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Starting Strong at Bending Spoons

Introduction

Your first months at Bending Spoons will be a period of adjustment. You're learning how things work and figuring out how to contribute effectively. Getting up to speed can be intense. This document is here to help!

Most of this practical advice is evergreen, but it will be especially useful in the first few months. We've based it on the patterns we've observed over many years working with new Spooners. The aim is to help you direct your effort toward the right priorities and approach them in a way that sets you up for success.

The advice, in brief: Be diligent, track your work, communicate often, invest in collaboration, make yourself useful, focus on objectives over tasks, get to the bottom of things, think critically, get comfortable with uncertainty, and work hard. Each is explored in more detail below.

Be diligent

From day one, show that you're someone who can be counted on. Don't let anything fall through the cracks, and be reliable about your deadlines.

Being diligent also means investing in your own preparation. Take time to understand the context you're operating in, including Bending Spoons' principles and policies.

Practical tips

Come to meetings prepared. Read what's relevant beforehand, form your views in advance, and bring your questions and proposals. Be on time.

Follow through on your commitments. If you said you'd do something, do it. If something gets in the way, bring it up in advance rather than letting the deadline pass unnoticed.

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Get familiar with our foundational documents. Take the time to think through them properly and revisit them when needed. This will help you operate with greater autonomy over time.

Track your work

Maintain a comprehensive to-do list. At first, when your tracker has only a handful of items, this might feel unnecessary. But when tasks multiply, it will give you the structure needed to prioritize effectively.

Assign an urgency or timeframe to each task. Each day, review your list to decide what needs your attention first. This will help you avoid missing deadlines or letting lower-priority work take up too much space in your calendar.

Practical tips

Write down every new request promptly. Unless you choose to complete the task right away, add it to your tracker before doing anything else.

Keep your tracker current. Update it when a task has been completed, paused, canceled, or passed to another stakeholder.

Use a format that helps you prioritize. This might mean a calendar view with deadlines mapped out, a list with urgency labels, a board with color-coded items, or another structure entirely. Whatever the format, your tracker should help you understand at a glance the urgency and impact of each task.

Communicate often

When working with others, keep communication flowing. Other Spooners won't have complete visibility over your work. It's on you to update the relevant colleagues without waiting to be asked.

Others may be planning their own work around your timing, or wondering whether something is moving forward. The burden shouldn't be on them to keep checking in or tracking your contribution. Once something is with you, they should feel confident it's progressing and trust that you'll keep them informed.

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Practical tips

Acknowledge requests promptly. Even if you can’t act on something immediately, let the other person know that you’ve seen the message and taken ownership of the task.

Share regular progress updates. Let your collaborators know what they should expect from you and by when. As things evolve, keep them updated on where you are and where you’re headed, rather than waiting until you have a finished result.

Don’t sit on changes. If a task is delayed or deprioritized, don’t wait for others to chase you. Let them know as soon as possible and provide a new timeline.

Invest in collaboration

You'll work with people who won’t always operate or communicate in the way that feels most natural to you. However, making those interactions effective is part of a strong performance.

Successful collaboration comes from people who make the effort to understand and accommodate one another. Pay attention to how your colleagues prefer to communicate and approach their work, and be ready to adapt.

Work has a strong human component, and navigating it well will make you a better teammate and a stronger contributor.

Practical tips

Align upfront on shared work. When starting a project with others, clarify who’s doing what, how you’ll communicate, and what timeline you’re working toward.

If collaborating with someone feels difficult, address it directly. Ask your colleague about their preferences, explain your own, and find a workable path forward together. Never let things fester.

Know when to push and when to align. Share your view openly, even if it goes against the majority. But once a plan has been decided, commit to it fully, regardless of whether it was the one you advocated for.

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Make yourself useful

When prioritizing your to-dos, a useful guiding principle is: *How can I be most useful to the team right now?*

Your mission is to contribute to the team's objectives in the most effective way you can—which means thinking beyond what falls neatly within your defined role. At times, your biggest contribution may be spotting an important opportunity and raising it proactively. But often, the highest-value work isn't the most exciting. You may make the biggest difference by taking on something simple but time-consuming, freeing up a teammate to focus on other priorities they're best-positioned to handle.

A team-oriented approach tends to increase a Spooner's impact considerably. The opposite tendency—being picky about what you engage with, or treating your role as a fixed boundary—tends to reduce it.

Practical tips

If you're unsure what should be prioritized, ask. Your lead can help you understand what matters most right now. There's no need to guess.

Be the first one to step up. If a task comes up and you can take it on, don't wait for others to volunteer.

Pay attention to where help is needed. If a colleague is juggling a lot, offer to take something off their plate, making sure it's something you have the capacity and skills to handle.

Focus on objectives over tasks

When you take on a task, your natural instinct may be to complete exactly what was asked, then move on. Resist that instinct. At Bending Spoons, most tasks are inputs to a larger problem to address or opportunity to explore.

The mindset to develop is that of an owner, not an executor. An executor asks: "Did I do what was asked?" An owner asks: "Did we achieve what we were going for, and is there anything else I can do to make this better?"

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Nobody expects you to reinvent projects on day one without context. However, it’s good to cultivate the habit of curiosity about the bigger picture from the start. Over time, this will shift your focus from the immediate deliverable to the broader objective, and will lead you to fully own an initiative's direction and success.

Practical tips

Before diving in, make sure the goal is clear in your mind. What is this meant to achieve? How do we define success? Moving quickly is useful only if you’re moving in the right direction.

Gather context to guide your judgment. Find out what has already been done in pursuit of this or a similar objective, what has worked, what hasn’t, and what the team has learned. Build on that foundation rather than starting from scratch.

Don't treat task completion as the finish line. Your part isn’t over just because you’ve handed the baton off to the next stakeholder. Stay engaged until the loop is closed and the objective has been achieved.

Get to the bottom of things

A common pattern for new joiners is to notice things that are unclear or don't quite make sense, but stay quiet—assuming there must be a good reason they're missing.

That's an understandable instinct, but it’s not how you maximize learning or impact. If something is unclear, ask. If something still doesn't add up once you've gathered more context, raise a flag. At the end of the day, either you get a convincing explanation and learn something useful, or your question surfaces something that deserves attention. Both are valuable outcomes.

Practical tips

Don’t wait for the perfect moment. If you have a question, ask it. Whether you pose it in a meeting, on Slack, or in a document matters less. There’s no need to overthink it: We’re an approachable bunch.

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Don’t worry about looking inexperienced. Asking questions is one of the best ways to learn and grow, at any level of seniority. You’ll notice that the people around you, including the most tenured, ask a lot of them too. Curiosity is a fundamental attribute of a great Spooner.

If you’re not sure who the right person to ask is, start with your leads or mentor. They’re there to point you in the right direction.

Think critically

Very few things at Bending Spoons can be done well on autopilot. Even when something seems routine, resist the temptation to default to the most familiar solution.

The intellectually easiest path—the approach you already know—isn't always the most effective. The quality of the outcome often depends on your ability to stay engaged, question assumptions, and adapt your approach to the specifics at hand.

Practical tips

Question the standard approach. When introduced to an existing system or process, don't assume it’s optimal just because it’s established practice. If you spot a more effective path, test it and share your findings. Don't reinvent things for the sake of it, but don't treat anything as set in stone either.

Take a fresh perspective on your own defaults. As a thought exercise, step back from your work and ask yourself: Why do I approach this the way I do? Where are the weaknesses? What could be simplified or automated? With technology and your experience evolving fast, the answer may have changed since you last checked.

Challenge the limits. If you hear that something is too difficult or bound to take a certain amount of time, don’t accept that at face value. Still, use your judgment: Not every assumption is worth testing, and some constraints exist for good reasons.

Get comfortable with uncertainty

When facing ambiguous problems with many open questions, it's tempting to either keep analyzing in the hope that a perfect answer will emerge, or to assume someone else will step in with clear instructions.

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However, in a high-challenge environment like ours, you'll often have to venture into unexplored, uncertain territory.

The expectation isn't that you'll always find an impeccable solution, but that you'll keep moving forward rationally despite uncertainty.

Practical tips

Don't overthink a close call. Invest time upfront to understand the problem deeply, including the relevant context and constraints, and to devise and evaluate as many potentially strong solutions as you can. But if after that the options in front of you remain roughly equally valid, just pick one and implement it.

Expect to iterate. Start with a working hypothesis, test it, and use what you learn as input to refine your approach.

When you feel stuck, ask for input. Write down what you know, what you don't know, and your current best hypothesis, then share it with colleagues whose judgment you trust. Don't be lazy and delegate your thinking to others. At the same time, don't wait until you have a perfect proposal before sharing it.

Work hard

Bringing a high level of dedication, focus, and urgency is the most direct way to learn, make an impact, and progress your career.

This doesn't mean you should work unsustainably or say yes to every task regardless of your bandwidth. It means assigning a very high priority to your growth and contribution, and acting accordingly, day in, day out.

Practical tips

Give each day your full effort. When you wrap up, you should be able to say you applied the best of your abilities to the work in front of you and left nothing on the table.

Move with urgency. Don't let work drag on just because the deadline feels far off. If you can push something forward today, do so.

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Be disciplined in managing your time. A day full of meetings, Slack, and socializing can feel busy but yield little. Protect space to get things done and measure your day by how well you used each hour, not just the number of hours you put in.

Conclusion

The advice in this document reflects what, in our experience, tends to make the biggest difference in the early months. For more guidance along the way, make use of the support available to you: Your leads, teammates, mentor, the People Operations team, and the Spooniverse at large are all there to help you succeed.