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Grooming for Employment

A job applicant's dress and grooming can be important — and sometimes even critical — factors in an employer's hiring decision.

To many employers, first impressions still count. Poor personal appearance and careless dress at an interview are major factors leading to the rejection of applicants.

In fact, in one major survey:

- **95%** of the employers interviewed said a jobseeker's personal appearance affected the employer's opinion of that applicant's suitability for the job.
- **91%** said they believed dress and grooming reflected the applicant's attitude towards the company.
- **61%** said dress and grooming had an effect on subsequent promotions as well.

Thus, whether you're preparing for job interviews or concerned about job advancement, it's worth a few minutes of your time now to think about what your appearance tells an employer about you.

First Impressions

Before you get a job, your job is to impress employers enough so that they will hire you. The first impression you will make on an employer may be based on your appearance.

If you appear for an interview carelessly-groomed, a potential

employer may assume you are careless about other things. He or she may think you lack initiative, may need close supervision, and may not be a good employee.

Dress to project the image you want the employer to receive. If a position required maturity, don't dress like a college student going to class. Let your clothing reflect your knowledge of the type of job for which you are applying.

Your appearance may also affect how you feel about yourself. Knowing that your appearance is good may give you added confidence in yourself — and self-confidence is essential if you are going to make a good first impression.

Appropriate Dress

Employers may judge your appearance as a reflection of your total personality, but also in relation to the type of work you will be doing. There are various standards of dress, each valid for different kinds of jobs.

For instance, employers hiring workers to unload box cars, or work in a factory, may not want to hire the person who looks “too dressed up.”

On the other hand, don't wear overalls or blue jeans if you are applying for an office or sales position. You may be giving the impression that you really want a laboring job.

(Jeans, in fact, appear to be regarded by many employers as unacceptable for job interviews, period! Other unacceptable factors listed in one survey included open-necked shirts or open or low necklines, a “no bra” look, and tennis shoes or sandals.)

Prior to your interview, you probably will be learning about the company for which you hope to work. This is a good time to get an idea of the appropriate dress there. If you dress as other employees do, you will give the interviewer the impression you likely will “fit in.”

If you apply for a job with a company where the employees wear suits or dresses and you dress casually for your interview, your chances of obtaining the job probably will be diminished — regardless of your qualifications.

In a few situations, casual dress is standard and may even be desirable. But in these instances, dressing too casually should be avoided.

There are no hard-and-fast rules to guide you as to the most appropriate way to dress, but you ought to consider the following advice.

When dressing for an interview, it usually is best to dress conservatively. If you wear loud colors or faddish clothes, the interviewer may remember your clothes, but not your name or qualifications. This is an unnecessary obstacle to getting the job you want. Common sense and simple good taste are the best guidelines to follow.

It may be a good idea to have more than one outfit for interviews. If you have more than one, you will not have to worry in case of a spill or a rip. Also some employers may want to interview you more than once and you may not want to wear the same outfit each time.

One final tip: Many employers seem to regard a neat and clean appearance as being at least as important as the type of clothes worn.

Grooming tips

Here is a grooming check list to use before job interviews:

- Hair should be neatly combed, or properly arranged.
- Be clean-shaven or trimmed, or use fresh make-up.
- Teeth should be brushed, breath fresh.
- Wear clean clothing.
- Clothes should be pressed and neat-looking.
- Shoes should be shined.
- Face, hands and fingernails should be clean.

Once the Job is Yours ...

Don't forget about your grooming once you've been hired.

Despite an apparent trend towards more freedom of expression in dress in today's society, many employers have kept dress codes.

As soon as you've been hired, find out whether your employer has a dress code. Some codes are written out, but others are “just understood.” Your dress and grooming also may affect the initial friendships you form on your new job.

Dress extremes may attract some people, but turn others off.

And while it appears that dress and grooming rarely are the major factors involved when workers are fired, 1 out of 5 employers in one survey said that both has at least some impact on firing decisions.

All in all, dress and grooming are important to most employers, whether they are looking at job applications or current employees.

