

# Looking your best at work



## Learner guide

Ready for work

**Pre-employment skills**

# **Looking your best at work**

Version 1.2



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### Looking your best at work

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# Your appearance

All employers want their staff to look neat, tidy and clean. This is very important if you meet and talk to customers. People often get an idea about another person the first time they see them. What would a customer think if your hair is messy and your clothes are dirty the first time they see you at work?

You should always look well groomed at work.

'Well groomed' means that you have:

- clean and neat hair
- clean fingernails
- clean teeth
- fresh breath
- clean and neat clothes.

You should also shower every day.



## Activity 1

Think about your appearance. Are you well groomed? Are there any areas where you could improve?

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[Click to complete Activity 1](#)

## Your hair

The way you wear your hair depends on the rules at your work. Some employers let you wear your hair the way you like to. Other employers have rules to follow.

Your hairstyle at work depends on the type of job you have. For example, if you work in an office, you may need to wear your hair tied back neatly. If you work in a clothing store for young people, you may be able to wear your hair however you wish.

Wherever you work, your hair should always be clean.

When you start work, find out your workplace's rules. Look at other staff members who are your age to see how they wear their hair.



## Safety and your hair

Rules about hairstyles at work are often related to safety and hygiene. Hygiene means keeping things clean. You may have to wear a cap or a hairnet if you work around food. This stops your hair getting in the food.

People who work with machines may have to wear a cap or tie their hair back. This stops their hair getting caught in the machines.

You must follow any rules. If you have an accident because you didn't follow the rules, it will be your fault. You could damage machinery or be seriously injured.



### Activity 2

List **three** jobs where you would have to cover your hair for safety or hygiene.

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[Click to complete Activity 2](#)

## Piercings and tattoos

Some people like to wear piercings. This includes earrings, nose studs, tongue studs, lip rings and eyebrow rings. Some employers may not like their staff wearing piercings at work.

Ask your employer what the rules are. You may have to take out some of your piercings while you are at work. They may be a safety risk. Your employer may ask you to take them out if you meet customers.

If you are not allowed to wear piercings at work you should decide whether your job or your piercings are more important. If it is your piercings, you should find a job where you can wear them.

Some employers don't like people to show their tattoos at work. They may ask you to cover them. Some employers don't mind if you have a tattoo. Before you start work, find out the rules in the workplace.



## Clothing

Many workplaces have rules about what to wear. This is known as a 'dress code'. A dress code explains what type of clothing is suitable to wear for your job.

The dress code may be written down. If it is not written down, you will be told the type of clothes to wear. You may be allowed to wear casual clothes if you do not meet customers as part of your job.

### The type of job

The way you dress for work depends on the type of job you have. Here is some more information.

Type of job	What you would wear
<p data-bbox="317 936 523 969"><b>Office workers</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="683 976 1254 1093">Female office workers usually wear neat suits, skirts or dresses. Male office workers wear suits and ties.</p> <p data-bbox="683 1122 1262 1279">They dress this way because of the work they do. For example, they don't have to lift heavy things, but they may meet customers or other workers.</p>
<p data-bbox="323 1346 517 1379"><b>Tradespeople</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="683 1384 1222 1581">Tradespeople wear overalls or hard-wearing work pants or shorts. They also wear protective boots. They do a lot of messy work and need to protect themselves.</p>

**Type of job****Factory workers****What you would wear**

Factory workers wear safety clothing such as hard hats, yellow vests and earmuffs. This protects them from getting hurt. In some factories, workers wear gloves, hairnets and shoe covers. This prevents them from contaminating products.

**Telephone customer service workers**

People who work in call centres may wear casual clothes that are comfortable, as they are sitting down for a long time. They don't meet customers or the public.

**Hospitality workers**

People who work in hospitality wear practical clothing because they stand up all day. They wear closed-toe shoes in case they drop something. They often wear a uniform or an apron. Wait staff tie their hair back if it is long. Kitchen staff may wear a hairnet or hat.

## The type of workplace

The way you dress for work also depends on your workplace. Staff at some workplaces wear uniforms. The uniform is given to you when you start work. You may need to wear a uniform if you work for:

- a bank
- an airline
- a hospital
- a shop.



## Story



Ann recently got a job in an office at a car repair workshop. She has to wear a uniform. The uniform is a dark blue t-shirt and cap, with black pants or jeans. At first Ann doesn't like it. She would much rather wear her own clothes. She also thinks the t-shirt doesn't suit her.

All the other workers wear the same uniform. Soon Ann feels like part of the team. She begins to like wearing the uniform, as she doesn't have to buy clothes for work. She also doesn't have to think about what to wear each day and enjoys wearing her own clothes more on the weekend.

## Activity 3

1. Why do some workplaces want employees to wear a uniform?

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2. Write down **two** reasons why you would want to wear a uniform.

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3. Write down **two** reasons why you wouldn't want to wear a uniform.

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[Click to complete Activity 3](#)

## Safety

Rules about clothes for work are often made for your safety. Employers do not want you to be hurt or have an accident at work because you are wearing the wrong clothes.

You may have a job where you must wear personal protective equipment (PPE). This is clothing and equipment that is worn to protect your body.

Here are some examples of PPE.

### Protective clothing

### What it means

#### Earmuffs and earplugs



Earmuffs and earplugs protect your ears when you work with loud noises.

#### Gloves



Gloves are used to protect a person's hands from dangerous liquids like cleaning chemicals or blood.

Gloves are also used to protect others. For example, if you prepare food you will wear gloves to keep the food safe from any germs on your hands.

#### Overalls and aprons



Overalls and aprons are used to protect you and your clothes from spills.

**Protective clothing****Safety glasses  
and goggles****Steel-capped boots****What it means**

Safety glasses and goggles protect your eyes from bright light, electrical sparks, dust and projectiles. A projectile is a small piece that flies off something, such as a metal shaving or a piece of glass.

Safety footwear protects your feet. You should not wear sandals if you work in a factory. Tools may fall on your toes, or you might step on something that can cut you.

PPE needs to be cared for properly so that it keeps you safe. Keep all PPE clean and only use it if it is in good condition.

## Religious or cultural clothing

Your religion or culture may require you to wear special clothing. For example, you may need to wear a head covering or scarf. Tell your supervisor this before you start work. He or she must allow you to do this. It is against the law for your employer not to let you wear religious or cultural clothing. However, special considerations may need to be taken in these situations. For example, a scarf may be dangerous around machinery. Your supervisor may help you find a way to make your clothing safe, or they may have to change your tasks.



### Activity 4

Why do you think it is important for people to be allowed to wear special clothing related to their religion or culture?

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[Click to complete Activity 4](#)

## Smile and be friendly

The last thing you can do to look your best at work is smile. When you smile and treat other people in a friendly way, they will be happy to deal with you. For example, if you work in a café and greet customers with a smile and a friendly 'Hello', they will be happy to be there. They may come back or tell their friends how friendly the place is. This is great for business.

You should also be open and friendly to the people you work with. If you are, they will be happy to work with you. They will also be happy to help you if you ever need it.

Along with your physical appearance, remember to smile as well, and appear happy and ready to do your job.



## Activity 5

1. Have you ever had to deal with a shop assistant or worker who was in a bad mood? They may have ignored you, or been rude to you. How did this make you feel?

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2. What can you do to turn things around if you are in a bad mood at work?

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[Click to complete Activity 5](#)

## What you have learnt

Put a ✓ in the box when you have learnt these things.

- Your appearance at work is important. All employers want their staff to look neat, tidy and clean.
- You need to be well groomed. This means that you have:
  - clean, neat hair
  - clean fingernails
  - clean teeth
  - fresh breath
  - clean and neat clothes.
- Many workplaces have rules about what to wear. This is known as a 'dress code'.
- The dress code at your work will depend on the job you do, and the type of workplace.
- You may need to tie your hair back or wear a hairnet at work.
- Some employers do not like their staff wearing piercings at work. Ask your employer what the rules are.
- Some employers don't like people to show their tattoos at work. Ask your employer if you should cover tattoos.
- You may have a job where you must wear personal protective equipment (PPE). This is clothing and equipment that is worn to protect your body.
- PPE includes:
  - earmuffs and earplugs
  - gloves
  - overalls and aprons
  - safety glasses and goggles
  - steel-capped boots.
- Your religion or culture may require you to wear special clothing. You must be allowed to do this at work.
- Remember to smile at work. When you smile and treat other people in a friendly way, they will be happy to deal with you.

## Check your learning

Think of a place where you would like to work. Write the name here:

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Then answer these questions about this workplace.

1. What type of work do people do at this workplace?

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2. What type of clothes do employees have to wear?

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3. Why do employees wear these type of clothes?

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4. Would you need to wear any personal protective clothing at this workplace? If so, what?

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5. Do you think the employer would let workers show their tattoos and piercings at this workplace?

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6. What would you do if you have a tattoo or piercing and the employer doesn't like it?

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7. What should you do if you have to wear something because of your religion or culture?

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[Click to complete](#)

# Answers

## Answers to activities

### Activity 1

Answers will vary depending on the person. For example, they might say that they could buy new work shoes or get their hair trimmed to improve their appearance.

### Activity 2

Answers could include factory worker, laboratory worker, surgeon, nurse, caterer or chef.

### Activity 3

#### Answer to Question 1

So customers can see who the workers are. So all the workers present themselves in the same neat way.

#### Answer to Question 2

So that I look like part of the team. So that I don't have to worry about what to wear to work, or spend money on work clothes.

#### Answer to Question 3

Answers will vary. For example, the uniform might not suit me, and I would have to remember to wash it and take it with me.

### Activity 4

It is against the law not to let people do this. Religion and culture play a large and important part in some people's lives. There are certain requirements that need to be met as part of some religions. Employers must respect these requirements as long as it is safe to do so.

## Activity 5

### Answer to Question 1

Answers will vary. Here is an example answer.

Yes, a shop assistant ignored me and snapped at me when I asked her a question. It made me feel like I was putting her out by asking her to do her job. I was also angry, as I was in a rush and she wasn't helpful at all.

### Answer to Question 2

Answers should take the form of a strategy to put aside bad feelings at work. For example:

Talk to a workmate or supervisor about your problem. Remember you are paid to help customers and treat everyone politely. Think about how you would like to be treated.

## Answers to check your learning

Answers will vary depending on the workplace chosen. Example answers will be given using a retail sports shop as an example.

### **Answer to Question 1**

People sell sporting goods and equipment at this shop.

### **Answer to Question 2**

The employees wear a uniform of red t-shirt, blue shorts and a cap with the store name on it. They also wear white sneakers.

### **Answer to Question 3**

Employees wear this uniform so customers know who works at the shop. The uniform is also comfortable and sporty, which is right for the job.

### **Answer to Question 4**

No, just the uniform.

### **Answer to Question 5**

I don't think so. I shop at this store all the time and I have never seen any staff with piercings or tattoos.

### **Answer to Question 6**

If it meant keeping my job, I would cover it up or remove it. Or I could find a job where tattoos and piercings are allowed.

### **Answer to Question 7**

I would talk to my employer before I started work. I would explain what the item is and why I need to wear it.