

First Day on a Building Site

Everything to sort the night before, everything to take with you, and the handful of things that get people sent home before dinner.

Nobody expects you to know the site on day one. They do expect you to turn up on time, with the right kit and the right paperwork, and to ask before you touch anything. Get those three right and the rest will come. Print this, tick it off the night before, and take it with you.

1. The night before — paperwork

- ☐ **CSCS card** — physical card, or open it in the My CSCS app and check your phone is charged
- ☐ **Photo ID** — driving licence or passport. Most sites will not induct you without it
- ☐ **National Insurance number**
- ☐ **Bank details** for payroll
- ☐ **Your other tickets** — asbestos awareness, first aid, harness, IPAF, PASMA, abrasive wheels
- ☐ **If you are self-employed:** your UTR, CIS registration, public liability certificate, and your own RAMS if you have been asked for them
- ☐ Right to work documents if you have been asked for them

2. The night before — the practical bit

- ☐ Confirm the **start time** and **which gate** — the site address and the entrance are often not the same place
- ☐ Get the **name and mobile number** of the person you are asking for
- ☐ Work out parking, or the bus, and then add twenty minutes
- ☐ Check the weather and pack for it. You will be outside longer than you think
- ☐ Make your food and fill a flask. Not every site has a shop or a van
- ☐ Charge your phone, and put the site contact in it
- ☐ Early night. A 7am start with an hour's travel is a 5am alarm

3. PPE to turn up with

- ☐ **Safety boots** — steel or composite toe and midsole. Trainers, rigger boots and worn-out soles get turned away
- ☐ **Hard hat** — in date, not cracked, worn the right way round
- ☐ **Hi-vis** — vest at minimum; a lot of sites now want long sleeves
- ☐ **Gloves** — cut-resistant for handling materials
- ☐ **Safety glasses**
- ☐ **Ear defenders or plugs**
- ☐ Dust mask or respirator if you will be cutting — and know that it will not seal over a beard
- ☐ Knee pads, waterproofs, warm layers as the job needs

Some sites issue PPE on the gate. Turn up with your own anyway — boots and hi-vis at the very least.

4. In the bag

- ☐ Your own hand tools if you have been asked to bring them — and only tools you are trained and ticketed to use
- ☐ Tape measure, pencil, knife
- ☐ Food, drink, and more water than you think you need
- ☐ Phone charger or a power bank
- ☐ A bit of cash or a card
- ☐ Any medication you need during the day
- ☐ A pen — you will be filling in forms before you get anywhere near the work

Getting paid — worth sorting in week one

Find out on day one whether you are on **PAYE** or being paid as a **self-employed subcontractor under CIS**, and whether it is weekly or monthly. If it is CIS, you need to be registered with HMRC before your first payment — registered subcontractors have 20% deducted, unregistered ones have 30%, and getting the difference back means waiting until your tax return. Keep every payment and deduction statement you are given; they are your proof when you claim the money back.

5. Getting there and signing in

- ☐ Arrive **fifteen to twenty minutes early**. First day only comes once
- ☐ Report to the gate or site office — never walk onto a site unannounced
- ☐ Sign in, every single day. The signing-in sheet is the fire roll call
- ☐ Hand over your card and ID for checking; expect it to be scanned
- ☐ Put your PPE on before you step past the hoarding, not after

6. The site induction

Every site starts with one. It usually takes 30–60 minutes. Listen, and write down the answers to these:

- ☐ Where is the **fire assembly point**?
- ☐ Who is the **first aider**, and where is the first aid kit?
- ☐ Where is the **welfare** — toilets, canteen, drying room?
- ☐ Which areas are **restricted**, and where are the pedestrian routes?
- ☐ What is the **traffic management** — where do vehicles and plant go?
- ☐ What work needs a **permit**, and who issues it?
- ☐ Who is your **supervisor**, and who do you report a problem to?
- ☐ What are the **break times** and the finish time?

9. What gets people sent home on day one

- ☐ No CSCS card, no ID, or a card that expired last month
- ☐ Wrong footwear — trainers, or boots with the toecap showing through
- ☐ No hard hat or hi-vis, or a hard hat that has been sat on
- ☐ Turning up late, or turning up to the wrong gate with nobody's number
- ☐ Smelling of drink, or being obviously hungover. Most sites test, and most test on suspicion
- ☐ Walking through a barrier, or climbing on scaffold that is tagged off
- ☐ Using plant, a cut-off saw, a MEWP or a tower you have no ticket for
- ☐ Loose clothing, jewellery, a hood up or headphones in near machinery
- ☐ Not signing in — on a big site that alone will get you escorted off

7. Your first hour on the tools

- ☐ Find your supervisor and ask what the job is and what "finished" looks like
- ☐ Read the **RAMS** for your task and sign it — and say something if the job in front of you does not match what is written
- ☐ Check your access before you use it: scaffold tag in date, handrails and toe boards on, ladder tied and at the right angle
- ☐ Check your tools and leads before you plug anything in — 110V on site, not 240V
- ☐ Ask where the materials and the skips are, and where you can leave your bag
- ☐ Ask before you move, borrow or use anything that is not yours

8. How to be the new one people want back

- ☐ **Ask**. Nobody minds a question on day one. Everybody minds a fortnight's work being ripped out
- ☐ **Keep your area tidy**. It is the first thing that gets noticed, and the cheapest way to look professional
- ☐ **Learn names** — your supervisor, the crew, the person on the gate
- ☐ **Put your phone away** while you are walking or working. Never on a ladder, never near moving plant
- ☐ **Stay out of exclusion zones** and never walk under a load. If plant is moving, make eye contact with the operator or the banksman first
- ☐ **Eat in the canteen, not where you are working**
- ☐ **Say something if you do not feel safe**. Every decent site would rather lose an hour than have an accident
- ☐ **Report near misses** the same day, even when nobody was hurt

10. End of the day

- ☐ Tidy your area and put tools and materials away
- ☐ **Sign out**. Just as important as signing in
- ☐ Fill in your timesheet and find out who signs it and when it has to be in
- ☐ Agree tomorrow's start time and where to report
- ☐ Ask how you did, and what you should do differently. It costs nothing and it is remembered