



Grooming to Make an Impression



Work It Out

Growing Your Knowledge Base



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Grooming to Make an Impression

In general, good grooming and personal hygiene signals that you care about your appearance and yourself. When people do not look after themselves this can indicate that they do not respect or care for themselves and this can indicate how they may treat others as well.

Importance of good grooming

When you work for a business, you become associated with it and can often be considered a representative of that business to the outside world. This means that your employer will have expectations of how you present yourself for work. You are indicating what that business is like by association. This is particularly the case for people involved in any customer and supplier interactions and is not limited to sales. Employers want you to portray a certain image to the outside world, based on how the business positions itself in the market place. This is often the reason that many businesses will adopt a uniform or have some standard requirements for dress. They are trying to present themselves to potential customers in a certain way.

When you present for an interview, employers will be thinking about you as a representative of their business, therefore you need to be well presented and groomed.

Grooming and interview impressions

Your presentation at an interview can have a major impact on your success, either positively or negatively so getting it right is important. Inappropriate dressing is one of the biggest turn-offs for interviewers.

Often how people appear colours the view that others have of them, even though that is not necessarily an indication of how a person may perform on the job, those first impressions count. This includes not only our clothing, but your personal grooming and hygiene as well.

First impressions are so important because they can be lasting and they can influence decisions both consciously and unconsciously. Our clothes and our grooming influence non-verbal communication which we know has the biggest impact on how we are perceived. We also know that first impressions and last impressions can be profound so getting those first impression right (the first 30 seconds) is essential.

If the interviewer notices poor grooming right away, it may be hard to recover from that first impression, no matter how good your answers. In short, poor grooming can be distracting and you may not be heard or able to make a connection.





As noted at the beginning of this guide, good grooming is an indication to the interviewer that you pay attention to detail, and that you take care of yourself. If you do not take the time to look after your own basic hygiene or dress appropriately, that can signal that you will not make an effort as an employee. Good grooming is especially important if you are applying for a customer-facing position such as sales. The first impression you make on the interviewer is the one you will be making to the company's clients and this is how they will assess you as suitable or not.

Good grooming demonstrates self-esteem and confidence. These are highly desirable qualities in an employee. All companies are looking for candidates who have the confidence to represent themselves well. That gives the impression that you will be decisive and effective as an employee.

What you wear to an interview and what you may wear for work may be very different. Ultimately what is important is that you signal to the employer that you have made an effort and that you can look presentable if needed.

How to groom for an interview

Before you attend an interview, you should think about the business for which you are interviewing. What is the nature of the business, how do staff present and appear to the public? You can find this out by taking a visit to the business and observing staff, how they dress and what they wear. This will give you an idea of expectations.

People have a bias towards people who seem to be like themselves. This is an unconscious bias, but if you are aware of this tendency, then you can use it to your advantage. This includes not only your grooming and appearance, but your behaviour as well.

Other Resources

This is a quick video on How to [Dress for a Job Interview](#)

This is a good article from SEEK about [What to wear to a Job interview](#), including information on your choice of clothing colour.

Check out this resource from Total Jobs covering what to wear to an interview by industry category.





Grooming for an interview always starts with good hygiene and a neat and tidy appearance.

You will probably dress a little more formally than you may be expected to present on the job. Let your research on the business guide you.

It is all about impressions and messy clothing or a grubby appearance will have a big impact on how an interviewer views you as a potential employee.

There are some basic preparations to make before you present for an interview:

- shower before the interview and use deodorant - body odour in an interview is an instant turnoff
- brush your teeth before the interview
- refrain from smoking before an interview, if you smoke make sure you brush your teeth and hands before going into the interview. You can also make sure you brush down your clothes to help remove any smoke smells that are lingering in your clothing – smoking is offensive for non-smokers and it is usually quite overpowering in a small room so keep this in mind. If you are unable to brush your teeth after smoking, then at least use a breath mint to help disguise the odour
- have your hair styled or cut in the days before the interview if possible and make sure you wash and comb it before the interview. Young men should be clean-shaven or have neatly-trimmed beards
- make sure your nails are trimmed and clean, avoid nail polish and very long nails
- dress appropriately for the job you are seeking - for the vast majority of positions this will mean a smart, conservative suit or smart shirt and pants. Keep loud colours, ultra-fashionable styles and message or slogan T-shirts for leisure time.
- if you do not have appropriate clothes secure these ahead of time – there are many options for getting clothes cheaply
- make sure that none of your clothes are wrinkled, or worse still, stained
- pay attention to details such as shining your shoes
- if you wear glasses, make sure the lenses are clean
- keep make-up light and subdued
- do not use excessive amounts of perfume or after shave as this can also be overpowering in an interview
- keep jewellery and other body adornments to a minimum
- cover any body art (tattoos) if possible in case this is an issue for the interviewer; you can check any work standards and requirements for body art if you get a job offer.

Grooming for Work

Before you present for work on the first day, you need to make sure you understand what is expected of you in terms of clothes and grooming. The personal hygiene issues noted in the previous session still apply, including:

- cleanliness of your hair and how it is presented
- cleanliness of your body and nails – including the absence of body odour
- cleanliness of your clothes and shoes including neatness

Before you commence work, you should check your understanding of any requirements about clothes and appearance. An ideal time to do this is when you are offered the position.

Work Policies on Grooming

Some business will have work policies covering their expectations and standards on dress and appearance. This is often the case with those businesses involved in customer service and the service industries for example hospitality, aged care, sales and other forward facing positions and positions where the individual is in close proximity to the customer. When companies have written work policies and you do not comply with these, they may use this as the reason for eventually removing you from the job. Even businesses that do not have written policies, but a stated policy, will still enforce these requirements. Non-compliance could result in the loss of your job.

When working in the personal care industries, food service and some hospitality industries there may be work policies on body piercings, body art, your hair presentation (for example being pulled back), overall cleanliness, clothing and your nails.

You need to make sure you understand these requirements, so check these before commencing work. Simply ask for details or a copy of any policies if the business has any expectations.

If you are required to wear a uniform, you need to check with the employer about access to the uniforms. Some businesses supply uniforms, others will specify the uniform details and you may need to purchase these before or soon after you commence work. Check the requirements.

If you are required to wear a uniform and this is not supplied by the employer keep in mind that you may be able to claim a tax deduction for the purchase of the uniform, or for that matter any other essential equipment you must have for the job that is not supplied by your employer.

Not all items are tax deductible; this is something that you will need to check when doing your tax. Other staff may also be able to tell you what they have been claiming if you are not sure.

If you are not required to wear a uniform, make sure you understand what is required in terms of clothing and shoes.

Securing Work Clothes

When you are first starting work, and depending on your personal circumstances and support networks, you may not necessarily have the right work clothes to commence. You may be on a tight budget and have a limited wardrobe but everyone can afford to be well groomed. You may need to be creative about how you can source clothes until you receive your first pay cheque.

Understanding that different work places require different standards is important to making sure you meet employer expectations. Complying with uniform or dress standards is an important part of your responsibilities at work.

Make sure you understand the standards before you commence acquiring work clothes. Note that:

- Clothes need to be clean and in good repair.
- Public contact, customer service and professional positions will require a more formal and conservative style of dress. A shirt with a collar and tie, dress pants (no jeans or track pants), socks and lace-up shoes (not thongs, boots or runners) for young men; a skirt, or tailored pants, blouse, jacket, and low-heeled shoes for girls.
- Construction, outdoor positions or those with no customer contact require different, less formal clothing and boots but keep safety in mind.
- When working outdoors, wear a hat and sufficient sunscreen.
- Shoes should be in good repair and well-polished.
- Simple clothes that fit properly and quiet colours are most suitable.
- Very tight clothes, see-through tops, low necklines, bare midriffs and short skirts should be avoided.
- Clothing and accessories do not have to be expensive or the latest fashion to make a good impression, but they should always be in good taste and clean. They should be toned down rather than wild or extravagant. You want the attention of your workmates and customers to be focused on you, not on your clothes.

If the employer has a uniform, this will either be supplied to you without cost or at cost. If your employer is supplying these items at cost, you may be able to take the payment out of your first pay cheque and you should check if this is possible. If the employer expects you to purchase a uniform which they do not supply and you do not have the finances to cover this cost, you should consider other options.



If you registered with a JobActive provider, they may be able to cover these costs or if you are enrolled in other government programs that support transition to work you should check if there is support of this nature available. If you exhaust these avenues you could check with the employer about an advance or securing second hand clothes if this is a possibility.

Depending on the clothing required you should consider pre-owned clothing as an option until such time as you can afford to secure additional new clothing.

In addition to grooming and work clothes, there may be other requirements that you are expected to have when working in various jobs; this is particularly the case for safety equipment. You will need to check these requirements with your employer.

CONNECT, Northern Rivers Inc is a not-for-profit entity that operates in the Northern Rivers of NSW, Australia.

CONNECT is focused on supporting young people still in school, and those who have recently left school, to reach their full potential in the fields of work, education and training.

CONNECT offers a range of youth services, including the Work It Out programme which operates in the Northern Rivers of NSW. The Work It Out Programme is designed to support young people aged 15-19 who are not in employment, education or training to either re-engage with school or transition to training or work.

More information on the Work It Out Programme can be found at the Work It Out website, along with other guides in this series.

Check out our website at the link below for more Guides in the Work It Out series.



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www.workitout.org.au