

# How to Develop Poise

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Having poise is being balanced, graceful, and elegant in social situations. If you want to become poised, you need to increase your self-confidence, become a great communicator, and learn how to keep your composure in difficult situations.

## Method 1

### Method 1 of 3: Becoming a Skilled Conversationalist



**1 Become educated in a variety of topics.** Interacting comfortably with others shows confidence and poise. It is much easier to come up with subjects to discuss if you are educated in a variety of skills and topics.

- Go to the library and read a variety of books. Read up about history, science, sociology, psychology, or anything else that you are interested in.
- Scan the internet, and read reputable websites to keep up with current events.
- Read a newspaper (either online or in print) and be educated about current events in your community as well as the world. This way, you can start a conversation by asking, "Did you hear about \_\_\_\_? What do you think about it?"
- Learn new hobbies and activities. Some examples include learning how to: play an instrument, dance, do yoga, rock-climb, skydive, surf, snowboard, ski, scuba-dive, paint, draw, or sing. This way, when you meet a new person you have plenty of activities to discuss. Chances are, the other person will have some similar interests.



**2 Listen.** When attending social gatherings, be a "listener" rather than always driving the conversation. People love being listened to and gravitate to people who take the time to listen to them.

- Relax, breathe and pretend you're talking to someone you've know all your life.
- Ask questions and be interested. Focus solely on the person and his or her experience rather than on what you are going to say next. Be present in the moment.
- Ask open-ended questions rather than closed-ended "yes" or "no" questions. This will help increase the likelihood that you have a positive and continued conversation.
- Use active listening skills, which help to build understanding and trust. One way to show that you are listening is to restate what the person has just said. You can do this by saying, "I am hearing that you are upset at your brother. Is that right?"<sup>[1]</sup>
- You can also give feedback and validate the person. Say something like, "That sounds really tough. It sounds like you are hurt, and that makes sense given the situation."



**3 Focus on the positive.** If you talk about negative things too much you may seem like a complainer and someone who lacks poise. However, if you focus on positive subjects people may notice your elegance and charm.<sup>[2]</sup>

- Ask positive questions such as, “What’s going well for you? What have you been doing that’s fun lately?”
- Generally avoid conversations about politics and religion unless you share the same mentality and openness toward these subjects.



**4 Use assertive communication.** Assertiveness is generally being respectful and open about your feelings and thoughts while maintaining tact and composure.<sup>[3]</sup> Assertive communication is warm, welcoming, and friendly.

- One way to be assertive is to be understanding of others and their situations, while still respecting and communicating your own needs and desires. For example, you might say, "That is a great idea. How about we also do this?"<sup>[4]</sup>
- Show you are assertive through your body language. Give appropriate eye contact (not staring, but not avoiding, look around every once in a while). Be relaxed in your body; Do not make your body too small (hunched shoulders) or too large (hands on hips).
- Do not use aggressive forms of communication such as putting people down, calling them names, or raising your voice.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Saying how you feel or think when you know it might hurt other people can also be a form of aggressive communication; some things are better left unsaid (negative comments about how someone looks or acts, for example). These types of speech and actions may show that you are aggressive, and can indicate to others that you are losing your cool.
- Some cities offer "finishing schools" where social skills are taught.

## Method 2 of 3: Increasing Self-Confidence



**1 Practice self-acceptance.** If you have self-confidence, then you will have poise; the two dovetail. Accepting yourself increases your self-esteem and can help you develop confidence and poise.<sup>[6]</sup>

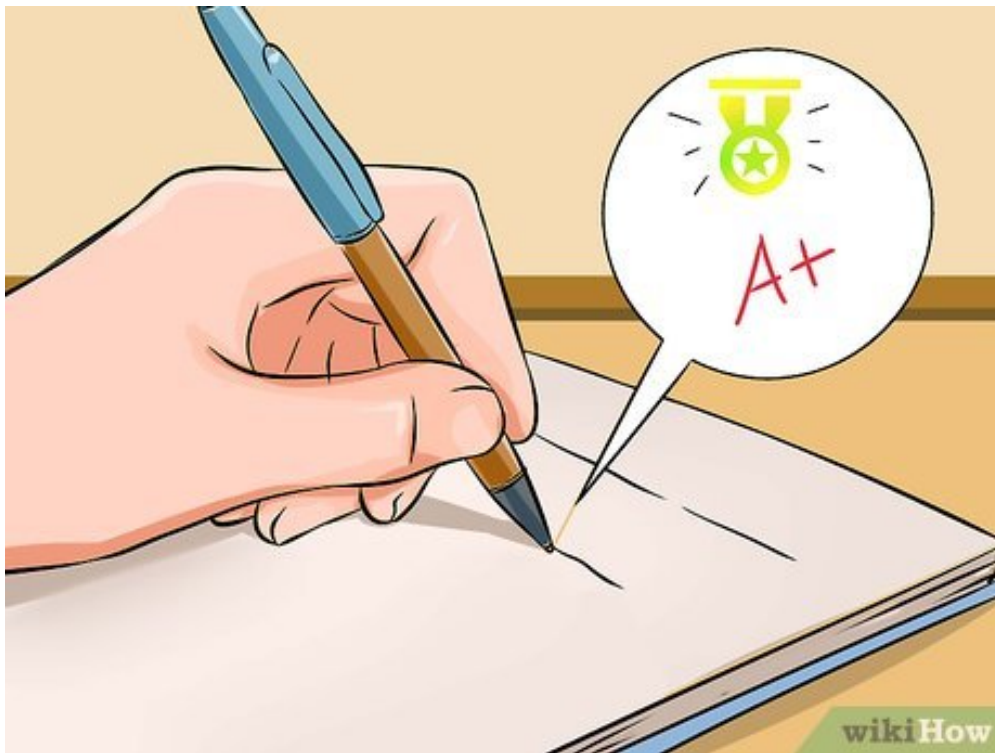
- Make a list of your strengths and things you want to improve, including personality characteristics and appearance. Go down the list and verbally accept each part of yourself. Say, “I accept that I am talkative. I accept that I sometimes have a temper.”
- In general, you can use a self-affirmation such as saying to yourself, “I accept everything about myself. I accept who I am, what I look like, my past, present, and future.”<sup>[7]</sup>



**2 Believe in yourself.** How you think about yourself affects your actions and your ability to be poised.<sup>[8]</sup> To develop self-confidence, learn to believe in yourself. This means believing that you are a positive person who has interesting things to share. This also means doing things that make you feel confident about yourself.

- Visualization is a helpful way to believe in yourself. Close your eyes and imagine yourself as completely confident and poised. Where are you? What does it feel like? What are you thinking about? What are you doing?<sup>[9]</sup>
- Think positive thoughts about yourself. If you find yourself worrying or thinking negatively, re-frame the situation.<sup>[10]</sup> You could practice by purposefully thinking, "I can do this. I can accomplish anything I put my mind to. I believe in myself."
- Try power poses. Our body language can actually shape how we feel about ourselves.<sup>[11]</sup> <sup>[12]</sup> Power poses generally involve making your body bigger (taking up more space) instead of smaller (which indicates a lack of confidence). Try spreading your legs slightly apart and putting your hands on your hips. You can find more power poses online.





**3 Focus on your strengths.** Paying attention to the positive aspects of yourself can heighten your ability to have confidence and poise in social situations, which can increase the likelihood that you are accepted by others.<sup>[13]</sup>

- Make a list of your accomplishments. Did you get an A on a paper? Are you great at swimming and you once won a medal?
- Think about how you can use your strengths to increase your poise.



**4 Trust that it will work out.** Whatever the situation you are in, the way you think about it can influence the outcome (for better or worse).<sup>[14]</sup> Those who believe that something negative will happen may actually influence that outcome to occur. For example, if you are worried that you will say something silly or wrong in a meeting, this thought can increase your nervousness, which may cause you to stumble over your words. Thus, you create the outcome that you are fearful of.

- Instead of thinking about what might happen or the worst case scenario, focus instead on what you actually want to happen. Instead of thinking, "Oh no, I hope I don't stumble over my words," consciously think positive thoughts such as, "I want to speak clearly and effectively. I will focus on being poised and feeling confident. I can do this." These positive thoughts are much more likely to reduce negative feelings and increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.





**5 Get social support.** Supportive relationships can help to empower you and increase your overall self-confidence. Through others, we can develop a sense of connection, belonging, and acceptance.

- If you are feeling low or not confident in yourself, talk to a friend or family member about it. Chances are, they will help you identify the good things about you and turn your mood and thoughts around. This can be very validating and can increase your self-confidence if you know that others support and believe in you.
- Take a look at your relationships and ask yourself if those who you spend time with are supportive of you. Our social connections should bring us positivity and lift us up in times of stress. If people are putting you down or making you feel worse about yourself, these connections are not likely to help you become more confident. Consider distancing yourself from damaging relationships and focus on connecting with supportive individuals.

### Method 3 of 3: Maintaining Your Composure



**1 Stop and take deep breaths.** Part of being poised is maintaining your composure in difficult or irritating situations. Instead of reacting automatically in a negative way such as storming out of the room or yelling at someone, maintain your poise by stopping and take a breath or removing yourself from the situation in an elegant way (i.e. excusing yourself to go to the restroom).<sup>[15]</sup>

- If you are alone, you can try a deep breathing exercise to calm yourself down. Breathe in through your nose deeply and out through your mouth slowly. Focus on your breathing and your experience of it. Your body should begin to relax and once you feel calm you can stop the breathing exercise.
- If you need to, take a minute to step away and recollect your thoughts.<sup>[16]</sup>



**2 Observe.** Being mindful of what you are reacting to is an important component of keeping your composure.<sup>[17]</sup> If you observe what is happening, you can begin to change how you react to the situation and be more poised.

- Ask yourself, "What am I reacting to? What am I thinking and feeling about this situation? Is this something that is a pattern from my past? Am I upset about this situation or does it remind me of something else that happened and struck a chord with me?"
- Look at the bigger picture. Observe the situation from afar as if you were in a helicopter viewing it from the sky. What is the bigger picture? Will this situation matter in 1 month, 6 months, or a year? You may find that you react to situations that do not affect your life in the long-term.



**3 Practice what works.** Having a plan on how to deal with difficult emotions is one surefire way to maintain your composure in difficult situations.<sup>[18]</sup> Identify ways to cope with difficult emotions that work for you.

- For example, if you notice that you tend to get angry when people do not agree with you on a topic, you may develop specific coping mechanisms for dealing with this situation. This might include taking deep breaths, counting to ten, or reminding yourself that others can have different opinions and it doesn't mean that they think you are dumb or don't like you.



## Expert Q&A

### Question

How do I talk classy?



**Tami Claytor**  
Etiquette Coach  
Expert Answer

If you're talking and someone ever upsets you, try to keep your composure. Step back and take a few minutes to recollect your thoughts before talking to them calmly.

Helpful 1 Not Helpful 0

### Question

I am already on vacation from last two days to take a break from work. Tomorrow being last day, I am still unsure if this vacation helped. Lately, I have noticed that acceptance level in my team for me has reduced. This incidentally had been noticed by my superiors and peers. They have been supporting and have shared their feedback for me. What is the solution?



**Tom De Backer**  
Top Answerer

The solution is to make sure your acceptance level has indeed decreased, or if it's only your perception. Then, find the underlying reasons for this decrease and remedy if possible. Talk openly and confront any unacceptable behavior, including your own.

Helpful 7 Not Helpful 0

### Question

How will I know when I'm poised?



**H.knowitall**  
Community Answer

Developing poise is a process. You must practice grace and elegance. You will know when you are poised when you find that your posture has improved, and it becomes easy for you to be graceful.

Helpful 1 Not Helpful 1



### Tips

- Never change yourself if it's not what you want.
- Watch other people with poise and you can copy their behaviors.

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## About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Tami Claytor**. Tami Claytor is an Etiquette Coach, Image Consultant, and the Owner of Always Appropriate Image and Etiquette Consulting in New York, New York. With over 20 years of experience, Tami specializes in teaching etiquette classes to individuals, students, companies, and community organizations. Tami has spent decades studying cultures through her extensive travels across five continents and has created cultural diversity workshops to promote social justice and cross-cultural awareness. She holds a BA in Economics with a concentration in International Relations from Clark University. Tami studied at the Ophelia DeVore School of Charm and the Fashion Institute of Technology, where she earned her Image Consultant Certification. This article has been viewed 119,338 times.

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