



Appearance

The devil is in the details

How you look tells others who you are

Apppearance has a tremendous influence on professional image.

Much of how we look is innate: our body types, faces, hair color, skin color, height, and so much more.

Our physical traits can lead others to draw conclusions about us on sight. For example, a blonde woman with a curvy figure is instantly at risk of being labeled a “bimbo”; likewise, a man with an impressive athletic physique is likely to find himself branded as a dumb jock before he opens his mouth.

At the same time, a great deal of what people see is the direct result of conscious decisions and behaviors we can control. Assuming they are education professionals, the blonde woman and the athletic man would be well-advised to avoid choices and mannerisms that contribute to those identities.

The good news is that we have the power to realize our best possible professional persona; we simply need to understand the fundamental influences and resolve to make a conscious effort.

Style

The goal is a simple, understated look. Fashion trends should be considered with care. Sometimes there is a fine line between stylish and amiss. Those fabulous new shoes might be perfect for a night out, but could make you seem oblivious to the dignity of your position at the office.

Dressing well contributes to how others see your work values. Clothing should enhance your acceptance, not detract from your abilities. A two-piece matched suit or well-ironed pants and a jacket are always appropriate for both men and women.

Tips for women

- ◆ Skirts should end no higher than directly above the knee.
- ◆ Pants should be tailored, not tight or flowing pant.
- ◆ Deep necklines are never a good idea.

Tips for men

- ◆ Tie choices should be professional.
- ◆ Socks should be dark colored and hit mid-calf so no skin is visible when sitting.
- ◆ Shoes can be lace-up or slip-on.
- ◆ A long-sleeved shirt button down shirt, even in the summer, is recommended for men striving for a top executive appearance.

Colors

Conservative clothing colors like navy, dark gray, black, or dark brown are always safe choices; however, colors are powerful factors and yours should be those that flatter you and enhance your look. It is smart to have an expert analyze your personal power hues. When colors are right they direct attention to you, make others more receptive to your contributions, and definitely add to your confidence.

Avoid combining a suit or sport jacket with pants or a skirt that do not match (i.e. two different shades of black).

Grooming

Every piece of clothing should be clean and wrinkle free.

Hair (and facial hair on men) should always be clean and neatly groomed.

Nails should always be clean and trimmed.

Even in education, it may be a good idea to cover body piercings and tattoos if possible.

The amount of perfume, cologne, or aftershave should be limited. Remember, some people have allergies.

In very conservative work environments, men may want to avoid wearing earrings or other visible piercings.

Posture

How you stand, sit, and carry yourself are important aspects of your overall appearance. Finding the right balance is a challenge. Stand erect with shoulders back, and sit with back upright, but try not to seem too formal or uncomfortable. Keep your head up, but remember that looking over the heads of others can seem haughty. Exude confidence and poise, yet avoid any hint of arrogance.

With a conscious effort and practice it can soon become who you are.

Appropriateness

Whether you interact with the public or not, what you wear affects the way you think, which in turn affects the way you act and ultimately affects how others respond and relate to you.

Casual Fridays should never be too casual, and should never include ripped jeans or witty T-shirts, even if they were pricy. Men can ditch the ties and women the suits, but jackets are a smart way to maintain your role.

Those sexy personal attributes you like to display when you're out with friends or dating should remain private in the workplace. Clothes that are too short, too tight, too low-cut, or too revealing in any way are never good in the office or at any district events.

Accessories

Hair is one of your most important accessories. A dated style suggests you are behind the times. A poor cut or careless grooming can diminish the respect and attention you deserve.

Accessories can polish your look, but they should enhance not overpower. Usually one bold piece or one statement piece of jewelry is best.

Makeup, too, is an accessory. It should be carefully applied give you a polished, professional look. Overdone detracts from being taken seriously.

Transportation

Believe it or not, even your personal vehicle might factor into the opinions others form about you. While the make and model may be of interest, whether it is clean and well-maintained is probably much more significant. A dirty old beater with bad tires would not contribute to a refined impression.

While all of this may seem overwhelming at first glance, it is really just common sense.

What is important is that it is common sense to take seriously because your future depends on it.