

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE FOR MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

OVERVIEW:

Just how important ARE first impressions, anyway? When it comes to job interviews, they rank right up there with skills and experience... as the characters in this video learn the hard way. They find themselves at a weekly meeting of FIRST IMPRESSIONABLES, a support group designed to help people get honest about their weaknesses in job interviews and learn to put their best foot forward at all times.

Newcomer Ronald looks on as several meeting regulars take their turns talking to the entire group. Most are burdened with major flaws in the way they present information about themselves at interviews; many have difficulties with their physical appearance as well. But as the video teaches: Nearly every problem can be fixed, as long as the person owns up to it.

Group leader Samantha puts the group through its paces, drawing attention to inappropriate resumes, clothing, speech patterns, etc. as necessary. Through a series of exercises and even “homework assignments”—a videotaped mock job interview, in this case—Sam is able to demonstrate

- That it only takes a matter of *seconds* for an employer to form a lasting opinion about a job candidate
- That a good first impression is, above all else, a mindset
- The importance of body language, listening, and speaking well
- The fine line between appearing confident and *over*confident

Make a Good First Impression is an amusing spoof of the self-help programs that have become an integral part of society. But the approaches and solutions presented are real. And while the problems faced by the video's characters are exaggerated for effect, they're easy to relate to. Once viewers become familiar with the ins and outs of *Make a Good First Impression*, they just might discover that the solution to their *own* interview woes is just a videotape away.

PRESENTATION SUGGESTIONS:

Start by asking the class what comes to mind when they hear the term **FIRST IMPRESSION**. What's the difference between a good and bad first impression when it comes to making a new friend? choosing a new store to shop at? deciding who to vote for in an election? Move on to a discussion about job searches and first impressions. How long does the class think it takes for an employer to reach a decision about a job candidate? What are the chances that candidate's skills and experience will override the first impression that was made?

OPTIONAL: Bring in a variety of clothes and accessories (in various conditions) the day of the video presentation. Ask the class first about the outfit you are wearing that day—what does it say about you, the one who is wearing it? Then add other clothes (a blazer/jacket, other shoes, different tie for men, different jewelry for women) and accessories such as a briefcase or purse. Ask if these changes would affect their opinion of you if they did not already know you. Ask what else might make a difference.

Next, complete the **Anticipation Quiz** prior to watching the video. Have the students set aside the completed quizzes during the viewing. Encourage them to take note of correct responses as they appear in the video presentation.

At the video's conclusion, ask the students to take out their quizzes and review the correct responses. Allow time for students to add or delete information to make each response correct. Discuss the responses. Follow the discussion with one or both of the follow-up **Activities**, as well as the **Hire Me! Quiz** if time allows. Assign the **Homework Option** if desired.

(**Note:** The **Hire Me! Quiz** could also become part, or all, of the **Homework Option**.)

ANTICIPATION QUIZ:

Directions: Respond as honestly and completely as possible to each question or statement.

1. According to the video, how long does it take employers to form an impression (either good or bad) of a job seeker?
2. Name 3 things that an employer is likely to notice quickly about a potential employee.
3. What does it mean to speak *carefully*?
4. What creates a negative impression when it comes to written materials, such as a resume?
5. Name 5 positive steps that a job candidate can take to look good at his/her interview.

ACTIVITIES

Activity #1

Title: Quick Decision

This is a variation on the “flash card” exercise that happens near the beginning and end of the video.

Format: Small group

Time: 20–25 minutes

Materials: pre-selected photographs (mounting these on cardboard or poster board makes them easier to handle, but is not necessary), paper, pen, and chalkboard or dry-erase board

Procedure:

1. In advance, prepare 10 magazine or other easily obtained photos of people— young, old, neat, sloppy, with a variety of clothes and expressions, but all should look like they could possibly be showing up for a job interview.
2. Have the students take out a sheet of paper and break into 3 groups.
3. Pass a few photos to each group. Ask the students to write down the first 3 words that come to mind when they see each photo. Encourage them to only spend a few seconds looking at each photo.
4. Have one person in each group write down all the observations for each photo, making note of the most popular ones. Rotate the clusters of photos every few minutes.
5. After all the photos have made the rounds, go through them one by one and ask the three group representatives to share their most popular observations. Keep a log on the chalkboard and see how often the three groups come up with the same words for the same pictures. Also note the overall words that are used most often; they tend to be pretty decisive.
6. Sort the photos into three categories: positive impressions, negative impressions, and neutral impressions (neither positive nor negative).
7. Discuss each photo in slightly more detail. If it creates a positive impression, talk about what makes it positive. If it creates a negative impression, have the students explain how the look could become a more positive one.
8. If any photos create a *neutral* impression, discuss what might “make or break” this job candidate on a verbal level. This is a great opportunity to show how the *looks* and *sounds* of a potential employee go hand in hand.

Activity #2

Title: Your Own Impressions

Format: Individual

Time: 15–20 minutes

Materials: pen and paper

Procedure:

1. AFTER STUDENTS COMPLETE THE ANTICIPATION QUIZ, pass out the questions for this activity.
2. Students should read through these questions just before the video begins. Encourage students to take notes when watching the video if it helps them answer the questions better. Advise students that you'll be discussing these questions as a group later on.
3. Questions to answer about RONALD (the first guy we meet by name in the video): How does he initially come across (before he ever says a word)? Why? How does this impression change once he's been seen and heard a few times?
4. As others are seen in the video for the first time—who catches attention? Why? Is it “good” or “bad” attention... that is, are they easily noticed for positive reasons or negative ones?
5. Once SAM, ANNE, MARK, and JULIE have their turns at speaking, compare and contrast the impressions they make with those made when they first came on screen. Why has SAM been chosen to lead this class? What needs the most improvement with ANNE, MARK, and JULIE?
6. Finally, ask the students if they know of people who create particularly positive or negative first impressions (whether in a job interview situation or otherwise). Do they bear any similarity to the people in the video? If it's negative—is the person aware of the problem? Are they taking any steps to correct it? Why or why not?

HIRE ME! QUIZ:

NOTE: This quiz may be read out loud, allowing time for the students to respond, or it may be copied and completed as a written exercise.

Directions: Have the students look over each statement. If the students were the employer in each situation, would *they* rule out the candidate based on the information given... or keep him/her in the running? Instruct the students to write either “Keep in” or “Rule out” next to each number, and then discuss the responses as a class for as long as time allows.

1. A woman shows up for a bank teller opening in clean, black, low-heeled pumps.
2. A man stares primarily at the floor and is hard to hear for much of his meeting.
3. A woman submits a resume that is cream-colored, with purple lettering in a very small brush script font.
4. A man comes to interview for a blue-collar factory job dressed in a neat, button-down shirt, pressed khakis, and muddy, worn-out running shoes.
5. A man answers most of the questions asked of him with very short, simple statements.
6. A woman fills the majority of her sentences at an interview with the phrase “You know...”

7. A woman sits near the edge of her chair, leaning in slightly, with her arms at her sides, appearing enthusiastic and comfortable with the interview process.
8. A woman wears a necklace, large hoop earrings, and an elaborate charm bracelet to an interview for a management position.
9. A man explains his tendency to “job-hop” by complaining about three of his four previous bosses.
10. A man arrives 10 minutes early for an interview after tracking out his route a day in advance.

HIRE ME! PREFERRED ANSWERS:

1. Keep in the running; these shoes are acceptable for women in practically every interview.
2. Rule him out; his behavior indicates a possible lack of confidence to do the job well.
3. Rule her out; resumes that are difficult to read for any reason are strikes against the candidate (color choice + fancy font = hard to read).
4. Rule him out; his clothes choice is fine for a factory job interview but his shoes are not appropriate.
5. Rule him out; his lack of ability to expand upon his answers indicates a lack of enthusiasm for the job at hand.
6. Rule her out; a speech pattern filled with “you know” or other slang is one that indicates a lack of professionalism.
7. Keep in the running; the body language described here indicates strength and confidence.
8. Rule her out; excess jewelry is likely to be distracting and/or noisy and will take away from everything else.
9. Rule him out; badmouthing a former employer doesn’t score points in a job interview.
10. Keep in the running; arriving early is seldom a bad thing!

HOMEWORK OPTION:

Pretend the next meeting of the class will be an interview for a summer opening at a favorite store or restaurant. Have students show up for class dressed as if they are job candidates, and then have each student walk to the front of the classroom and tell, in just one sentence, why they should be hired for the “job.” Let the class vote as to who is the most hireable based on the impression they create. Remind students that *everything* counts! When the class votes, have them make anonymous (written) comments on what is good and bad about the outfits, and then discuss the comments once the voting is complete.

(NOTE: Be sure to look over the comments before reading them aloud so as to include only the most constructive feedback!)