

Dress and Groom for Career Success

Second Edition

Instructor's Guide

Overview

One's appearance—the way they dress, groom, and present his- or herself—has a direct impact on how people perceive them in interviews or at work. To advance in a career a person needs to present his or herself as a professional—someone who knows the industry and who can be counted on to get the job done. That all starts with the impression they make.

This video provides viewers with the dressing and grooming tips they need to be successful during their job search and to stay successful once they are hired. It presents strategies and suggestions for apparel, personal hygiene, and behaviors and mannerisms, all with an eye to looking and acting professional. Numerous examples of what is appropriate and inappropriate are provided to give viewers a clear sense of what it takes to make a positive first impression.

The video provides general guidelines for dressing and grooming that will apply to most industries and workplaces. Keep in mind that standards and conventions of personal appearance vary from job to job and you should work with your clients or students to devise a dressing and grooming strategy that is appropriate for their situations.

Presentation Suggestions

Ask participants to describe their personal appearance the last time they interviewed for a job. What did they wear? How was their hair done? Did they use perfume or cologne? How much jewelry did they wear? What color was their suit? Were there aspects of their personal appearance that they accidentally neglected, such as trimming their nails or covering a tattoo? Was their choice of clothing comparable to the interviewer or was their choice of clothing not formal enough for the interview? Did they present themselves well? Were they confident? Did they maintain eye contact, offer a firm handshake, and sit up straight? Did they feel like they made a great first impression? If not, where did they go wrong?

Ask these questions to establish a sense of the many considerations involved in creating a professional appearance as well as some common pitfalls that participants have encountered. If you'd like you can make a running list on a board or overhead.

When you feel participants have a better sense of the many concerns involved with proper dress and grooming, 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 once everyone has completed the Anticipation Quiz. Encourage students to make changes to their Anticipation Quiz answers while watching the video. Consider allowing students the opportunity to change their work whenever the video suggests a pause.

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 in the video. Follow the 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 will revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. The key to making a good first impression is looking and acting professional. True or false?
2. What is the relationship between personal appearance and self-confidence?
3. How do you go about dressing professionally if you are on a budget?
4. List five things you should pay close attention to with regard to your grooming and personal hygiene.
5. What should you do if you have questions or concerns about your workplace's dress code?
6. List three behaviors or mannerisms that contribute to making a positive impression.

Answer Key

1. True.
2. If you are pleased with your appearance—if you think you look sharp—you will be more confident in your abilities as well.
3. (Answers may vary.) Shop at thrift stores. Borrow interview clothes from friends or family. Find non-profit organizations that lend out interview clothes to those who

lack financial resources.

4. (Answers may vary.) Wash, trim, and style hair; shave or groom mustache/beard; brush teeth; clip and clean fingernails; remove visible body piercing jewelry; cover tattoos; use make-up sparingly; shower and use deodorant.
5. You can consult the written company policy, but serious concerns should be addressed directly with your employer.
6. (Answers may vary.) Smile, offer a firm handshake, maintain eye contact, use good manners, watch your posture, and keep your body under control.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Interview Checklist

Format: Small group to large group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. Organize the class into small groups of three or four and have them generate a checklist of *everything* they need to remember to do when getting ready for an interview. This should include any item related to their personal appearance and preparation that can be handled the morning of or night before. Examples include: brush teeth, iron clothes, pack briefcase, and put on deodorant. Lists do not have to be gender or workplace specific.
2. Come back together as a whole class and discuss your lists. Create a master checklist on a board or overhead for everyone to copy down. Alternatively you can collect the lists and create your own master list to print out and give to participants during the next meeting. Advise them to use this list before every job interview.

Activity #2

Title: Best and Worst Impressions

Format: Small group roleplay

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: List of defining personal characteristics

Procedure:

1. Write the following attributes/characteristics on index cards or scraps of paper: **lazy**, **disinterested**, **nervous**, **disrespectful**, **over-enthusiastic**, and **shy**. Break class into groups of 2-5. Give one characteristic to each participant, making sure that members of a group each get a different characteristic. Participants should keep their selection secret from the other members of their group.
2. Participants should take turns roleplaying the first sixty seconds of a job interview (taking turns as job seeker and interviewer). The job seeker should try to give the impression exemplified by the characteristic written on their card. After sixty seconds, whoever acted as the role of the interviewer should try to guess what characteristic the job seeker was expressing.
3. When everyone has had a chance to play the role of job seeker, come back together as a large group and discuss what participants noticed. What behaviors or mannerisms stood out as giving a negative first impression? Make a list of such behaviors to avoid.
4. Finally, ask for two volunteers who would like to come up and roleplay a *positive* first impression with the characteristics **confident** and **professional**. Alternatively you can ask a participant to be the interviewer and play the role of the job seeker yourself. Discuss the differences between the positive and negative impressions.

Discussion Questions

1. The video states that there is a positive correlation between personal appearance and self-confidence. Do you agree? Do you think looking your best has a direct impact on how you feel and act? Are there times when what you wear changes your mood, attitude, or perception of yourself and what you are capable of? If you think there is a connection, why do you think that is?
2. Conventional wisdom says that in order to get hired you need to be exceptional, to be the best candidate, and to stand out from the crowd. The same conventional wisdom says that when it comes to dress and grooming, you should be conservative and, above all, professional. What can you do to make yourself stand out more during an interview without coming off as *unprofessional* and risking your chances of getting hired? Are there ways you can subtly enhance or accentuate your personal appearance to make an even better first impression without going “over the top”?
3. So much of dress and grooming advice seems to be common sense, and yet every day hundreds of people are fired or are rejected as job candidates because they failed to look and act professional. What challenges do you face when it comes to dressing,

grooming, and behaving professionally? Is it a matter of time? Of money? Of not knowing what's expected of you? What can you do to overcome those challenges?

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. If you read the quiz, write or project the responses for the group to see.

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

1. You should dress for the position you *want*, not necessarily for the one you have.
2. Your personal appearance reflects directly upon the company you work for.
3. A suit and tie is generally appropriate attire for an interview, even if it won't be required on the job.
4. It's better to wear too much perfume or cologne rather than too little.
5. Women should wear high heels (three inches or more) during job interviews as they are more professional-looking.
6. Looking your best can increase your self-confidence.
7. The best suit colors for interview attire are generally blue, black, and gray.
8. When it comes to dressing for an interview, you are better off standing out by wearing something untraditional rather than playing it safe and conservative.
9. People who interact with customers face-to-face need to be especially conscious of their grooming.
10. You don't need to dress up for video interviews, via Skype for example, as you would a traditional face-to-face interview.

Answer Key

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

Homework Option

While the video prescribes a fairly conservative model for dressing and grooming, there are still a wide variety of looks and styles available that are both fashionable and professional. Using magazines you have at home or pictures from the internet, find two images (one male, one female) of individuals whose appearances immediately give off a positive and professional impression (in your opinion). Bring the images to class and be prepared to discuss what you like about the way these two people are dressed and groomed, and why you would be more likely to hire them over other candidates. As a class you can discuss what all of the people in the images have in common.