



IT ONLY TAKES TWO MINUTES

An etiquette brief on first impressions by Civility Experts Worldwide

Introduction

Most people achieve success in life and work based on their ability to perform a skill, or to make some contribution, that somehow meets the needs of someone else.

The more consistently a person can exhibit the characteristics of a professional, and the extent to which a person can surpass expectations for being trustworthy, and exhibiting confidence, the greater success that individual will achieve.

For an expanded lesson plan including activities and answer keys, please visit the shopping cart at www.etiquettrainingtoolkits.com

Creating a Lasting Positive First Impressions

Knowing what is expected, and accepted as appropriate, behaviour for every social and business situation is vital to success. And, knowledge about how to present yourself professionally gives you a powerful edge over the competition. Whether it's the boardroom, the dining room or the locker room, and whether you are representing yourself, your family, or your company, you want to put your best foot forward.

The first few minutes of an interaction can make or break business relationships; first impressions do matter and anyone who expects to build long-term personal or professional relationships needs to consider the impression he/she is sending.

Suggested books, references and resource reading:

First Impressions: What You Don't Know About How Others See You (Paperback)
by [Ann Phd Demarais](#), [Valerie Phd White](#)
Publisher: Bantam; Reprint edition (March 29, 2005)

You've Only Got Three Seconds (Paperback)
by [Camille Lavington](#) (Author), [Stephanie Losee](#)
Publisher: Main Street Books; 1st Main Street Books Ed edition (April 13, 1998)

Your Executive Image: How to Look Your Best & Project Success for Men and Women (Paperback)
by [Victoria A. Seitz](#)
Publisher: Adams Media Corporation; 2nd edition (February 2000)

The New Professional Image: Dress Your Best For Every Business Situation (2nd Edition) (Paperback)
by [Susan Bixler](#), [Nancy Nix-Rice](#)
Publisher: Adams Media Corporation; 2nd edition (April 2005)

Did you know that 55 percent of how you will be judged is based on what the other person sees? The other 45 percent is based on the words you say. Amazingly, only seven percent depends on the actual words themselves. Thirty-eight percent of how people judge you is based on your tone of our voice. All this happens in three to seven seconds.

Source: Making a Powerful First Impression - How to Outclass Your Competition from the Start , Author: Lydia Ramsey with Sharron Senter

First Impressions

Have you ever met Bill Clinton? Chances you have not. Okay, so you haven't met him in person, but do you have an opinion about Bill- that is, do you like him? Do you find him credible? Does he seem educated? If you are like most people, you probably have formed an impression of Bill Clinton.

Knowing that you form impressions from a distance, that is, without ever actually meeting people, would you agree that face-to-face in-person impressions carry even more weight?

This is precisely why we need to pay very careful attention to the impression we are sending and to control any/all factors related to creating the impression we want to create, if/when we can.

Did you know?

That in the first 30-60 seconds of an encounter with someone we've never met before, the majority of people make overt decisions about whether or not to approach someone, whether or not someone is "our kind of person", and whether or not someone is "worthy of our time/attention" or of "equal value" on the basis of physical appearance.

Clean and neat includes clothing, weight, hairstyle, etc. In business settings, we can take this one step further in that clean and neat appearance isn't enough- we also have an expectation that a person's appearance is "appropriate". For example, most of us have preconceived ideas about what a CEO of a large corporation should look and dress like, just as we have an idea of what a mechanic or trades person should look like, or an elementary school teacher, or a lawyer, or someone interviewing for a job- we are more likely to engage a business person in a business setting when that person presents him or herself "appropriately".

In the second minute of an initial interaction, studies say that we make less deliberate, but longer lasting and more meaningful sub-conscious decisions about a person's credibility and confidence on the basis of that person's nonverbal communication. And, the single most significant element of nonverbal communication is POSTURE. Eye contact was the second most influential *nonverbal* cue.

Another important component is tone of voice, but it's of course not a non-verbal cue.

First Impressions

So all those times when one of your parents or a teacher told you to “stand up straight”, or “don’t drag your feet”, he/she was actually on to something. What does this mean? It means that by simply standing up straight, walking with a purpose, and being deliberate about managing your non-verbal communications, you can increase the chances that others will deem you confident and competent in a first impression.

Sounds simple, right? The reality is that non-verbal communication experts say that on average only 5% of non-verbal communication is deliberate. This is why looking good and saying the right thing isn’t enough, you have to be deliberate about more than 5% of your body language. This is a powerful skill. Having this skill is how some people, e.g., con-artists, can sometimes get away with looking you in the eye and lying through their teeth.



In the first 45 sec of meeting you for the first time, people will make up to eleven assumptions about you including your level of expertise, success, education and knowledge. If the other party forms the wrong opinion of you, you will have to work much harder to establish credibility. www.robertsontraininggroup.com

Let’s think about this for a moment. Can you remember a time when you met someone new who seemed to have “it”? From the moment this person walked in the room he or she garnered attention. He looked great, maybe even striking-stuck out in some way- a great sense of style, unique tie, etc., he seemed charismatic and charming, managed to keep everyone’s interest, made people laugh and so on. When you spent a little time or had a conversation with this person you were captivated, and even though you paid attention – something just didn’t feel right. You felt drawn in, but at the same time, you had a feeling that the person was full of baloney. Here is a person who has managed to make his body language and non-verbal cues match his words- to an extent- (enough to hook you) but not quite enough for you to find him entirely credible.

In terms of overall influence for first impressions, the top three elements are:

1. clean and neat appearance
2. posture
3. eye contact

First Impressions

When it comes to first impression, there are at least five respected and expected behaviours for first-time interactions/meetings/greetings in North America, they are as follows:

The five behaviours are:

1 Rising

This could be moving closer in proximity to someone, either by actually stepping towards him/her, leaning in to him/her, or even raising your eyebrows. This overt physical gesture is a nonverbal way of showing respect, that on a basic human level, we are all deserving of some small expression of giving- in this case it's a giving of energy. Expanding on this physical gesture includes behaviours like coming out from behind a desk, or chair, or any other kind of barrier that separates you. Also, when someone is seated, sit beside them. If someone is standing, come up to their physical level.

2 Eye contact

In North American business, there is an expectation that both men and women (age and experience is not a factor) make direct eye contact. Regardless of cultural background, and even when people might guess that a person's failing to make eye contact is for a good reason, many people still make subconscious judgments about a person's level of confidence and trustworthiness based on whether or not that person makes eye contact.

Direct eye contact should last 3-6 seconds, then you might break direct eye contact (in fact, holding a gaze longer might seem a little creepy), but you should maintain visual contact until an interaction (which ideally lasts 2 minutes if you are trying to encourage a long-lasting positive first impression) is complete.

3 Smiling

Even when there are language barriers, a spontaneous, open-mouthed, toothy smile can speak volumes. Tight-lipped smiles are not acceptable. Studies suggest that people want to see your teeth. *certainly fresh breath is a bonus too.

4 A proper handshake

Regardless of the situation: the shopping mall, a conference, a family reunion, a job interview, or even meeting your child's new teacher, a proper handshake sends a positive impression. Experts at Civility Experts Worldwide suggest a few tips for proper handshakes:

- Always rise from your seat or come out from behind a table or desk when someone approaches you. Remember that often when someone says, "Don't get up", he/she really means, "please show me the respect of getting up."

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First Impressions

- Men and women of any age and every rank should shake hands with each other in exactly the same way. It doesn't matter who initiates handshaking. The important thing is to do it.
- Don't shy away from handshaking just because your palms are sweaty. Avoiding shaking hands sends the wrong impression and people are generally very understanding about a clammy hand as most everyone feels nervous now and then.
- Always make eye contact with the person you are making contact with and don't forget to smile.
- A good handshake should be firm but not bone crushing. Fingers should be together with thumb up and open. Palms should be clean and dry.
- Both women and men should not present or accept the "damsel in distress" or fingers only handshake. Socially or for business, this limp handshake sends a message of weakness, low confidence or inferiority.
- A proper handshake lasts about 3 seconds. You should "pump" once or twice from the elbow. The hand is released after the shake, even if the introduction continues you should maintain good eye contact with the other person throughout.
- Try to resist clasping your free hand over your hand and someone else's when shaking or grasping someone's elbow or shoulder. Regardless of your motives for doing so, such gestures can send the wrong impression, for example, that you are controlling.
- You should extend your hand to others when meeting someone for the first time, meeting someone you haven't seen for a while, when greeting your host, when greeting guests, saying good-bye to people at a gathering and when someone else extends his/her hand towards you.
- When at networking or reception events, avoid giving a cold, wet handshake by keeping your drink in the left hand if you are right handed.

France: Shaking hands is customary upon greeting and parting, however an aggressive handshake is considered impolite. The French handshake is a light grip and single, quick shake. www.crazycolour.com

5 A proper introduction

Introductions

Regardless of any other rules, the most important thing to remember about introductions is to MAKE THEM.

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First Impressions

If you are unsure of the “rules” or the proper order to introduce someone, don’t worry about it and do the best you can. It is far ruder not to make an introduction than it is to introduce in the wrong order. Chances are the people you are meeting are also unsure and even if they do know better, they should be polite enough not to say anything.

The chart below outlines the direction of introductions. Remember in business situations the client is always the most important person and in social situations your family members are always the most important people.

IN SOCIAL SETTINGS:

<i>Greater Status</i>	<i>Lesser Status</i>
Guest or friend you are with	Your boss
Old friend	New friend
Significant other	Workplace acquaintance
Guest of honor	Anyone

IN BUSINESS SETTINGS:

<i>Greater Status</i>	<i>Lesser Status</i>
Client	Anyone
Your boss	Junior executive
Old colleague	New colleague
Guest of honor	Anyone
President	Significant other

Once you’ve mastered the five basic greeting behaviours, you can add the following to your repertoire: proper use of business cards and remembering names.

Proper Use of Business Cards

The exchange of business cards is one of the most important communication behaviours in business and it is practiced all over the world.

In many social circles the use of personal contact cards (business cards with personal information) or “calling cards” is still popular. For this reason, many of the guidelines for using business cards in business settings can be applied to social settings.



Interesting facts about the history of business cards.

Sources state that the first business cards (also called visiting or calling cards), first appeared in China in the 15th century, and in Europe in the 17th. The footmen of aristocrats would deliver these to the servants of their prospective hosts solemnly introducing their arrival.

What did the first cards look like?

- visiting cards included refined engraved ornaments and elaborate coats of arms
- the first trading cards became popular at the beginning of the 17th century in London, these functioned as advertising and also as maps, giving directions to their stores, as there were no formal address numbering systems
- the visiting cards in 17th century France, were playing card size, just a little smaller than the size of a man's hand. The earliest forms were actually playing cards. Visitors would write on the cards, their signatures, promissory notes and other messages. en.wikipedia.org

Make sure you have cards with you wherever you go and remember you should present your card as if it is a gift you are giving someone.

When you are giving your card, "present" it with the writing away from you so the receiver can take a moment to read it and ask questions.

Make sure your card is clean and not scribbled on, bent or soiled. A calling card is a mini-snapshot of you and it will be a factor in people's first impression of you.

You should offer your card (in this case a business card might be appropriate) if you are involved in a conversation and the other party has expressed interest in you or what you do. Do not give out cards in social situations. Soliciting business in social situations like weddings, funerals and house parties is considered in very poor taste.

If you are a subordinate, you should wait until a superior offers you a card. Similarly, do not ask for business cards in emotional/social situations, and be discreet in business when you ask. Remember the potential client or potential employer is handing you a gift when he/she gives his/her card and there are responsibilities that go along with that.

IMPORTANT TIP: Only give business cards when business is involved. For example, it would not be appropriate to attach a business card when you send flowers to a co-worker or client who has had a death in the family. Nor would it be appropriate to attach a business card to a gift sent to someone when they've just had a baby. An easy rule to remember is that if there is emotion involved, don't send a business card.

The Art of Remembering Names

Surveys show that 83% of the population worries about their inability to recall people's names. Ironically, while most of us hate having our names forgotten or mispronounced, the majority of us claim we just aren't good at remembering names or putting face together with names when we meet them.

How can we Remember?

- 1 When first introduced to someone, look closely at his face and try to find something unique about it.
- 2 Slow down for five seconds, and concentrate on listening to them. Repeat their name back in a conversational manner. Make sure to give a firm handshake, which established a physical connection.
- 3 Create a mental picture of someone's name. Example Ken, think of a ken doll or something close like a can.
- 4 Glue the mental image to the person's face or upper body.
- 5 At the end of the conversation, integrate auditory learning by repeating the prospects name one more time.
- 6 Writing is a form of kinesthetic learning. If you're really serious about wanting to remember people's names for the long term, keep a name journal or a log of important people you meet and review it periodically. www.advisortoday.com

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the longest name given at birth of an individual that is recorded belongs to a German immigrant to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His first and middle names consist of one name for each letter of the alphabet plus his surname (which cannot be said short for that matter). However, he was commonly known as Mr. Hubert Wolfe and officially, he was known as Hubert Blaine Wolfeschlegelsteinhausenbergerdorff, Sr.

If you would like an expanded version of this brief, please visit www.etiquetetrainingtoolkits.com where you can purchase this and 140+ additional civility and etiquette lessons and other materials.

First Impressions