

# B13 Representation and Dress Code

This Skill Sheet lists three principles of appearance to apply when you meet other people, and you would like to establish some kind of barter (⊕A12) in the most effective manner. This is the area of (re)presentation which in particular deals with the way you make yourself identifiable to your communication partner.

## Principle 1: make a business card

The usefulness of business cards in all kinds of situations is obvious. It helps the person you meet remember your name during the conversation, and makes it easier to re-establish contact at a later date (⊕D1, D5, D6). Because business cards are relatively cheap to make, you could even consider making different business cards for each research project.



The contents of your business card will vary according to your level of involvement in different projects. It is common for business cards to have more than one address and telephone number. However, before you list several department names on your card, you should obtain permission from both your instructor and the departmental secretary, since these people will more than likely be the ones receiving correspondence and telephone calls on your behalf.

The contents of your card should include:

- Your name.
- Your full address - including the country!
- Your telephone number including country code.
- Your fax number and email coordinates, if available.
- If applicable, the department for which you are conducting the research.
- Your title – don't exaggerate! If you put 'consultant' as your title and your contacts find out that you are not really a consultant, your ability to get information from them decreases dramatically!

The design of your card should be considered with care. Usually a conservative design is most effective (and cheapest).



**Principle 2: dress appropriately**

The importance of the clothes that you wear is illustrated by the title of John Molloy's best-selling managers' books called 'dress for success' (Warner Books, 1988). But the way you dress largely speaks for itself. Never approach a business associate or your interviewee in less than what is to be business dress. For example, avoid bright coloured socks - they draw attention to your feet in an interview, rather than to your face, which is where you want it.

This is another area in which a creative and stylish approach can have either a better or a worse effect than a conservative approach. If possible, find out about the environment that you will be visiting, and dress appropriately. If you are not sure what you will run into, take the conservative approach - there is less risk of looking like an idiot.

**Principle 3: adopting the right approach**

Try to keep your attitude in a conversation in line with your position. If you approach someone as a student, your respondent will know that you are a student, so you should show as much respect as possible during interviews and meetings. They will expect you to ask questions, so do so! Avoid the temptation to interject, or do so at the risk of looking like a know-it-all (⊕D series). You can be assured that the vast majority of 'new information' that you will be giving to your interviewee is not so new to them.

Make sure that you also establish a barter system in your first meeting. It could be useful to take a small (!) gift to the respondent in the case of an interview: The gift should come from (or be connected with) the institute or university that you are doing the research for. This could help the respondent to remember you for reasons besides the actual interview.