workplace and your workday will be much more peaceful.

Tips For Communicating in a Professional Manner

- Be kind to the people at work—both clients *and* coworkers. Of course, your clients need and deserve kindness. But, remember that working with sick and/or aging people can be emotionally exhausting. It can be very frustrating to work hard every day and still see clients getting worse. So, support your coworkers...and let them support you!
- Try to keep your personal feelings about other people to yourself, and *refuse to listen to gossip*. You'll be seen as a professional and have a happier workplace!
- Health care professionals are expected to be warm and caring people. Yet at the same time, they are expected never to make a mistake and to work as tirelessly as a machine. It's a lot to ask of people—to be kind and sensitive and still get



all the work done quickly! But, this is the goal for every health care worker. Help yourself and your coworkers by encouraging them to talk to you when they are stressed and by being willing to share your feelings with them. No one knows better what the stresses of your job are than the people you work with every day!

- Don't forget to say "please" and "thank you" to both clients and coworkers. These simple manners are a basic part of professional communication.
- Take every opportunity to praise coworkers when you notice them doing good work. Your kindness will come back to you—and will earn you high marks as a professional!
- When talking with coworkers, offer solutions not just problems. Don't be shy about offering your creative opinions about how to make things better for your clients.

Tips For Keeping on Task in the Workplace

- If your supervisor asks you to do more tasks than you can finish in one day, be sure to ask which task is top priority. Then, finish that task first.
- Remember that each person has different amounts of energy at different times of day. If possible, plan your day so that you work hardest during the times when you have the most energy.
- Look for ways to save time every day. Share the things that work for you with your coworkers.



- Wear an alarm wristwatch. Then, if you want to complete a task in 45 minutes, set the alarm for 30 minutes and check your progress. Can you finish your task in 15 more minutes?
 - To avoid boredom, try adjusting the *order* in which you complete tasks—if it doesn't interfere with client care and your supervisor is okay with it.
 - Keep on learning new skills. The more you know, the more time you'll be able to save during your work day. (Be sure to let your supervisor know what topics you would like to know more about.)
-

Working As a Nursing Assistant

As a nursing assistant, you have learned—and continue to learn—a number of important skills. You use these skills in your current job, but they can also help you in other jobs throughout your life. Here are a few of the skills that show your professionalism every single day:

- Meeting the personal care needs of ambulatory and bed bound clients.
- Reviewing paperwork to check for errors and to make sure it is complete.
- Serving clients meals that are nutritious and help improve their health.
- Promoting client and staff safety by following all workplace safety guidelines.
- Making suggestions to the health care team about how to better meet the needs of your clients.



- Documenting your client care accurately and promptly—and according to workplace policies.



- Prioritizing your client care so that all your client's needs are met.

Remember:

A strong work ethic improves the quality of your work and the atmosphere of your workplace.



- Completing your assignments as ordered and on schedule.
- Delivering quality client care under the supervision of a nurse or therapist.
- Ensuring client safety by using the proper equipment at all times.
- Motivating your clients to keep up with exercise plans set up by their therapists.
- Maintaining confidentiality about clients and coworkers.
- Continuing to learn new things by participating in all scheduled inservices and staff meetings.
- Encouraging client independence by having your clients participate in their care.
- Identifying when you need help and then asking for it.
- Utilizing all your knowledge and skills to bring a better quality of life to your clients.
- Following nursing and physician orders exactly.
- Observing your clients for problems and reporting them right away.
- Helping to teach and train new aides.
- Helping coworkers when necessary to promote teamwork in your workplace.
- Maintaining a high standard of quality in your work at all times.



Health care employees with strong work ethic get a number of benefits from their jobs. These benefits include:

- Respect from clients and coworkers for doing a good job.
- The opportunity to continue to learn new things on the job.
- No time spent being bored on the job!
- Satisfaction from being able to help other people.

As champion tennis player Arthur Ashe once said...

"From what we get in life, we can make a living. But, from what we give, we can make a life."



The Job Outlook for Nursing Assistants

Did you know that the United States Department of Labor has recognized the importance of your job? It lists nursing assistants, home care aides and personal care aides as three of the **most needed jobs** for the year 2005 and beyond.

Our country will be needing more and more people with the skills that you already have. This is because our population is getting older (All those "baby boomers" aren't babies anymore!)



As the years pass, technology will help even more elderly people live longer. There will

In a recent poll, the United States public rated the nursing field at the *top* of the most honest and ethical professions.



be a greater need for nursing assistants and aides to help elderly people who have chronic illnesses.

In the year 2002, nursing aides held almost 1.4 million jobs in the United States. This huge number is only expected to increase in the coming years. It has been projected that by the

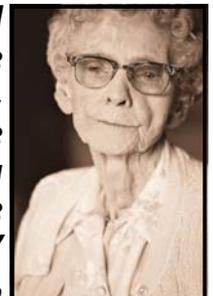
year 2012, the number of nursing aides needed will increase as much as 35%!

Your work is very important to your clients and to your supervisors. You may not always hear "thank you" or "good job", but you can leave work every day knowing that you really made a difference in your clients' lives.

Remember...

"To the world you might be just one person, but to one person you might be the whole world."

Author Unknown



Having Fun at Work



Does being professional at work sound like you have to be “stuffy” or “prissy” or “boring”? That’s not true! Having fun at work—and still getting the job done—shows that you really enjoy your work.

Let’s face it. Healthcare is a human business. Your work brings you in touch with lots of people...clients, their families, coworkers, supervisors, and other medical professionals. Your job is very different from someone who sits in front of a computer all day or who works on an assembly line at a factory.



Can you think of another very human business? *How about education?* Think of all the years you spent in school. Did you learn more from a teacher who was always serious and taught strictly by the book or from a teacher who brought fun and playfulness into the classroom? Chances are, you learned more if the teacher added some fun into the school day.

Now think of your clients and your coworkers. Put yourself in their shoes for a minute. How do you think they feel every day when you come to work? Are they glad to see you because they know you will be pleasant and fun to have around? Do they know that you take your work—but not yourself—seriously? *Is your workplace better because you are there?*

Did you know that when you say, “I love my work!” you reduce your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and ulcers?

(Unfortunately, studies have shown that only 1 out of 10 people say they love their job. What about you?)



Having fun at work doesn’t mean that everyone at your workplace should clown around all day and not get anything done. Work won’t be fun for you, your clients or your coworkers, if no one gets their job done. **Client care always comes first!** There are several things you can do to have fun at work without getting off task. Your work must be done safely and carefully—but there’s no rule that says you can’t smile, laugh or share a joke at the same time.

“People will be just about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

A quote by Abraham Lincoln



(Have you made up your mind to be happy at work?)

More About Having Fun at Work



Remember, you probably spend more waking hours with your coworkers and your clients than with your family! If you don't bring a positive attitude to your workplace, you are wasting a big part of your life being unhappy. And, keep in mind, that happiness is contagious! If you come to work happy and you spread those good feelings around, they will rub off on your clients, their families and your coworkers.

Working with clients who are sick, and sometimes dying, can be depressing at times. Bringing a positive attitude with you to work every day can help balance out the sadness that is part of every health care worker's job. Being professional means that you use your knowledge and skills to perform your job well, and that you use qualities like kindness,



consideration and a sense of humor to get along with your clients and coworkers. And, having a healthy work ethic requires that you have a positive attitude toward your job.

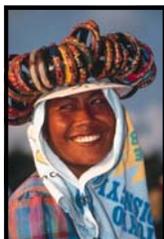
Did you know that having fun at work can boost your coworkers' morale, decrease stress within the workplace, increase creativity and interesting ideas, lower the turnover rate of employees, and jump start productivity and loyalty to the company? All of these factors help improve overall job satisfaction. Often times, people dread going to work because of high levels of stress and lack of positive morale.



However, if the workplace is looked at as a positive place to be, you and your coworkers will be much more likely to give better care to your clients and enjoy your jobs!

Some Facts About Smiling

- A smile is a universal expression of happiness and recognized as such by every culture around the world.
- The muscles you use to smile send messages back to the brain telling it to feel happy!
- Women smile eight times more often than men—and women live about eight years longer than men. Does smiling help you live longer? It could be...
- Smiling actually *cools down* your brain while frowning heats it up.



- It takes a lot more energy to frown than it does to smile. You use about 60 muscles for a frown but as few as 17 muscles for a smile. So, don't waste energy frowning!
- Babies don't just learn to copy a happy face; they are *born* with the ability to smile (because even babies who are blind from birth know how to smile).
- A smiling person is judged to be more pleasant, attractive, sincere, sociable, and competent than a non-smiling person.



Being Part of a Professional Health Care Team

Whether you work in a large facility with hundreds of other people or you spend your days working in a private home with just one client, you are part of a healthcare *team*. Every health care team is made up of a variety of disciplines—such as nursing, physical therapy and social work.

In the past, each health care discipline had its own specific tasks to perform, but no one really worried about how all those tasks came together. Everyone focused on their own “piece” of the client. Sometimes the same task got repeated by two different people because the disciplines didn’t communicate with each other.

But, health care has changed. The client as a whole is now the main focus. Tasks are performed with a plan in mind and all the disciplines must work

together on the same goal—meeting the health care needs of each client.

Our current health care system requires that all team members:

- Understand their own job and how it fits into the team.
- Have a basic understanding of their coworkers’ jobs so they can all work together.
- Focus on how their actions are affecting the client.



Tips For Professional Teamwork

You know how hard you work and how much your clients need you. In fact, the *entire healthcare team* relies on you. Many administrators admit that their workplaces would fall apart in a very short time without you...the nursing assistants!

To be the best team player that you can be, keep these important things in mind:

- Be sure you are clear about what your supervisor expects from you. If you have questions about your assignment, don’t be shy. ASK!
- Remember that your fellow team members are counting on your input. Be sure to tell them when you notice changes—good or bad—during your daily work with your clients.
- Pull your own weight by fulfilling your assigned duties. However, as a professional, you should remain flexible, too. Your assignment may change from week to week, from day to day or even from hour to hour. And, when someone asks you to help with a task that’s not one of your regular duties, try to avoid saying, “That’s not my job.”

- Use your observation skills to watch your coworkers as they go about their daily work. You can learn a lot from watching others.



"The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side."

-Margaret Carty

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

- Helen Keller

Putting It All Together

Keep these three tips in mind in order to “show off” your professionalism:

1. Use all the knowledge you have gained about your job. Keep your “thinking cap” on at all times. And, be sure to follow each client’s care plan and your workplace policies exactly. Think of every day as an opportunity to learn something new.



2. As you perform your client care, use all the skills you’ve learned as a nursing assistant. If you are assigned a task you know you can’t do, be sure to ask for help. (Part of being professional is knowing when to ask for help!) Document everything you do in a timely manner, according to your workplace policies. **USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO BE THE BEST NURSING ASSISTANT YOU CAN BE!**



3. Keep a positive attitude and try to spread it to your clients and coworkers. For example:

- Ask your client what his/her favorite color is, and then wear something that color (if it’s not against the dress code in your workplace).
- Ask a client to tell you about a special childhood memory, a nearby photograph or a special “knick knack”.
- Smile at everyone you see at work. What happens when you smile at people? They usually smile back! Then, they will be more likely to smile at the next person they see...and so on! Smiling is contagious!



- Praise people as much as you can. Praise tends to have a wonderful effect on people. If you say to your client, *“Thanks for walking with me today, Mr. Jones. I really enjoyed it and you did a great job.”* ...don’t you think Mr. Jones will feel good about himself and be more eager to walk tomorrow?
- Don’t forget to praise yourself. We are all good at giving ourselves those negative messages such as, *“How could I forget that? I am so dumb!”* or *“I feel so grumpy that I’m no good to anybody.”* It’s much harder for most of us to give ourselves positive messages. How about this: At the end of each work day, tell yourself a few things that you did really well that day, such as, *“I finished all my client care on time today.”* or *“I really feel good about how I handled that disagreement with Susan.”* or *“Mrs. Smith and I had such a good conversation during her bath today.”* Remember that being professional means that you admit both your mistakes and your achievements.
- Have fun at work! Bring your sense of humor to work with you every day. If a situation starts to upset you, try to see the lighter side of it. Share a funny story with your clients and coworkers, or sing a silly song while you work. Don’t wait for someone else to make work fun. Take charge and do it yourself. Remember, time flies when you’re having fun!
- Do something that makes you different from everyone else who does the same job. For example: Find a saying or a joke to share with your clients and coworkers every day like, *“Nature’s wonderful. The older you get, the harder it is to see yourself in the mirror.”* They will come to look forward to your daily messages! Or, find out the birthdays of your clients and coworkers. Give each of them a birthday card or sing “Happy Birthday” to them on their special day. The goal is to put some of your spirit into your work—and you’ll get back more than you give!

Doing Quality Work

Do you think that it sounds okay to do quality work **80%** of the time? Well, think of it like this. Aiming for 80% quality is like doing good work on Tuesday through Friday, but forgetting about quality every Monday. That's really not very professional and it's not acceptable, is it?

How about **90%** quality? That's better, right? Unfortunately, that still means "messing up" for 48 minutes every day. Would you want your loved one to be cared for by someone who did poor work for nearly one hour every day? Probably not.

Okay, then how about **99.9%**. That's got to be good enough, since no one is perfect. Well, if 99.9% quality is okay, then:

- 12 newborns will be given to the wrong parents every day.
- 18, 322 pieces of mail will be sent to the wrong address every hour.
- 2 million documents will be lost by the IRS this year.
- In the next twelve months, 2.5 million books will be shipped with the wrong covers.
- 2 planes landing at Chicago's O'Hare Airport will crash every day.
- 315 words in Webster's dictionary will be misspelled.
- 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions will be written by doctors this year.
- 5.5 million cases of Coke and Pepsi will have no carbonation.
- 291 heart operations will be performed incorrectly this year.

- Nearly 300,000 new automobile tires will be defective.
- 114,500 pairs of shoes at shoe stores will have two left shoes in the same box.
- 880,000 credit cards will have the wrong cardholder information on their magnetic strips.
- Every minute, over 1300 telephone calls won't go through.
- 22,000 checks will be deducted from the wrong bank accounts every hour.

Pretty shocking, isn't it? Unfortunately *medical* errors are all too common. A recent study done by the Institute of Medicine estimated that between 44,000 and 98,000 people die in United States hospitals every year because of these medical errors! This is an extremely high number that could be lowered by increasing quality work.

So, what should you do in your job to help? Aim for 100% quality. Tell yourself that you refuse to do less than excellent work! To do this, you may need to brush up on some old skills and/or learn some new ones. You'll probably make mistakes along the way. That's okay. Just try to figure out why they happened and what you could have done differently. Learn from your mistakes and keep going...**always aiming for 100% quality!**





A Professional Growth Module: Professionalism & Work Ethic

***Are you “in the know” about professionalism and work ethic?
Circle the best choice. Then check your answers with your supervisor!***

1. TRUE or FALSE

It is against U.S. labor laws for a workplace to insist on a strong work ethic.

2. TRUE or FALSE

It is unprofessional to feel angry with a coworker.

3. TRUE or FALSE

The job outlook for nursing aides is expected to increase in the coming years.

4. TRUE or FALSE

Happiness can often be contagious in the workplace.

5. TRUE or FALSE

Professionalism cannot be learned. People are either born with those qualities or they are not.

6. When health care professionals work as a team, it:

- A. Slows everybody down.
- B. Meets all the client’s needs.
- C. Hurts the client.
- D. Adds to healthcare costs.

7. You can help improve your job satisfaction by:

- A. Loving your job.
- B. Staying on task.
- C. Working well with others.
- D. All of the above.

8. Having fun at work:

- A. Is inappropriate in health care.
- B. Should never involve a client.
- C. Can increase creativity.
- D. Is always a waste of time.

9. TRUE or FALSE

A realistic goal for health care professionals is to do quality work 90% of the time.

10. TRUE or FALSE

Nursing assistants can enhance their professionalism by learning new skills.

EMPLOYEE NAME (Please print):

DATE: _____

- *I understand the information presented in this inservice.*
- *I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.*

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.