

Vail School District
9th Grade
Writing Benchmark #2
Argumentative

DIRECTIONS:

Read the information and writing prompt below. As you read these texts, you will gather information that will help you understand the importance of professional appearances and first impressions as steps to success. Then use scratch paper for your prewriting/planning and your draft.

It is believed by some that perception is more important than the truth. Within the first ten seconds of meeting someone an opinion of that person is already formed. Although that opinion may later be adjusted slightly, that initial judgment is always present.

Professionalism was once regarded very highly by society as a whole. In today's world, it appears as though most adults hold professionalism in the utmost regard, but that the younger generations do not consider it critically important. Appearance and manners are key components of professionalism. Appearance determines immediately how a person is going to be received, only to be followed by their manners.

Knowing that the first two key components of professionalism are appearance and manners, then it stands to reason that with every high school's mission being to prepare it's students for the real world that then their staff and students should be required to be dressed in professional attire; not school uniforms.

Present an argument to your principal that the Vail School District should require all staff and students to wear professional attire.

Your essay should include:

- An introduction, body, and conclusion
- A precise claim, organization of complex ideas or concepts, which are developed through relevant and concrete examples
- Develop and continue a formal style and objective tone
- An appropriate voice towards the audience with a correct anticipation of the audience's knowledge and concerns of the topic

Why We Judge Personalities On Appearance - It Works

By News Staff | August 11th 2012

Most people claim they don't make judgments about people based on appearance, and most people who say that are lying.

'First impressions' became a term for a reason. Everyone knows appearance counts in first impressions, and first impressions count overall, that is why it is better to wear a tie to a job interview than pajamas but how much are people really able to tell about someone else based on physical aspects, aside from whether or not they are

wearing pajamas instead of a tie or if they look like George Clooney?

A 2009 study examined the accuracy of observers' determination about 10 personality traits of people based on nothing but full-body photographs. When targets' posture and expression were constrained - the standardized condition, where the photograph was posed to the researchers' specifications - observers' judgments were accurate for extroversion, self-esteem, and even religiosity.

When the subjects were photographed with any pose and facial expression they wanted - the spontaneous condition - judgments were accurate for almost all of the 10 traits examined. [Lens model analyses](#), which describe how people perceive an unobservable (distal) criterion through observable (proximal) cues in statistical terms, results in the conclusion that both static cues, like clothing style, and dynamic cues like facial expression and posture, helped people deduce accurate personality-relevant information.

So 'the clothes make the man', as the saying goes. You dress to be like the person you want to be and observers use this information to form accurate judgments for a variety of traits. What it also means is that you can change how people view your personality and then maybe your personality itself. After all, if you want to be treated like a wealthy, intelligent person, and you dress the part and people treat you that way, eventually it will become part of your self-image; who you are. Want to experiment? Dress like a hobo and wander around the streets of a city and people might be all wrong about your agreeableness, emotional stability, openness, likability, and loneliness but they aren't wrong for making those determinations - most hobos are not conducting experiments.

"As we predicted, physical appearance serves as a channel through which personality is manifested," [say the authors](#). "By using full-body photographs and examining a broad range of traits, we identified domains of accuracy that have been overlooked, leading to the conclusion that physical appearance may play a more important role in personality judgment than previously thought."

Citation: Laura P. Naumann, Simine Vazire, Peter J. Rentfrow, and Samuel D. Gosling, 'Personality Judgments Based on Physical Appearance', *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*, December 2009; vol. 35, 12; pp. 1661-1671 [doi: 10.1177/0146167209346309](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167209346309)

Excerpt from : “How to Make a Great First Impression”

– by Nina Jamal and Judith Lindenberger

Did you know that within seconds of meeting someone for the first time, your appearance, body language and non-verbal communication will create a lasting first impression, and that person will assume to know everything about you? Like it or not, it's true and the work world demands making a great first impression and keeping it. Learn how to make a great first impression in this article from a human resources expert and image consultant.

In the Concise Oxford Dictionary, image is described as "the character or reputation of a

person or thing as generally perceived". A first impression based on non-verbal communication goes a long way in influencing this perception. Within seconds of meeting you, based on a single observed physical trait or behavior, people will assume to know everything about you (as is explained in the 2003 book *Social Psychology* by H. Andrew Michener, John D. Delamater, and Daniel J. Myers). Furthermore, according to research by Dr. Albert Mehrabian of UCLA, appearance and body language (visual image) accounts for fifty-five percent of an invaluable first impression.

The Relationship Between Image and How You Are Perceived Since light travels faster than sound, you are seen before you are heard. This is why, before even uttering a word your visual image will say a multitude about you as an individual (your perceived level of intelligence, competence, affability, self-esteem, confidence, power, beliefs and success) and about the organization you represent (its philosophy, culture, and standard of service).

You constantly send out *silent messages* providing clues to both existing and potential clients and colleagues. Based on these *clues*, they take their *cues*, e.g. consider you for a job or promotion, consider buying your organization's products and services, etc.

The National Research Council of Canada's Caroline Dunn and Lucette Charette found that, "People are affected by your appearance, whether or not they realize it, and whether or not they think appearance is important." In short, your visual presentation has consequences.

"I work in a field that is devoted to assessing people," states Kathryn Ricker, 30, Statistician, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey. "One of the concepts we talk about is known as the 'halo effect.' That means that if we know certain positive things about a person, we tend to have a generally positive impression of that person, sometimes even in spite of evidence to the contrary. What I'm realizing is that the halo effect also extends to a person's appearance. I think that is why a positive first visual impression is so important. If someone is nicely dressed and looks well put-together, we have greater confidence in his or her abilities even before he or she has said a word. If that is the case, why not always have your halo looking its shiniest?"

The Relationship Between Appearance and Interview Success Employers are severely irritated by inappropriate dress, mumbling and even poor handshakes by job applicants during interviews. A recent study, conducted by an employment law firm, Peninsula, asked businesses in the United Kingdom what interview habit they found most annoying and found that over a quarter were upset by unsuitable clothing or appearance.

Pamela Monticelli, 50, Senior Recruiter for Sovereign Bank in Tom's River, New Jersey, believes, "Especially in the financial industry, which tends to be a more conservative environment, what a lot of the younger people don't understand is that we are looking for someone to represent the company. So your appearance is not just representative of you; you will also be representing the company the way we want it to be represented." She adds, "I have raised four teenagers and every one of them has, at some point, gotten a piercing or tattoo and has said that 'if I am going to work for XYZ Company they

need to accept me for who I am.' My children need to understand that at some point they might have to modify their appearance to fit into a professional environment. While companies believe in a diverse environment, you also don't want to offend your customers."

Adds Meghan Meyer, 31, Human Resources Manager for The Mercadien Group in Princeton, New Jersey, "A comprehensive and well designed resume will get you to the phone screening process. An articulate person, who speaks confidently about his or her skill sets, will land an interview. But it is how you are perceived during the interview that will leave the lasting impression."

The Relationship Between Clothing and How you Perceive Yourself Besides being an external cue affecting the response of others toward you, clothing is also an inner cue affecting your self-image. Feeling good about how you look can make you feel good about yourself, thereby increasing your personal presence.

At some time or the other we have all experienced the emotional high of a successful clothing purchase, and when met with validating compliments and supportive attitudes from colleagues, our overall energy level is given an even bigger boost adding to that "feel good" factor.

Karen Dixon, 42, Supervisor, The Mercadien Group, Princeton, New Jersey, indicates, "Dressing in a professional yet stylish manner can give you a tremendous feeling of confidence that is exhibited to others through your attitude and actions."

The opposite is true when we just don't feel right about how we're dressed. The observer meets the ensuing negative energy in kind, potentially causing a further drain to our self-image.

The Relationship Between Clothing and Behavior Jackson Lewis, a law firm that specializes in personnel issues, polled more than 1000 human resource executives who had implemented a dress down policy. They reported a thirty percent increase in flirtatious behavior, contributing to an increase in sexual harassment lawsuits.

When you wear more powerful *looking* clothing (e.g. professional business attire, a suit, darker colors, etc.) and clothing that is appropriate for your profession, it changes your mindset -- switching from "relaxed mode" to "professional mode." This positive change in attitude is reflected in body language and behavior (e.g. better posture, firmer handshake, maintaining eye contact, sticking to business, etc.), giving you greater visual power.

The converse is true for more insignificant or inappropriate clothing choices, such as washed out colors or informal ensembles where more traditional clothing choices are the order of the day. Without you even knowing it, people will take the liberty of interpreting what you are saying via your body language and will judge and respond toward you accordingly.

The Relationship Between How You Dress and Your Professional Goals An indifferent professional image (which spells an indifferent attitude) can cost you valuable

clients, adversely affecting your professional goals and your organization's bottom line. However, a *well-defined* and *consistent* professional image can improve the perception of your professional abilities, which will increase your potential to attract and hold on to clients. When you aim to bridge gaps between your personal image and corporate image, there is a positive impact on business relationships plus, you increase your ability to build *rapport* and *fit* with the team. You can then start contributing to your team's success and ultimately to the attainment of your own professional goals.

Emily Oswald, 22, Account Manager, TrailGraphix, Washington, D.C., in her first job out of college, states, "My mother always said you don't dress for the position you have. You dress for the position you want. After three months with my company, I was promoted. Out of 300 people in my company, and out of 35 other account managers, I am the youngest one. When I meet with clients, who are typically fifty-year-old attorneys, I always dress more professionally. There is nothing comfortable about wearing a suit and heels but it does affect how you carry yourself and how you are perceived. Dressing professionally has definitely helped me move up quickly in my company. The first impression, and the second and the third, are important."

10 Thing Employees Can Do

1. **Dress Appropriately.** In a more conservative environment (banking, accounting, law, etc.) dressing "alluringly" can be perceived as "provocative," sabotaging your chances of attracting the kind of attention that wins you credibility. Likewise, in a more artistic industry, dressing in a dark colored, boxy suit will cause people to doubt your creativity. Dressing to fit your profession or industry and the situation, goes a long way toward making you feel like you belong with the team and with that particular corporate culture. This allows you to be "*in-the-moment*" and to focus on the business at hand. It also shows that you understand and respect the level of dress expected from you.
2. **Dress Consistently.** Dressing appropriately one day and inappropriately the next sends mixed messages causing confusion for yourself and the observer. Make sure that the way you *silently* present yourself is consistent with both your professional goals and your audience's expectations.
3. **Dress With Special Attention to Color.** Research shows that color is a very powerful communicator that has emotional and physiological affects on both the wearer and the observer. These affects can influence behavior, perception and responses. To best use color to your advantage, determine what your best colors are based on your unique undertone, eye and hair color. You can then use this knowledge as an invaluable tool in putting together your professional wardrobe.
4. **Dress For Your Body Type.** Find out your body type and the best fit for your shape. Clothes that are too big or cut for somebody else's silhouette can make you look disheveled.

5. **Dress in The Best Quality You Can Afford.** For the discerning wearer, "cheap chic" can be *felt*, making you uncomfortable (itchy fabric, poor fit); for the discerning viewer, it can be spotted a mile off. Aim to build a core wardrobe with quality rather than quantity. The quality outfits will have a longer life and therefore, work out cheaper in the long run.
6. **Dress With Finesse.** Never neglect to cultivate and maintain impeccable grooming habits. Little is more off-putting than body and food odors, greasy hair, overdone makeup, torn pantyhose or socks etc. Your attention to detail will show that you care about all the components that make up the *big picture*.
7. **Dress It Up a Notch.** The more client-oriented your role, the more professional your appearance needs to be. No one wants their banker to look like they just got out of high school or as if they're heading out for a day at the beach.
8. **Dress Into The 21st Century.** Throw away all those neon colored clothes, platforms and loud prints. You don't have to look like you just stepped off the pages of Vogue or GQ, but keeping your wardrobe up-to-date shows that you're current rather than dated which can read 'old fashioned'.
9. **Dress For The Part You Want to Play.** If you *look* content with the position you are at, that's exactly where you'll stay. On the other hand, "*looking-the-part*" can enhance confidence and lend greater credibility to your *intended* message of *where you want to go*. Try mirroring the image of the person whose position you aspire to be at. When you look the part, you can play it more convincingly in much the same way that actors do. **Jeanine Rhonstein**, Co-Chair, Princeton Community Works, indicates, "**Often opportunities present themselves to you, not the other way around. If you dress according to where you want others to see you heading, you may find more doors opening.**" And **David Watson, 39, Vice President, TrainRight Solutions in Louisville, Kentucky, seconds by saying**, "I live by this motto when it comes to professional dress. 'You dress for where you want to be, not where you are.' This means if you are a manager and you want to move to the executive suite, then you better dress like an executive."

Last but not least ...

If You're Fresh Out Of School Get Help. Transitioning from a school wardrobe and environment to a corporate one can be a daunting task. Find out from your organization if they offer professional dress training and then take advantage of it. If not, take the initiative and hire a specialist because when you look and feel your best, your heightened energy level will lead others to take you seriously.

DIRECTIONS: Write your argumentative essay on the following pages.

Argumentative Essay
