

How to make a great first impression

There are so many points in your sporting career and your job search where first impressions count for everything. From interviews, networking or your first day at your new job, it's important to put your best foot forward to leave a lasting impression – no matter the situation.

1. *Prepare*

Make sure you feel confident, relaxed and are not rushing to wherever you are going. Even if you need to arrive to your interview/first day 10 or 15 min early, always make sure you have enough time to centre yourself, reflect on what's ahead and ensure you are mentally prepared. It sounds cliché but doing breathing exercises or meditating before you step into a new environment can be extremely helpful in mentally preparing yourself and ensuring you are in the best frame of mind to leave a good impression.

2. *Read the room*

Having the emotional intelligence to be able to read the room you're in and adapting your behaviour and communication to suit is a highly regarded skill. This doesn't mean changing your personality, but rather making small adjustments appropriate to the environment or setting you are about to enter.

For example, being overly enthusiastic in a highly formal setting is probably not the most appropriate behaviour but presenting yourself in a more subdued tone will send a more appropriate and positive vibe.

3. *Build rapport*

It's essential to build rapport as soon as possible with whoever you are meeting with. Try to find some common ground, or common interests in the initial part of your meeting, this will serve to not only 'break the ice' but give you and the other/s something to remember each other by and build a connection for next time you meet.

However, make sure to keep this as professional as it needs to be – for example, don't spend the entirety of the interview/meeting discussing your weekend plans or the latest developments in your favourite TV show – keep it short and friendly but don't ramble.

4. *Be attentive*

While this goes without saying, it's important to stress focusing your attention on the person you are speaking to always. Besides removing external distractions such as your phone, make sure that you keep eye contact, maintain positive body language, and be totally present with each person you talk to, divide your attention equally if speaking to a group.

For example, if in an interview is with more than one person, make sure you answer the person's question directly instead of focusing your attention around the room. Make sure not to interrupt or talk over the top of whoever you are speaking with, even if you are enthusiastically trying to answer the question to the best of your ability.

Enjoy the experience,
Gerry Knights
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