

PROFESSIONAL IMAGE (For Interviewing)

VERY FIRST IMPRESSION: *Resume/Cover Letter*

A resume by itself can never get you a job, but it can keep you from getting a job! Prospective employers often decide whether to keep or trash a resume within the first five to 10 seconds of reading it.

2ND “FIRST” IMPRESSION: *Messages on answering machines and cell phones*

Make sure all your messages are business-like and pleasant-sounding.

3RD “FIRST” IMPRESSION: *Speaking with employer on the phone* when setting up the interview.

1. Demonstrate courtesy by returning ALL calls (even if you are not interested)
2. Lack of distractions (radio/crying children)
3. Show enthusiasm (SMILE while talking!)
4. Make every effort to be flexible and agree to meet their interview schedule.



FIRST IMPRESSION “IN PERSON”: *Physical appearance and attire upon entering office for interview* Interview attire should be business professional, regardless of what the attire may be later for “on the job.”

1. Classic suit is best for both men and women. (Alternative is a jacket with dress pants or skirt)
 - a. Neutral color, preferably dark (navy, black, gray, brown, beige)
 - b. Solid or very small pattern (like a pinstripe)
 - c. Hemline conservative for women;
 - d. Well-made, well-fitted for men; always clean and pressed for both.
2. Accessories
 - a. Blouse/shirt: Light/neutral or small print or stripe, comfortable (no low-cut or sheer for women)
 - b. Shoes (Both): Dress shoes for men; pumps for women with no open heels or toes, low to medium heels, comfortable. Match to suit, if possible. New or near new, polished, no scuffs
 - c. Ties (Men): Conservative but colorful.
 - d. Purse (Women): none necessary, or a small one
 - e. Hose (Women): skin-colored is best; or coordinate hose to shoes; no runs
 - f. Jewelry (Both): a watch and one ring per hand; additional for women could be small earrings, a bracelet, a necklace, or a pin (not all at once).
 - g. No tattoos (at least not showing)
 - h. No unusual body piercings with metal pieces showing
3. Hair and Nails
 - a. Clean hair and not “too wild”
 - b. Very long hair should be pulled back or up
 - c. Nails manicured: neatly trimmed and clean (or polished for women)
 - d. Fresh shave or good trim of mustache/beard.
4. Makeup for Women
 - a. USE SOME, even if you are not used to it! But keep it understated.
 - b. Foundation, small amount of blush, small amount of neutral eye color (pencil or shadow), mascara, and lipstick to harmonize with suit, blouse.

NEXT IMPRESSION “UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL”:

1. Handshake: A firm handshake is very important to show confidence, so practice!
2. Eye contact: Good eye contact is absolutely essential, and a lack of it may cost you the job.
3. Perfume/Cologne: NONE is best, or just a touch of a mild fragrance (you will most likely be in a closed small office)
4. Breath: If you smoke, use breath mints (NOT gum), and don't smoke in the car.
5. Manners: Politeness and consideration of others is more important than ever in business

IMPRESSION YOU MAKE DURING INTERVIEW:

1. Attitude (positive, negative, interested, bored)
2. Demeanor, voice tone, body language
3. Communication skills
4. Confidence level (how well you sell yourself)
5. Personality

FINAL IMPRESSION: *Close of interview*

1. THANK INTERVIEWERS for their time and interest
2. Shake hands, if appropriate
3. Ask when you might expect to hear something from them (or contact them).
4. MOST IMPORTANTLY: write a thank-you letter immediately!

OTHER REMINDERS:

1. NO SMOKING (not even in the car on your way to interview)
2. NO CHEWING GUM
3. ARRIVE EARLY
4. On arrival, go to bathroom for one last check on appearance.
5. If nervous, breathe deeply few times and mentally pump yourself up.
6. Be friendly and/or complimentary to receptionist or secretary.

TIPS FOR ONCE ON THE JOB:

1. You can dress in line with what others in company wear, but an excellent formula for success is to dress for the position you want, not the one you have!
2. Many companies have adopted the custom of “Casual Fridays.” This does not mean that anything goes; in fact, many companies are now specifying no jeans and no shorts. Again, the advice is to look at what the boss wears on “casual” days.
3. We are hearing more about “Business Casual.” This is simply a step down from the attire described above, but includes:
 - a. Jackets, vests
 - b. Shirts, blouses, sweaters, turtle-necks
 - c. Skirts or pants; casual slacks
 - d. Ties (optional)
 - e. Shoes: casual loafers, boots, flats (sometimes even tennis shoes or sandals)
 - f. Jewelry: can be more fun and casual type
 - g. More recently, jeans are acceptable when worn with a nice shirt or jacket

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

Taken partially from *The Newsletter of the National Business Education Association*, January 1996.

When interviewing, a dark suit is most appropriate for both men and women. Once on the job, the most basic rule is to take your cue from what others in the business are wearing, especially those in leadership roles. In some offices, a coat and a tie are required; in others, suits must be a certain cut and color and ties must be conservative. At the other end of the spectrum are offices where jeans and T-shirts are acceptable. But even in offices where informality is the rule, employees will wear a suit or other professional attire if they know they have a meeting with someone from outside their office.

Casual attire. Many companies have adopted the custom of “Casual Fridays.” This does not mean that anything goes; in fact, many companies are now specifying no jeans and no shorts. It’s okay to change the suit for slacks and a shirt or sweater, but the rules of appropriateness for work, cleanliness and neatness still apply.

Again, the advice is to look at what the boss is wearing. If casual attire is specified for a company picnic or social event, ask what that means. Don’t embarrass yourself by showing up in cut-off jeans and flip-flops when everyone else is wearing slacks or casual dresses.

Grooming. Hair should be clean and neatly trimmed. Men—clean shave or neatly trimmed beard/mustache. Women—makeup should be appropriate, not overdone, and well applied. Be sure fingernails are clean. Be careful with fragrance or cologne; none is best. Don’t forget deodorant. Clean teeth and fresh breath are important. Clothes should be well pressed and clean with no stains, no unraveling hems or frayed collars and cuffs. Shoes should be fairly new, or polished with no worn down heels or holes.