



## What (Not) to Wear

### Introduction

When interviewing for a job or for admission to college, you need to get the message across that you are a good candidate for the position. Your message is conveyed by what you say, how you say it, and how you present yourself. This activity is designed to start a discussion about what is appropriate for an interview, and what might send the wrong message.

### Materials

- Photos printed on cardstock (preferably) – use the photos provided in the provided What (Not) to Wear Photo Bank or collect your own. Each small group (3-5 students) should have their own set.

### Instructions

- Spread out the photos in a disorganized pile on a table or on the floor.
- Ask participants to work together in small groups to sort the photos into two piles: appropriate for an interview and inappropriate for an interview. Participants may need a third pile for “it depends on the situation,” “some features are acceptable,” or “we disagree.”
- Ask participants to discuss why each photo was deemed appropriate or not. As they arise, discuss criteria for presenting yourself in an interview including guidelines and best practices.
- Here are some suggested discussion questions:
  - Were there different opinions about what was appropriate or what was inappropriate in the photos?
  - Did everyone focus only on clothing? Did anyone identify eye contact, handshake, cleanliness, good posture, smiling, or looking prepared by bringing a resume, etc.?
  - Would job interviews in different career fields have different guidelines? Why or why not?
  - Does a high school student interviewing for college admission need to meet the same criteria as a college graduate interviewing for their first job?
  - For a variation on this activity that does not require printing photos: put all photos into a presentation and ask the whole group to voice what is appropriate and what is inappropriate as the slides are advanced.

### Take it from here

- The key takeaway is that how you present yourself makes an impression that can help or hurt your message. For a follow-up activity, ask everyone to identify and wear their most “interview worthy” outfit from their existing wardrobe to a future event, such as a mock interview day with mentors, college and career fair, or other activity. Emphasize that no new clothes should be purchased for this challenge. If students cannot assemble an interview-appropriate look right now,



# CORE PRACTICES

# PATHWAYS



there's still plenty of time before the real interviews begin! The following resource can be shared to help students prepare for an interview.

## Guidelines and Best Practices for Presenting Yourself in an Interview

### Do

- Learn about the school or company so that you can ask smart questions.
- Bring a copy of your resume or portfolio.
- Know the name of your interviewer.
- Smell good! Take a shower and wear deodorant.
- Remove any visible body piercings, or put in your least obvious hardware.
- Wear clothing that covers any tattoos.
- Keep your hair neat and tidy.
- Dress on the boring side – you want your knowledge and personality to be what's noticed.
- Arrive early.
- Smile and make eye contact.
- Ask follow-up questions.

### Don't

- Call your interviewer by his or her first name unless invited to do so.
- Apply too much body spray or other scent – it's distracting.
- Slouch or put your feet up.
- Dress sloppily.
- Be late for your interview.
- Leave without thanking your interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.