



Unit 1

Skills needed to become a Successful Administrative Assistant

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the importance of professional presence on the job

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The Basics

The Importance of Appearance

No matter what you may like to think, people judge you based on your appearance. They don't take long to make assumptions, either. If you think that you'd like to march to the beat of your own drum and you don't need to follow some kind of standard for the way you dress, think again. While you may think that you don't have to iron your clothes, you can get away with not polishing your shoes, or that you can wear sneakers with your business suit, we're here to challenge your thinking.

People who are well respected, highly trusted, and most likely to be promoted care about how they look. You shouldn't give in to the temptation to dress according to trends (sometimes they are simply a mistake). You also don't need to wear clothes that shout out who you are. You can dress conservatively and accessorize tastefully if you want to show that you are unique or have flair. Just do so while thinking about how people in your industry look when they achieve success.

Tips for Success

Keep it understated. While someone in a design firm is likely to dress differently than someone in a law firm, both share something in common: if you stray far from what's considered the norm, you can be viewed as disrespectful and even as holding your employer in contempt. That won't do much for your career. Think about making a statement that is professional and one that will be taken seriously for the work you do.

Dress for the job you want, not the one you have. Always consider where you are going within the company. The image that you portray can help you meet your goals, or get in the way.

Be an ambassador. If you are wearing your company jacket outside of work, think about what you are doing. When people know that you work for a particular place, they expect certain things. If you suspect that you might do something foolish, don't wear your company gear outside of work.

Look after your things. Although it may take an investment of time and effort, learn to look after your things. Iron like a pro and get rid of that slightly rumpled, still-in-college look. Replace it with an image that is crisp and professional. Find a tailor and have your trousers or skirts properly hemmed. (You're

spending good money on clothes as it is, so respect yourself and present yourself well.) Replace buttons if they go missing. Make sure that you are cleaning clothes according to the instructions on the label.

Footwear requires attention. Shoes need to be in good repair and clean. Don't wear your weekend or gym sneakers even on casual days. Make sure you have a polishing kit and that you know how to look after your shoes to keep them looking like new. People notice your footwear. You can lessen your credibility significantly by wearing a nice outfit and a poor pair of shoes.

Glasses need to be clean. Long-time glasses wearers have a gift for being able to look through a pair of smudged or dirty lenses, but your customers, colleagues, and manager will notice that layer of grime. Keep a microfiber cloth handy to keep your glasses clean.

Leave sexy for another time. Workplaces take professionalism very seriously. It's in everyone's best interests to maintain a professional atmosphere. While you may think you look good in club wear, evening wear, or lingerie, none of these are appropriate office attire. It can also be distracting to the rest of the office. Whether we like it or not, low-cut blouses, tight pants, short skirts, see-through fabrics, poorly fitting bras, ill-fitting suit jackets, or open shirts can contribute to a poor professional impression rather than an appropriate one. At work, the goal is to create an image of competence and professionalism; leave the glamor and glitz for your evenings out.

Keep your breath fresh. Nothing is more off putting than being greeted by someone with bad breath, so make sure that you brush your teeth, floss, and get regular dental check-ups, which are huge culprits in creating bad breath. If you are a coffee drinker or have a spicy meal, make sure you have something handy to clean yourself up. And don't rely on gum: business people should not be chewing gum in the office, in meetings, nor blowing bubbles out on the step.

What is an appropriate look for your workplace?

First Impressions Count!

Photo	Impressions

Debrief

How did you feel making judgments based on first impressions?

Do you feel that your judgments were accurate or realistic?

What can you do over the next 21 days to make a better first impression?

Can you find ways to change or improve your environment?

Do you resist change, and cling to the security of your present lifestyle, or are you open to new ideas and new ways of doing things?

Are you easy to live with?

How would you like to have a parent like you?

Can you identify any distortions in her thinking?

What thoughts would you suggest she substitute for the ones in her head?

How might these new thoughts make her feel?

Distorted Thinking

Most bad feelings come from illogical thoughts, even though they seem perfectly correct when you think about them. When you uncover the lies that make up these distorted thoughts, you can change the way you feel.

Here are some ways that Angelique's thinking was distorted:

- **All or nothing thinking:** She's looking at herself in black and white categories, because she sees herself as a total loser.
- **Overgeneralization:** She's lost her job but is generalizing to her entire self.
- **Mental filter:** She's dwelling on this bad event and letting it discolor her entire view of life, much like a drop of ink can discolor a whole glass of water.
- **Discounting the positives:** She's overlooking her many good qualities.
- **Magnification or minimization:** She's blowing this negative event out of proportion.
- **Emotional reasoning:** Angelique reasons from how she feels. She feels like a born loser, so she believes she really is one.
- **"Should" statements:** She may have the belief that she should always be successful at things and never fail. She may also believe that if she is a good person and tries hard, life should always go smoothly.
- **Labeling:** She's labeling herself as a born loser instead of trying to learn from the situation or thinking about the best way to find a new job.
- **Blame:** She's automatically blaming herself for getting laid off. In fact, lots of people were laid off due to budget changes. Angelique's employment record has been excellent.

The Steps to Feeling Good

Emotion	Describe the Events that Triggered this Emotion	What Kind of Thoughts Lead to this Emotion?	How to Replace the Negative Thoughts
Sadness or depression	Events that involve a loss: a romantic rejection, the death of a loved one, job or money problems, aging, poor health, the failure to reach a personal goal.	You may tell yourself you can never be happy without the thing you have lost or that person whom you loved so much. You may feel a loss of self-esteem because you tell yourself you're inferior or unlovable.	Identify that this is only one aspect of your life. Identify ways that you can minimize the sense of loss. Find ways to interrupt the cycle of negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones.
Sadness or depression			
Guilt or shame			
Frustration			
Anger			

Emotion	Describe the Events that Triggered this Emotion	What Kind of Thoughts Lead to this Emotion?	How to Replace the Negative Thoughts
Anxiety, worry, fear, panic			
Loneliness			
Hopelessness or discouragement			