

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Evaluate how to look good on the job.

Objectives:

- A. Explain how good grooming habits and clothes influence your appearance and the way others see you on-the-job.
- B. Describe the grooming habits you need to practice to stay neat and clean.
- C. Evaluate your wardrobe and make wise clothing selections for work.

MODULE 3F: INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: Read the following information sheet and complete the activities at the end.

Introduction

The best work environment is one in which employers and employees work together as a team, supporting, leading, and sharing goals. In such an environment, it's up to each person to meet his or her responsibilities and do a good job. Every employee on the team must help the employer sustain this spirit of cooperation and achievement. None of this is possible unless you cooperate with company standards of dress and appearance.

This module is about proper grooming and dress. If you are not properly groomed and appropriately dressed, you won't have good relations with your employer. If you don't have good relations with your employer, you won't be able to do good work, and you may lose your job.

The Problem and Its Consequences

Over the last decade or so, standards in dress and grooming have changed considerably. Jeans, athletic shoes, sweat suits, jogging suits and other casual clothes have become more acceptable for everyday wear. Both men's and women's business suits have become softer and less structured. In short, you have much more flexibility in choosing appropriate clothing for work.

But that doesn't mean all the rules have disappeared. Employers still expect their employees to come to work looking neat and well groomed. Your supervisor may allow some discretion on how you dress for work, but your clothes should still fit well and be neat, clean and professional looking.

People often make judgments about a company, store or restaurant on the basis of how employees look and what they wear. This doesn't mean that you need to look as if you stepped out of the pages of a magazine like *VOGUE* or *GENTLEMAN'S QUARTERLY*. It does mean that you need to be neat, clean, well groomed and appropriately dressed whenever you are on the job.

Have you ever been in a store--say a clothing store, for example--and noticed that all the employees looked messy? One salesperson's hair needed combing, another had spots on her blouse, and a third needed a haircut and shoeshine. What impression of the store did you have?

Or maybe you've been in a restaurant where everyone had stains on his or her uniform and dirty shoes. Some of the women have long hair, which always seems to end up in the soup bowl or clinging to the side of a glass. It makes you uncomfortable about eating there, doesn't it?

Or let's say you're working in an office at the reception desk. Customers come in and find you chewing away on your bubble gum, listening to loud rock music on the radio while you apply nail polish or style your hair. Customers or clients who enter the office may think, "These people are not serious about working. They're all **playing** on the job!"

The point is: it's the wrong image to project. People need to see a neat, clean, attractive person, whether that person is working at a counter, ringing up sales, stocking shelves, waiting tables or sitting behind a desk. Whatever your job, you **ARE** the company to the people who meet you. You're one of the deciding factors that influence them to come back--or not to come back.

Now let's replay all of those scenarios above. Imagine that you walk in a store and see that all the salespeople are neatly dressed in professional-looking outfits. The men are wearing jackets and ties; the women are wearing attractive dresses or suits, or perhaps pulled-together casual outfits. Everybody looks terrific! You want to look terrific too, so you stop to browse through the racks to see what the store is selling. The image of the store fits the product they're selling.

Or you step through the door of the restaurant and immediately see a well-dressed and well-groomed host/hostess. All the wait staff are wearing clean uniforms. Their hair is clean and neatly groomed. The persons cleaning the tables are wearing jeans and casual shirts, but they are clean and attractive. Don't you feel more like sitting down and enjoying a meal?

Finally, you step in that office and are greeted by a man or woman who is professionally dressed. The office is quiet. The receptionist is working at the desk and greets you pleasantly as you come in. Don't you feel more like doing business with this company?

Remember: when you look good, the whole company looks good. When you look bad, the company does too. It's a cooperative relationship, a team effort. The effect of the whole depends on all the parts being in place. You're a big part of that whole. You can help make or help break it!

Causes of Improper Grooming and Dress

Different people neglect their dress and grooming for different reasons. Here are a few reasons that people give their employers for not being well groomed and appropriately dressed:

- I don't have time to pay attention to grooming and dress.
- I was running late.
- I got up too late to shower (shampoo my hair/iron my clothes).
- It's no big deal.
- It costs too much money.
- The shoe repair shop (cleaners) was closed yesterday.
- My brother/sister borrowed my clothes.
- The iron was broken.
- My blow dryer was broken.
- There wasn't enough hot water.
- I forgot to buy shoe polish.
- I have to do my own laundry and didn't get to the Laundromat.
- I just forgot.

While statements on this list may be explanations for not being well groomed and appropriately dressed, none of them are good **excuses**. Of course irons and blow dryers stop working sometimes. Dry cleaners and shoe repair shops do sometimes close inconveniently early. Brothers and sisters (and sometimes parents and friends) do borrow clothes, and everybody forgets the shoe polish or toothpaste at some time. But with enough forethought and planning, none of these events should affect your daily grooming routine.

You already know approximately how much time it takes to get dressed in the morning and get out your door. Take that figure and add 15 minutes to it. Those extra fifteen minutes will give you time to shine your shoes, iron and brush your clothes, and do the little extras that make a difference between being just "dressed" and being well-groomed and well-dressed.

If mornings aren't a good time for you, try doing most of your preparation the night before. Lay out the outfit you plan to wear, including the shoes and accessories--the right tie and belt if you're a man, jewelry and belt or scarf if you're a woman. Make sure all the buttons are on and there are no stains or spots on the clothing. Iron anything that needs ironing. Polish your shoes (and your bag or briefcase, if it's leather). The next morning, you'll just have to shower and shampoo your hair, shave

(or do makeup), dress in the clothing you laid out the night before, and you're out the door.

There's also a myth that looking good costs a great deal of money. It can, but it doesn't have to. Soap and shampoo are inexpensive, and so is deodorant. If you're trying to save money, buy in quantity and share with a friend. Or buy generic brands of toiletries like toothpaste, shaving cream or hand lotion. Check out discount stores. Watch for sales. It's not the cost of what you buy that matters, but the consistency with which you use it.

What It Means to be Well-groomed and Appropriately Dressed

Being well groomed and appropriately dressed doesn't mean dressing in the height of fashion--being what some people call "a fashion plate" or what others, less kindly, call "a fashion victim." It DOES mean looking neat, clean and professional on the job at all times.

It doesn't even mean having the latest haircut or glamorous makeup and expensive manicure (for women). You may have a very simple, basic cut that you maintain and style yourself and it can look great (this goes for men as well as for women). It DOES mean having clean hair, clean, medium-length nails, a well-trimmed beard or mustache (if you're a man), and light, professional-looking makeup (if you're a woman).

The following set of checklists may help to get you started at good grooming and appropriate dress:

GROOMING CHECKLIST

- Hair clean and styled
- Haircut current (last 3-4 weeks for men, 4-6 weeks for women)
- Nails clean and manicured
- Hands clean and free of stains
- Teeth brushed
- Shower and deodorant

CLOTHING CHECKLIST

- Clothing ironed
- Stains or spots removed
- No visible underwear lines (for women)
- Buttons sewed on securely
- Belt loops, epaulets, etc. stitched down
- Hems in pants or skirts
- No holes or worn places, please!

ACCESSORIES CHECKLIST

- Shoes and other leather accessories polished
- Bag or briefcase cleaned out; zippers or locks checked
- Scarves or ties free of stains and wrinkles
- Jewelry polished
- Belt shined (if leather); buckles or snaps checked
- Tie-tack or clip not tarnished

These checklists aren't comprehensive, of course; there will be other items you need to fill in. But they form a basis for making your own lists. You may copy the lists and hang them inside your closet or bathroom. They might save you time as you decide what to wear to work the next day.

Case Studies

Here are a few stories to illustrate how people make excuses to avoid being well groomed and appropriately dressed on the job. You may recognize someone--including yourself.

GRACIE THE GRUNGE

Gracie is always on top of every fad. Whether it's micro-miniskirts, stirrup tights, the biker look, hip-hop or see-through clothes, Gracie always buys it and wears it.

This week, Gracie and her friends are all into "grunge." They wear two old thrift-shop flannel shirts together, one with the sleeves cut off, combat boots, long flowing see-through skirts, knit hats and vests, together with long 60s-style beaded necklaces and chiffon scarves. They don't style their hair, but let it flow naturally. Sometimes it just looks messy and unkempt, especially when it's dirty.

Gracie appears to listen to her manager at the upscale clothing store in the local mall when she stresses that she wants all her sales staff to dress professionally in order to convey the right image of the store. But Gracie keeps coming to work in her grunge look--thrift-shop flannel shirts and transparent skirts with slits up the side--always with the combat boots and heavy wool socks. The other women in their suits and dresses are just too boring for Gracie.

When Gracie's manager asked her to dress differently, Gracie wouldn't listen. "I've got to be ME!" she cried. "I can't just be like everyone else. I'm different. I'll show you!" Gracie is still wearing the grunge look, but not to work. Her manager fired her for refusing to follow the store's dress code. Now Gracie is free to wear her flannel shirts and combat boots wherever she wishes. She's also free to look for another job.

JOHN AND HIS JEANS

John is a jeans person. Ever since he was in elementary school, John has worn jeans everywhere and to everything. He probably has twenty different pairs of jeans in his closet. He especially loves one pair, the ones with the knees ripped out. These are his favorites and he wears them wherever he goes.

John just began work on a new job. The first day at orientation, the training supervisor talked about the company's dress code. Male employees were encouraged to wear suits or sports jacket and tie for days when meetings with major clients are held. The rest of the time, jeans are permitted as long as they are clean and pressed and worn with dress or casual shirts, a belt and loafers instead of athletic shoes.

John bought a nice sports coat and several dress shirts but no new pants. He insisted on wearing his jeans. It was part of his image, he insisted. He was a "jeans person." When his supervisor asked him about it, John convinced her to let him go on wearing the jeans except for the days when there was a major client meeting.

But one weekend, John forgot to do laundry. He didn't get his dress pants back from the dry cleaners and he had only one pair of clean jeans--the ones with the knees ripped out. On Monday, John showed up for work in his old favorite jeans, a sweater, athletic shoes and casual socks.

You guessed it! John had forgotten to mark his calendar. That Monday was the day for an important meeting with clients. One of the clients happened to comment on John's casual dress to his supervisor. Now John is on probation for thirty days for a violation of the company dress code. John had taken his "jeans look" one step too far.

MESSY MARIEL

Mariel looks messy. That's the bottom line. No matter what she wears, she is always a mess.

Mariel spends a great deal of money on clothes. She has some expensive outfits in her closet but they usually are missing a button or a belt loop, and none have been dry-cleaned recently.

Mariel rarely takes the time to coordinate clothing and accessories. She'll wear a casual summer straw bag with a wool sweater or heavy suede pumps with a light-colored summer dress. She wears brown hose with navy shoes and black tights with white summer shoes.

Mariel never pays much attention to grooming. Her nail polish is always chipped, her hair in need of washing or styling. She never has time to clean out her bag or briefcase. Her hose have runs in them and her jewelry needs polishing. She buys

makeup but then forgets to wear it. Or she wears it, but hasn't learned how to apply it. She looks overdone and clown-like: too much blush or eye shadow or too bright a shade of lipstick.

Mariel is good at her job. The other employees say that she's in line for a promotion. But her supervisor Paula thinks otherwise. "Not until she cleans up her act and learns how to dress," Paula says. "Mariel doesn't project the image we want our business to have."

Problem Prevention and Goal-Setting

How can you avoid being sloppy and carelessly groomed and dressed? It's simple: by devoting some time and energy to your appearance. If you don't know how to dress properly, but you know someone who does, talk to that person and get some advice. You can talk to friends, family, or to your supervisor. In fact, your supervisor would probably be impressed with your desire to be well dressed and well groomed.

Gracie's problem isn't lack of time or creativity. Gracie spends lots of time and energy in coordinating her grunge outfits. She has a real eye for color and detail. But she's so insistent on being different and original that she refuses to see the larger picture. The clothing store where she works appeals to a wide variety of customers, not just people interested in a particular look. Gracie needs to reserve her grunge look for after-work hours and dress in a more acceptable way on the job.

John is another individualist who sees himself in one mold: as a "jeans person." John's whole self-image is tied up in his jeans. If John experimented with other ways to dress, he might discover other looks he likes. He might find that he can enjoy dressing one way on the job and still have his jeans for casual wear. Often people dress one way for work and another for play and enjoy the difference in the feel of the clothes. But John hasn't learned this yet.

Mariel has plenty of clothes, many of them expensive new outfits. But Mariel doesn't take care of her possessions. She doesn't repair her shoes or bags or take her clothes to the cleaners. Mariel needs to spend some time in basic maintenance work—getting a basic haircut, learning to apply her makeup in a professional way so that she doesn't look like a clown, sewing on buttons, finding hose that coordinate with her outfits. Then Mariel will look less messy. She might even get that promotion!

When you have a problem with grooming and proper dress, you need to set some goals that will enable you to overcome your problem. But first, you have to discover why you are having the problem with grooming and dress. You might begin by asking yourself, "What are the real causes for my appearance problems?" For example, some of the following might apply:

- My appearance isn't a top priority for me.
- I'm not really interested in the job.

- I don't like the way people on the job dress.
- I want to hang on to my own style and image.
- I can't seem to get organized in the mornings.
- I can't afford the clothes I really want, so I'd rather buy nothing.
- I don't have time to get a haircut.
- I live too far from the cleaners.

As you set your goals, try to be honest in your assessment of the real reason why you're having trouble with certain things. Then set goals that specifically address those issues. Include a strategy for meeting the goal. For example, if you don't have time to get a haircut or take clothes to the cleaners, make up a weekly schedule and write in times to do those things. If you are still having problems with the issue, talk to a friend who doesn't have these problems. She or he can help you work through a solution.

Activity 2: Check Your Grooming Habits

Place a check in the column that best describes your grooming habits.

	ALWAYS	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Do you keep your hair neat and clean?				
Do you shower/bathe daily?				
Do you use deodorant or antiperspirant daily?				
Are your nails clean and well manicured?				
Do you brush and floss your teeth regularly?				
If you wear makeup, is it applied lightly for a natural look?				
If you wear fragrance, is it light and pleasant?				
Do you wear appropriate clothing to work?				
If you wear jewelry, does it accent your clothing?				
Do your accessories and clothing coordinate?				
Does your clothing fit properly?				
Do you wear clean clothing?				
Is your clothing free from wrinkles?				
Are your shoes clean or shined?				

What can you do to improve your grooming habits?

Activity 3: Appropriate Clothes for the Job

1. What kind of clothes would be most appropriate if you worked...

- in a bakery? _____
- as a carpenter's assistant? _____
- in a child care center? _____
- as a receptionist in an office? _____
- as a service station mechanic? _____
- as a medical technician? _____

2. What are you required to wear for your own job?

3. List two occupations requiring a uniform.

4. List two occupations for which your school clothes would be suitable.

MODULE 3F: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work

13.3.11. Career Retention and Advancement

- A. Evaluate personal attitudes and work habits that support career retention and advancement.

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)

1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.