

# Making a Great First Impression

## Getting Off to a Good Start

It takes just a quick glance, maybe three seconds, for someone to evaluate you when you meet for the first time. In this short time, the other person forms an opinion about you based on your appearance, your body language, your demeanor, your mannerisms, and how you are dressed.

With every new encounter, you are evaluated and yet another person's impression of you is formed. These first impressions can be nearly impossible to reverse or undo, and they often set the tone for the relationship that follows.

So, it's essential that you know how to create a great first impression. This article provides some useful tips to help you do this.

## How to Create a Good First Impression

### 1. Be on Time

Someone you are meeting for the first time will not be interested in your "good excuse" for running late. Plan to arrive a few minutes early, and allow flexibility for possible delays in traffic or taking a wrong turn. Arriving early is much better than arriving late, and is the first step toward creating a great first impression.

### 2. Present Yourself Appropriately

Of course, physical appearance matters. The person you are meeting for the first time doesn't know you, so your appearance is usually the first clue he or she has to go on.

But, don't worry! This doesn't mean that you need to look like a model to create a strong and positive first impression. (Unless you are interviewing with your local model agency, of course!)

No. The key to a good impression is to present yourself appropriately.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and so the "picture" you first present needs to demonstrate who you are to the person you are meeting.

First, think about the way that you dress. What is the appropriate dress code for the meeting or occasion? In a business setting, what is the appropriate business attire? Suit, blazer, casual?

And what will the person you'll be meeting be likely to wear? If your contact is in the creative arts or the music industry, a pinstripe business suit may not strike the right note!

For business and social meetings, appropriate dress also varies between countries and cultures, so it's something that you should pay particular attention to when in an unfamiliar setting or country. Make sure that you know the traditions and norms by reading up on the different cultural norms in our section on [Managing Around the World](#).

### **3. Be Yourself**

Yes, making a good first impression does mean you need to "fit in" to some degree. But it doesn't mean losing yourself or pretending to be someone you're not. The best way to create a good impression is by being your authentic self. Doing this will make you feel more confident, help you to build trust, and earn the respect and integrity from the people you meet.

### **4. Have a Winning Smile!**

As the saying goes, "Smile and the world smiles too." So there's nothing like a smile to create a good first impression. A warm and confident smile will put both you and the other person at ease. So smiling is a winner when it comes to great first impressions. But don't go overboard with this – people who take this too far can seem insincere and smarmy.

### **5. Be Open and Confident**

When it comes to making a good first impression, body language can often speak louder than words.

Use your [body language](#) to project appropriate confidence and self-assurance. Stand tall, smile (of course), make eye contact, greet with a firm handshake. All of this will help you to project confidence and encourage both you and the other person to feel more at ease.

Almost everyone gets a little nervous when meeting someone for the first time. But this can lead to unwanted side effects, such as nail biting, the "jitters" or sweaty palms. By being aware of your nervous habits, you can try to keep them in check. See our article on [relaxation techniques](#) for help with this.

### **6. Use Small Talk**

Conversations are based on verbal give and take. It may help you to prepare questions some questions for the person you are meeting beforehand. Or, take a few minutes to learn something about him or her. For instance, does he play golf? Does he work with a local

charitable foundation? Do you have anything in common with him? If so, this can be a great way to open the conversation and to keep it flowing.

## **7. Be Positive**

Your attitude shines through in everything you do. So, project a positive attitude, even in the face of criticism or in the case of nervousness. Strive to learn from your meeting and to contribute appropriately. Finally, show that you are approachable by maintaining an upbeat manner and smiling!

## **8. Be Courteous and Attentive**

It goes without saying that good manners and polite, attentive and courteous behavior help make a good first impression. In fact, anything less can ruin the one chance that you have at making that first impression. So be on your best behavior!

Set aside modern-day distractions, for instance, by turning off your mobile phone so that you can give the person your full attention. And don't get sidetracked by other people. After all, what kind of first impression would you create if you are more interested in talking to someone else? Your new acquaintance deserves 100 percent of your attention. Anything less and you'll likely make them feel unimportant or even irritated.

### **Key Points**

You have just a few seconds to make a good first impression and it's almost impossible to change it once it's happened. So, it's worth giving each new encounter your best shot.

You can do this by following these eight strategies:

1. Be on time.
2. Present yourself appropriately.
3. Be yourself.
4. Have a winning smile.
5. Be open and confident.
6. Use small talk.
7. Be positive.
8. Be courteous and attentive.