

6 Ways You Can Make a Great First Impression

Summary: Want to make the best first impression possible? Follow these 6 tips.

While you can earn someone's trust and respect over time, making a good first impression is essential when it comes to making business connections and making sure they feel at ease with you and trust you and your opinion. But not everyone is a charismatic people person, making conversation and connecting without effort. So how do you make a good first impression? Here are six ways to gain trust and respect early on with people you come in contact with.

1. **Prepare.** Especially if this is a business meeting or a job interview, make sure you've done some research beforehand. Check out their company website and their LinkedIn profile to get an idea of the work they've done or what their company is most passionate about. Getting an idea of who they are not only helps you feel comfortable and confident walking in, but it gives you conversation starters as well.
2. **Let the other person speak first.** If you get overzealous and dominate the conversation, you won't gain any trust. Let the other person take charge of the conversation, but be sure to ask engaging questions and help them to open up and feel understood.
3. **Use active listening.** To make someone feel understood, you need to really be listening to them. Don't just hear what they're saying and file it away, but repeat things back to them and ask questions that show you really understand what they're expressing to you. However, don't give them solutions unless they're asking for them. If you tell someone what to do and they just wanted you to listen rather than give advice, they may feel like you're being condescending.
4. **Put away your phone.** Nothing makes someone feel more unimportant than when you're checking your phone during a conversation. Are they so boring that you have to look to something else for entertainment? Put it away and out of your mind so you can show them that you're focused on them.
5. **Make plenty of time.** Don't schedule time to speak with someone if you're going to have to rush off right away. Make sure there's time for small talk to get to know them personally if it's a business meeting. Even if you're talking about the traffic or the weather, ask them about their day or week and pay attention to what they say. Making time for "unimportant" conversations lets them know that you're invested.
6. **Follow up.** After you've met with someone, follow up with them. If it's a job interview or an informational interview, send them a handwritten thank you card in the mail thanking them for their time and/or advice. If it was just a meeting to get to know someone, send them an email letting them know you enjoyed the conversation. This leaves the other person knowing for sure that you enjoyed the time and reminds them of you, rather than having them either worry or completely forget about what you discussed.