# Job Savvy

# How to Be a Success at Work

Sixth Edition

## Chapter 3: Making a Good Impression

## Video Transcript

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# Title Card

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# Chapter 3 Making a Good Impression

People form impressions based on looks and actions. In this chapter, you will learn how to dress and groom for confidence and success. Because your appearance often determines what kind of first impression you make, it’s important that you look and feel as good as possible to make that first impression positive.

This presentation will help you demonstrate your self-worth and a positive view of self, make a good impression on the job by demonstrating appropriate dress, personal hygiene, mannerisms, and attitude, and recognize nonverbal messages. You will then identify strategies to make a positive impression on others.

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# Introduction

When the first edition of this book was written in 1990, society had different standards for appearance than today. Most companies followed a business formal or business casual dress code—but today there are more dress exceptions than hard rules. Exceptions and relaxed standards make it trickier to give advice about appearance in the workplace. The best advice for making a good impression is to learn what the formal and informal appearance standards are for your specific workplace.

The implication is that you will care about your job the same way you care for yourself. Topics like dress and hygiene might seem basic, but they are critical elements for work success. This chapter will also help you better understand how other factors, like a positive attitude and confidence, can help you make a good impression on the job.

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# Dress for Success

What to wear on the job is a difficult decision, unless the employer provides a uniform. About 15% of workers are employed in manufacturing, construction, and agricultural jobs, and most of these jobs require employees to wear either uniforms or clothes that comply with safety regulations. The remaining 85% of workers are employed in jobs that allow a wider variety of clothing types. Many employers have dress guidelines or codes that help guide these choices. According to surveys, employer dress codes often align with what most employees prefer to wear.

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# Dress for Success (continued)

An internet search using the term business attire will provide examples of dress styles matching various dress codes. Business formal attire is typically worn in highly professional offices while business casual is found in corporate offices and government workplaces.

In small businesses and entrepreneurial companies where there is often little personal contact with customers, casual or street clothes might be more common. Uniforms are typically used in businesses providing health care, automotive services, grocery stores, and fast food.

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# General Dress Guidelines

The best way to know how to dress is to ask. Your supervisor and coworkers know about official and unofficial dress codes and different types of clothes for special work assignments. For example, many “casual” dress codes don’t allow workers to wear jeans or shorts to the office.

Some clothing is suitable for a night on the town but inappropriate for the office. If you are unsure about wearing something to work it is best to not wear it. Make sure that the clothes you wear are neat and clean and press them if necessary. Even casual dress must be tidy.

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# General Dress Guidelines (continued)

Uniforms vary depending on the type of work being done. Hats, scrubs, aprons, and/or specially designed shirts may be required. Knowing the “uniform rules” used by your employer is important. For example. Are you responsible to keep the uniform clean and pressed? How many uniforms do you need? Who pays for repairs or replacing the uniform that is accidentally damaged? How should a uniform be worn? Do you need special shoes or a blouse to be worn with it?

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# Personal Protective Equipment

Safety considerations must be taken on some jobs. Loose clothing or dangling jewelry can get caught and pull you into machinery. Hard leather or steel toed shoes are a must if something heavy could drop on your feet. Jeans help protect you from scrapes and cuts that can happen on some jobs.

Find out what safety equipment is required on the job, and then wear it. Safety equipment can be slightly uncomfortable, but, if you don’t wear it, you could lose your job (or get hurt). An employer is responsible for your safety and will not tolerate safety infractions. Personal protective equipment includes safety glasses, ear protectors, hard hats, masks, and gloves. If you work with hazardous materials, your employer must provide protective clothing and teach you how to prevent injury.

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# Personal Hygiene and Grooming

In some jobs, your own health—as well as that of customers or patients—depends on your good hygienic practices and personal body care. For example, the law requires healthcare organizations and food-preparation facilities to enforce certain sanitary practices. You must wash your hands with soap and water after using the restroom. This helps protect you from disease or from spreading germs and is particularly important in jobs where you prepare or serve food. Additional precautions are taken in many occupations. Become familiar with the hygiene practices required for your job.

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# Personal Hygiene and Grooming (continued)

Both grooming requirements and dress codes in the workplace must be reasonably accommodated according to federal regulations. "Accommodated" is a legal term that means the employer must adjust their rules so both the employee and employer can arrive at an agreement that fits the needs of both parties. This means there may be occasions when an employer must allow beards and hair styles that are worn as part of a person's religious beliefs.

Practice standard grooming practices like showering regularly, brushing your teeth, and maintaining and neat appearance. Make sure you know your workplace’s feelings on facial hair, makeup, strong scents like perfume and cologne, piercings, and body art, like tattoos.

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# Special Personal Considerations

Three specific issues regarding appearance justify special attention: physical health, weight, and skin care. Being in good physical health allows you to look and feel your best so you can perform your work confidently and fully. For more physical jobs, this may require you to exercise regularly. Exercise improves your stamina, helps relieve stress, and can help alleviate job-related stress injuries. For all of these reasons, it makes good sense to maintain good physical health.

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# Special Personal Considerations (continued)

When it comes to weight, the goal is to be healthy and confident. If you have insecurities or health concerns related to your weight then you may want to research healthy eating habits or exercise. Do what you need to do to look and feel your best!

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# Special Personal Considerations (continued)

Many people experience skin irritations, disorders, and diseases caused by air quality, diet, or environmental issues. Other times these conditions are genetic. If your skin condition is weighing on your mind or interfering with your work performance, consult with your health insurance provider to find a skin specialist (often called a dermatologist). A dietitian or naturopath may be helpful as well.

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# Mannerisms and Habits

Mannerisms and habits can have as powerful an influence on people as appearance. Look at other people and determine what mannerisms they exhibit that negatively affect the way you feel about them. Examine yourself for any such behavior. Ask friends and family to tell you whether they observe undesirable traits in your conduct.

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# Mannerisms and Habits (continued)

Irritating mannerisms may take many forms. Some common problems include tobacco use, chewing gum, wearing earbuds, using slang or profanity, as well as texting or talking on a cell phone. Most organizations have banned smoking on the job. In some cases, smoking is restricted to certain areas.

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# Mannerisms and Habits

During your first months of work, your superiors and coworkers will form opinions of you based on your actions and attitudes. These first impressions are important to your success on the job. They may affect the work that you are assigned and even future promotions.

To create a positive impression, be a learner. Pay attention and listen to directions.

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# Have a Positive Attitude

Also, be a part of the team. Do your part and be helpful. Be business-like. Speak in a professional manner. Get to work on time. Be positive. Recognize your contribution to the work team. Focus on the value your supervisor sees in your ability.

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# Good Communication

Good communication in the workplace requires both speaking and listening. To effectively communicate in the workplace, you must actively listen, process what you hear, and then speak. When you speak clearly you appear confident to others. However, speaking in an inaudible voice or not looking at the person you are talking to when you are speaking gives the impression that you lack confidence.

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# Conclusion

First impressions are made only once. Make sure what you’re conveying about yourself is positive. The best-dressed, sweetest-smelling negative coworker in the workplace is still the negative coworker, and everyone else will avoid that well-dressed negative person. Your actions will influence the impression others have of you. If you are upbeat, your boss and coworkers will view you positively.

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# Conclusion (continued)

Remember, your actions will influence the impression others have of you. If you are upbeat, your boss and coworkers will view you positively. Smile, be friendly, and show interest in your work to let others know that you want to be a part of the team.