

HOW TO STAND OUT WHEN MAKING FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Whether you're attending a social event, introducing yourself in a professional setting, or just striking up a conversation with someone new as you go through your daily routine, first impressions play a key role in how you may be perceived. And since these snap opinions can be formed almost instantly (with some research indicating the process taking around a tenth of a second),¹ knowing how to present the best version of yourself when meeting new people is a useful skill.

Here are a few practical tips to keep in mind the next time you want to make a good first impression.

DRESS WITH INTENTION

Appearance is one of the first things others notice upon meeting someone new, so dressing with intentionality is a good place to start when trying to make a positive impression. Consider the occasion you're dressing for and think through what you want your clothes to convey about you in that situation.²

As long as you find something you're comfortable with that you feel represents you well, you'll be on the right track.



BE MINDFUL OF BODY LANGUAGE

Non-verbal communication plays a large role in how somebody is perceived. Standing or sitting up straight, maintaining comfortable eye contact, and smiling can convey confidence and approachability. Conversely, things like crossing your arms or looking at the floor can signal disinterest.²

Being mindful of things like your posture, facial expressions, and even the strength of your handshake³ can all go a long way in cultivating a positive image.

KNOW WHAT TO SAY

When talking to someone for the first time, having neutral conversational topics in mind can be a helpful way to start forming a connection. Things like sports, food, or travel are often broadly applicable, making them safe ground to traverse with someone you aren't familiar with.²



LISTENING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SPEAKING

It's important not to dominate the conversation when trying to make a good impression. In fact, the best approach is often to prioritize listening to what the other person is saying.

A good way to accomplish this is by asking relevant follow-up questions to show your interest in what's being discussed. This gives the other person an opportunity to share more about a topic they (hopefully) enjoy discussing while letting you engage more deeply in the conversation.²

Being a good listener can make the person you're speaking with feel valued, which makes them more likely to want to interact with you again in the future.

TIPS WHEN MEETING ONLINE

With so many modern interactions being virtual, you may find yourself meeting someone for the first time via an online meeting. All other strategies discussed so far still apply, but there are some additional considerations to think about when introducing yourself digitally.

If the physical room you're in needs tidying up or has distracting personal items in the frame, use a background that looks professional and clean instead. Additionally, make sure your area is properly lit and the camera is at eye level so the other person has a clear view of your face.⁴

These practices will remove the hurdles that can come about during virtual meetings, giving you the opportunity to make a strong impression without technical hiccups or visibility issues getting in the way.



A LITTLE PREPARATION CAN GO A LONG WAY

Making a good first impression isn't about pretending to be someone you're not—it's about showing your best self in a respectful, confident, and considerate way. With a little preparation and awareness, you can create strong, positive connections that open the door to new relationships and opportunities.

¹Mautz, Scott. "The No. 1 way to make a good first impression, from an expert in mental strength: It works in 'almost every situation.'" *CNBC*, 2024.

²Cherry, Kendra. "How to Make a Lasting First Impression: Strategies for Every Situation." *Very Well Mind*, 2025.

³Guttmann, Ben. "The Science of a Good First Impression." *Toastmasters International*, 2025.

⁴Wainger, Liz. "Virtual vs. In-Person: How to Tell Your Story and Make a Strong First Impression." *Wainger Group*, 2025.