Handout #1:   
First Impressions

SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES

Positive Behaviors Negative Behaviors

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| * ***makes eye contact*** * ***shakes hands and calls person by appropriate name (i.e., Mr. Jones)*** * ***wears clothing that is neat and clean*** * ***wears little or no perfume but is obviously well-groomed*** * ***uses professional vocabulary and greetings (i.e., “Good morning, Ms. Smith; it’s great to see you today.”)*** * ***uses good posture; walks with confidence*** | * ***puts feet on desk*** * ***keeps hands shoved in pockets*** * ***undergarments are showing*** * ***gum chewing*** * ***wears heavy perfume*** * ***uses informal words such as “dude” and “yeah”*** * ***slouches when sitting; shuffles when walking*** |

It can be argued that it is unfair to judge a person according to brief impressions; that may be true. However, when an employer has dozens of applicants for a job, he/she must cut that number down in order to move forward with the hiring process. Below is a list of behaviors and/or impressions that detract from a person’s employability. Next to each, explain why an employer might want to avoid a person who represents him/herself in this way.

Applicant wears dark sunglasses to the interview. ***It’s hard to tell what this person is looking at or thinking; it could make an employer wonder what he/she is hiding.***

Applicant fails to make eye contact with the interviewer. ***The interviewer is trying to get a sense of the applicant’s character. Lack of eye contact makes this difficult and sends the message that the applicant does not want to engage.***

Applicant’s fingernails are dirty and in need of clipping. ***Basic personal hygiene is expected in any workplace; this is especially important if the applicant will be working with customers or clients.***

Applicant is wearing very heavy perfume to the interview. ***As a rule, applicants should not wear anything that detracts from a professional first impression, whether that be clothing, accessories, or scents. Many people are allergic to compounds found in perfumes.***

Applicant crosses arms across chest during entire interview. ***This type of body language may send one of the following negative messages: “I am angry.” “I am judging you.” “I am not engaging with you.”***