

# **Instructor's Guide**

for

## ***Good First Impressions***

### **Overview**

The power of a positive first impression cannot be overestimated. Most employers form an opinion about a job candidate in a matter of minutes—sometimes seconds—and those first impressions are usually confirmed over the course of the interview. A good impression can provide much-needed momentum that can carry one through a job interview. A bad impression is almost impossible to overcome.

This video discusses the importance of making a positive first impression and offers specific strategies for doing so. It takes viewers through the ABCs of first impressions—Appearance, Behaviors, and Characteristics—and shows both positive and negative behaviors and attitudes in action. In addition, the video covers specific interview scenarios, such as group interviews and phone interviews, and how to make a good first impression in each.

Students should be encouraged to apply what they see in the video to their own interview experiences, making note of behaviors and personal characteristics they need to work on. The video provides natural breaks for questions for group discussion. Feel free to follow the cues, pausing for activities and discussion as your own schedule dictates.

### **Presentation Suggestions**

The job interview is an employer's chance to evaluate a candidate's attitude, confidence and enthusiasm; his communication and people skills; and his potential ability to do the job. Believe it or not, most of this can be assessed in just the first five minutes.

Begin by asking students if anyone has ever made a bad first impression on *them*. It doesn't have to be in a work setting, though that would be preferred. Ask students what the other person did that prompted the negative reaction. Was it something they said? The way they looked? Was it a particular behavior or habit that was annoying or upsetting? Was it a part of their personality that stood out? Point out that we all make judgments about people, almost instantaneously, but that it is much harder to recognize the impression that we give off ourselves. If you'd like, make a list on the board or overhead of ways to make both a positive and negative first impression. Feel free to add to that list after the video.

Point out that there are as many ways to make a great first impression as a negative one, and that these strategies and behaviors can be improved through practice and self-awareness. Stress that by making a positive first impression, interviews will go smoother and the chance of a positive outcome—in the form of a job offer—increases dramatically.

When you feel students have begun thinking about these issues, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the students to state their answers and discuss them.

Show the video. Encourage students to take notes or to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss any changes they made to their answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information they learned. Follow up this discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from students or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group. Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

### **Anticipation Quiz**

**Directions:** Answer these questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. How long do you have to make a good first impression?
2. What are the general rules for dressing and grooming for an interview?
3. Name three positive behaviors you can showcase in the first few minutes of an interview.
4. How do you make a good impression in a group interview situation?

### **Answer Key**

1. Opinions vary, but generally three minutes or less.
2. Dress conservatively and professionally. Be clean and neat. Avoid anything that would be distracting.
3. Answers will vary but may include the following: maintain eye contact, offer a firm handshake, have good posture, speak clearly, and smile.
4. Balance your self-confidence and leadership skills with your people skills. Show you are a team player.

## **Activities**

### **Activity #1**

**Title:** First Impressions Checklist

**Format:** Individual/Group

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Materials:** Paper, pen

**Procedure:**

1. While first impressions are made in the first few minutes, they can be prepared for hours ahead of time. The video discusses several things job seekers can do in advance to make a positive impression. Ask students to brainstorm a list of five or ten things they can do the day of the interview or even the night before to ensure their first impression is a good one. This could include ironing clothes, packing a notepad and pens, printing out another copy of their resume, getting directions, trimming nails and facial hair, and many other strategies for creating a professional image.
2. Once students have made their lists, come back together as a class and create a master list on the board or overhead. Have students add anything to their lists that they missed. Encourage them to take those lists home and use them to prepare for their next interview. They shouldn't leave the house until everything is checked off.

### **Activity #2**

**Title:** Gone in Sixty Seconds

**Format:** Pairs

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Materials:** Simulated office environment (desk and chairs), stopwatch or timer

**Procedure:**

1. By far the best way to prepare for an interview—especially for the first few minutes of one—is to roleplay. Break students into pairs and assign them each a role of interviewer or interviewee. Tell them they are to roleplay the first sixty seconds of a job interview and that you will be timing them. The goal of the interviewee is to introduce herself and make a positive first impression using the skills and strategies suggested in the video.
2. Have students take turns roleplaying in front of the class. Time them. After each “introduction,” give the class time to make suggestions about what was positive and what could be improved. Encourage them to keep the criticism constructive, and be sure that everyone has the chance to be the interviewee. Consider taking the first turn yourself and making a few obvious missteps for students to pick up on (for example, a weak handshake, a lack of eye contact, mumbling, poor posture, a sour attitude).
3. When students have finished, come together as a class and discuss what they have learned. What seemed to be the most common problems or issues? What strategies for making a good impression seemed most effective?

## **Discussion Questions**

1. There are certain key personality characteristics nearly all employers look for, namely punctuality, communication skills, enthusiasm, professionalism, friendliness, and self-confidence. What can you do in the first few minutes of an interview to project these?
2. How much does personal appearance matter in an interview situation? Should looks matter that much? Are there some types of jobs where they matter more than others?
3. How might an employer already have formed an impression of you (positive or negative) even before you show up to the interview? Where might that impression have come from?
4. What can you do in the *remainder* of an interview to overcome a bad first impression? Give examples.

## **Quick Quiz**

**Note:** You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise.

**Directions:** Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. You generally have between five and ten minutes to make a first impression.
2. A bad interviewer is an opportunity for you to steer the direction of the interview.
3. Employers assume that any negative behaviors you display during an interview will also show up in your job performance.
4. The key to making a positive impression is to wear clothes that help you to really stand out.
5. When making a first impression, it's best to avoid eye contact.
6. Interviews can tell almost as much about you over the phone as in person.
7. You can establish rapport with an interviewer by making small talk.
8. Good posture (standing and sitting up straight) suggests you lack confidence.
9. During a panel interview, be sure to address your answers to the group—not just the person who asked the question.
10. Information about you on the Internet—including personal information on Facebook—can contribute to an employer's impression of you.

**Answer Key**

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| 1. False | 6. True  |
| 2. True  | 7. True  |
| 3. True  | 8. False |
| 4. False | 9. True  |
| 5. False | 10. True |

**Homework Option**

Have each student ask several people what their first impressions of him or her were; then have students record the responses in a notebook or on a sheet of paper. People to ask can include friends, significant others, bosses, coworkers, fellow students, and acquaintances. Encourage students to get response from four or five people. Instruct them to go through the responses and look for patterns and similarities. When the impression was positive, what made it positive? If the initial impression was negative, what, exactly, stood out? This will help students recognize behavior or mannerisms that are more readily noticed by others. Have students pick one thing they need to work on in order to make a better first impression in their next interview.