

# How to Be Professional at Work

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Being professional is one of the most important aspects of being successful at your job. Your professionalism could open the door to other career opportunities, a raise, or even a bonus. Your demeanor toward your boss, your coworkers, and your clients should be courteous and professional at all times, from how you present yourself to how you communicate to how you interact with others at work.

## Part 1

### Part 1 of 3: Presenting Yourself in a Professional Manner



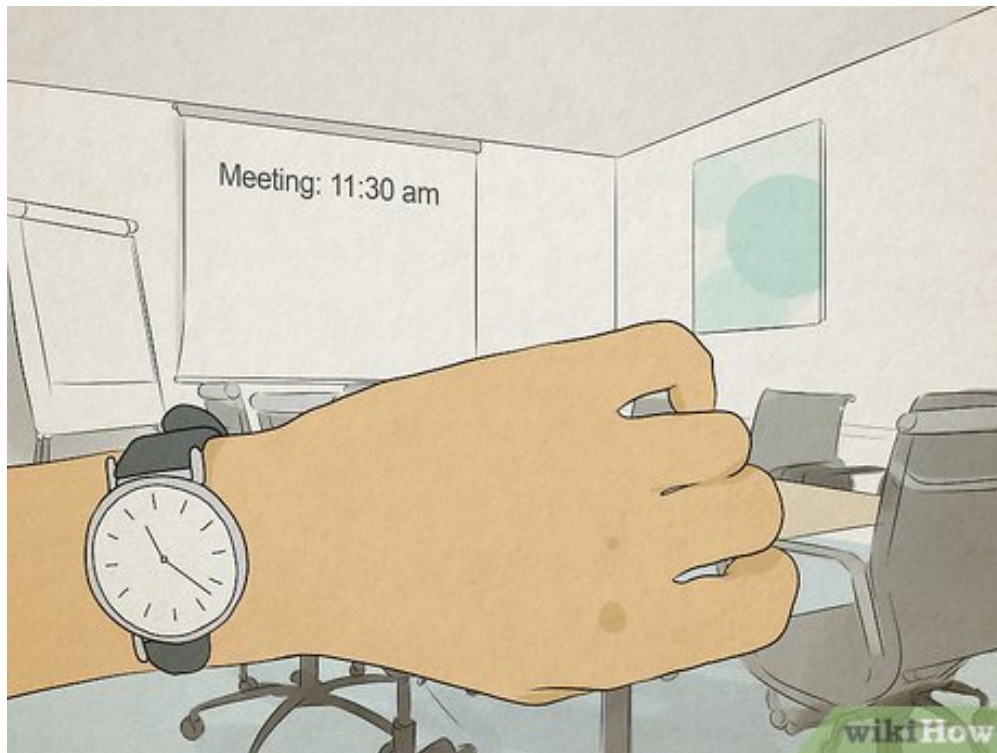
**1 Be well groomed and appropriately dressed.** You should come into work every day clean and well groomed to ensure you have a professional appearance. You will also need to [dress professionally](#) based on the expected attire of your workplace. Avoid clothing that is too tight or too revealing and if you think something may not be appropriate for your workplace, don't wear it.

- Gauge the dress expectations of your workplace by noticing what other employers are wearing. If everyone is wearing conservative attire, with suits, collared shirts, and long skirts, adjust your attire accordingly. Many workplaces have a business casual dress code, which may allow slacks or jeans as long as you still appear professional. Be mindful of bright colors and busy patterns as well.
- If possible, cover any tattoos and remove any piercings, unless your superiors are fine with you exposing them.



**2 Follow the cultural norms of your workplace.** Note how your coworkers operate in your office to get a sense of how things are done. You may note how people dress, and how they lower their voices when someone is on the phone nearby, or that they go into the staff room to have more casual discussions.<sup>[1]</sup>

- You may also notice how your coworkers interact with clients during meetings, and how everyone always shows up on time, or a few minutes early for a meeting. Pay attention to the behavior of others to get a sense of what is considered professional in your workplace.



**3 Be on time for meetings and discussions.** The majority of workplaces will expect you to be on time for all meetings, planned discussions, and to be at work by a certain time in the day. If you are not sure about the expectations around the start time for the work day, ask your superior. Most offices expect their employees to be in the office early in the morning to field any calls from clients and to ensure the office is functioning during regular business hours.<sup>[2]</sup>

- If possible, try to get to meetings 5 minutes early to get settled and organized before the meeting begins. Avoid showing up more than 10 minutes early for a meeting, as any earlier can throw off other people's schedules and actually be inconvenient for others.
- Make sure you organize your materials and papers before the meeting begins. Be prepared to participate or give your input in case you are asked to do so.



**4 Maintain a positive attitude.** Often, a professional attitude is a positive and motivated one. To be successful, you will need to demonstrate to others that you have the skills and knowledge to perform your duties and responsibilities. But in addition to expertise and know how, your employer will value a professional attitude that demonstrates character and integrity.

- Focus on being honest, reliable, a hard worker, and positive, day in and day out. Your job should be important to you, and you should value your successes, no matter how small or minor.



- 1 Bring a notepad with you to meetings and discussions.** Avoid forgetting any tasks or appointments by always writing it down in a work designated notepad. You can use a digital notepad or a pen and paper. Show your professionalism by taking notes during meetings to stay organized and on track.<sup>[3]</sup>





**2 Speak clearly, and speak up when necessary.** To communicate professionally, you need to show you can write and speak with confidence and clarity. Be an active listener during meetings and discussions and wait until someone is finished speaking to share your thoughts. Speak slowly and concisely so everyone can understand your points and make note of them.

- If you have an idea about how to approach a problem or project, make sure to give it some thought before sharing with the group. Take some time to fully flesh it out so that you can present a good idea when the time comes.<sup>[4]</sup>
- If you notice problems or issues around a certain project or client, speak up to your coworkers and your superiors. Don't ignore or avoid these conflicts. Instead, face them head-on by alerting others to the issues and working together to try to problem-solve.



- 3 Use email or the telephone, unless you need to discuss something face to face.** Most workplaces encourage managing your time effectively by using email or a phone call to discuss minor decisions or issues. Avoid calling a meeting for topics that could be addressed in 5 minutes with a quick email exchange or phone call. Wasting other people's time with unnecessary meetings can be seen as unprofessional.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Research your question or issue before bringing it to everyone else's attention. Look through your emails or office memos to ensure you aren't missing information that has been disseminated.
  - There may be an instance where you need to call a face to face meeting to discuss a major issue. If this is the case, send a meeting invitation by email to your coworkers and/or clients. Check your coworkers' calendars to ensure they are available during the proposed time.



**4 Learn to take feedback and act on it.** Another key way to demonstrate professionalism is to be willing to learn from feedback.<sup>[6]</sup> Remember that good feedback should be about your work and your results. It should never be personal. Getting angry or defensive about feedback can make you appear unprofessional. Instead, focus on learning from feedback and using it to improve the way you do things at work.<sup>[7]</sup>





- 1 Avoid office politics and gossip.** It can be hard not to get sucked into the office gossip mill, especially if you are new to the workplace and are starting to get to know your coworkers. But staying out of office politics and gossip will ensure you maintain a professional reputation and do not get too involved personally with rumors or hearsay.<sup>[8]</sup> <sup>[9]</sup>
  - Not talking about your coworkers behind their backs or based on gossip will also show you respect your coworkers and are willing to be honest and straightforward with them.



- 2 Be pleasant and respectful to your coworkers.** This includes coworkers you may not get along with or see eye to eye with. If you have a coworker who you cannot work with, avoid working directly with them, if possible. You may consider talking to your boss or superior if you have constant issues with the coworker's work attitude and performance.



**3 Treat your boss like a possible mentor.** If your boss sees potential in you as an employee, they may try to act as a mentor to you. It's important to maintain a relationship with your boss that is professional and humble. Avoid acting like you know more about the job than your boss does or that you are not willing to learn new skills or to take their advice.<sup>[10]</sup>



**4 Focus on getting your work done well.** The easiest way to be professional at work is to do your job well without having to be reminded. Focus on getting your tasks done and contributing to the workplace culture in a positive manner. Being a good worker will enable you to have an impact at work and learn a lot from your time as an employee.<sup>[11]</sup>

- Having a mentor as your boss can lead to bigger career opportunities and the ability to expand your existing skill set.



## Community Q&A

#### Question

### How do I be more professional at work?



Community Answer

Be mindful of the other colleagues around you and act appropriate and respectful. You can also dress in appropriate attire.

Helpful 57 Not Helpful 2

#### Question

### How do I act professional at work?



Community Answer

Be respectful to coworkers. Avoid office politics and gossiping. Speak clearly when necessary, and learn from constructive feedback.

Helpful 56 Not Helpful 5

#### Question

### How do I deal with a boss that's rude to me?



Community Answer

To start, talk to them and provide examples of times when they have made you feel uncomfortable, disrespected, or insulted; make sure the examples you're providing are factual. If the problem persists, go to a senior manager and discuss your concerns.

Helpful 40 Not Helpful 14

#### Question

### How can I stop being too friendly with customers?



Community Answer

Being friendly with customers is not a bad thing. However, it is always important to limit the time of conversation with them, don't let all your time of work be consumed by spending too much time trying to show people you are nice. Greeting them and showing good attitude is enough to show that you are nice.

Helpful 2 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

### How do I present myself in a professional manner?



**Amy Gremillion**  
Community Answer

Write a list of the practices you wish to use and keep it in a drawer within your desk so you can refer to it as needed. Each opportunity that presents itself to use an item from the list should be explored. Once you develop a good habit, check it off. If you are shy, make an effort to get to know your coworkers. Asking how their weekend was is a good way to break the ice and build rapport. As you get to know them it may become easier to communicate more effectively and assert yourself professionally within the workplace.

Helpful 0 Not Helpful 0

### Question

## How do you collaborate with someone you don't like?



**Amy Gremillion**  
Community Answer

Let your work speak for itself. Each role within an organization complements another role. If you do your work, it will make the workload easier for everyone else. You can also make it a point to acknowledge others when they perform a job well done. Being cordial and greeting your colleagues is a great way to also build rapport. Everyone isn't always going to like you, however good practices will command the respect you deserve.

Helpful 0 Not Helpful 0

## References

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## About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Melody Godfred, JD**. Melody Godfred is a Career Coach, Entrepreneur, and Founder of Write In Color, a full-service resume and career development company that specializes in developing compelling personal narratives and brands. With over ten years of experience, Melody has worked with clients at entertainment and media companies including Apple, Disney, Fox, Netflix, Riot Games, Viacom, and Warner Bros, among others. The Muse invited Melody and Write In Color to serve as one of its 30 trusted career counselors (out of 3,000) to provide one-on-one coaching and resume services to the platform's more than four million active users. Melody earned a JD from Loyola Marymount University and BS from the University of Southern California. This article has been viewed 254,915 times.

★★★★☆  
8 votes - 75%

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