

Workplace Readiness Series

Making a Great First Impression

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Your appearance is important, whether you are being interviewed or working at your job. This includes the way you dress and the way you walk and stand. Your appearance at the interview tells the employer how neat and professional you would be on the job.

Most employers will look you over and in a couple of minutes will have formed an opinion of you based on what they see. This is why it is important to be aware of how you look to others. In fact, how much a person is paid depends a lot on how they look when they interview for a job.

Here are some basic rules for dressing properly:

Dos

- Wear clean, wrinkle-free clothes that are well-fitting.
- Make sure that the buttons are sewn on.
- Wear appropriate shoes in good condition.
- Your hair should be clean and styled neatly.
- Men should be neatly shaved.
- Have clean and trimmed nails.
- Use deodorant.

Don'ts

- Do not wear heavy perfume or aftershave.
- Women should not use heavy makeup.
- Do not dress flashy, wear extreme hairdos or revealing clothing to get attention.

- Avoid wearing clothes that are too casual like cut-off jeans and screen-printed T-shirts.
- Avoid big purses, dangling earrings or jingling belts.
- Do not smoke, chew gum or tobacco.

For example, when Mary goes to apply for a job, she puts on her best slacks or skirt and white blouse. She makes sure that her clothes are pressed and her shoes are polished. Since she is going to apply for a job as a waitress, her hair is clean and combed neatly. She knows that she will be working around food and close to customers, so she always uses a minimum amount of makeup and perfume. She also keeps her hair and fingernails clean and neat.

When Harry goes to apply for a job, he always makes sure that he has dark-colored pants and a white or blue shirt. His clothes are clean and ironed. His hair is neat and well-groomed. He makes sure his face is neatly shaved. Harry feels much better when he is clean and fresh. He can think about the interview and his answers to the questions he is asked because he does not have to worry about how he looks.

Never take friends or relatives with you when looking for a job. This is very important because it shows that you are independent. It also shows that you know how to balance family and work responsibilities. Also, never bring portable CD players, video games, food or drinks when job hunting. Turn off your cell phone so that you are not interrupted.



Revised and correlated to

Arkansas Frameworks for Career Orientation

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Another part of your appearance is the way you carry yourself. This includes the way you stand, speak and make eye contact. When you are asking for an application for employment, make sure you look the employer in the eyes and speak clearly. This shows the employer that you have confidence in yourself.

Here are some ways you can display confidence:

- Know when to go to different job sites.
- Never go job hunting between the hours of 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. This is usually lunchtime.
- Never interrupt someone to ask for an application.
- Start every day with a positive feeling, such as, "I do have a chance of getting this job."
- Never go to a company feeling down on yourself or discouraged.
- Speak with confidence and talk directly to the manager. Do not look up at the ceiling or down at the floor.

In the space provided, answer "yes" or "no" to the following questions. These deal with a job applicant's appearance and self-esteem.

	Right Way	Wrong Way
Mary wears her new shorts to the interview.		
John wears clean jeans when looking for a job as a laborer.		
Joseph has on a pressed shirt and pants.		
Dave decides to apply at the Fish Inn. Since it's 12:30, he decides to eat and pick up an application while he's eating.		
Mary lights a cigarette and asks the manager for an ashtray.		
John is chewing gum during his job interview so he won't show his nervousness.		
Mary is wearing her new mini-skirt to look for a job.		
John is shy, so he doesn't look up during the interview.		
Mary knows she will never find a job.		

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Write down everything you will wear on your next interview:

I

Job interview at: _____

Date: _____

What I will wear: _____

II

Job interview at: _____

Date: _____

What I will wear: _____

III

Job interview at: _____

Date: _____

What I will wear: _____

You never have a second chance to make a great first impression! A neat appearance lets your prospective employer know that you really want the job and have the confidence to do it. Taking the time to prepare will allow you to be more comfortable at your interview so that you can focus on the details of the job. Remember to smile and make eye contact. Each day is a great day to make a first impression.

Sources

- Bolles, Richard Nelson, *What Color Is Your Parachute: 2003*.
 Otto, Luther B., and Vaughn R.A. Call, *Career Smarts*.
 Taylor, Dorothy, *How to Get a Job – How Do I Look?*, Texas A&M University System Publication.

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