

The Workplace

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A Fact Sheet

Highlights

Making a good first impression depends on:

- ◇ *Your choice of attire including accessories.*
- ◇ *The way you are groomed.*
- ◇ *The manner in which you greet the interviewer.*

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Making a Good First Impression—Dressing the Part

Most interviewers form an impression of a job candidate in the first 30 seconds or less after first meeting the applicant. Although jobs are never offered solely on how a candidate is dressed for an interview, making a good first impression is very important. You want to make sure your first impression is a good one that contributes to the overall success of the interview process.

Your first impression is determined by the way you “package” yourself for the interview. You want your appearance to communicate respect for authority and the position as well as confidence in your ability. Making a good first impression depends on 1) your choice of attire including accessories, 2) the way you are groomed, and 3) the manner in which you greet the interviewer.

Let’s look first at attire. The clothes you wear for your interview do not have to be new or expensive, but they must be appropriate as defined by the level of position for which you are applying, the type of work you will be doing, and your personal taste. Prior to the interview, investigate the dress code for the company, whether written or implied. Choose an outfit that will make you look as though you belong. For women applying for most jobs, a business suit or dress with low heels is the expected. For men, a business suit with a white shirt and simple tie is the usual interview attire. Conservative colors are usually best for both men and women, but select a color that complements you and makes you feel good about yourself.



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Accessories should be functional and contribute to your overall appearance. Accessories that can be distracting to the interviewer and a temptation to “fiddle with” to the candidate should be kept to a minimum. A watch and pair of earrings are probably sufficient for women. For men, a watch is adequate. Jewelry associated with any particular group, such as fraternities, sororities, or civic organizations, can have a negative impact

and probably should be avoided. Wear attractive and comfortable shoes that complement your outfit. Make sure that your shoes are clean and that the heels and toes are not worn or scuffed. Although high tech and more creative jobs may be the exception, dress conservatively when in doubt.

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A terrific outfit with the perfect accessories is of little value if you are not well groomed. Hands and fingernails should be clean and neat. For women, well-manicured nails are short to medium length, polished with clear or neutral polish that is neither chipped nor peeling. Long, glamorous, brightly colored nails have no place in most interview situations. For men, nails should be short, trimmed and clean. Hair should also be freshly washed, combed, and businesslike. Getting a trim a week or so before the day of the interview helps to ensure manageable, neat hair. Both men and women should use cologne sparingly. Make-up should also be kept to a minimum. Paying attention to detail in grooming yourself signals to your prospective employer that you will pay attention to detail and take pride in your job responsibilities.

How you greet the interviewer should never be underestimated. A warm, sincere

Sources:

AERO Community. (2001). Belmont Business Enterprise Centre Inc. <http://www.bbec.asn.au/>.

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greeting that communicates openness, enthusiasm, and a genuine interest in the company is essential to making a good first impression. Stand up straight with shoulders back when meeting someone. Look them in the eye as you offer to shake hands. Do not wait for formal introductions or for the other person to offer his or her hand first. Good posture and good eye contact coupled with a firm, full (but not painful) handshake and a broad smile shows confidence in yourself and demonstrates to your potential boss that you meet people well.

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