

Cultural Orientation



Employment

Developed by Line Tveit



YMCA

International Services 2001

Working in the USA



⌘ This presentation will teach you basic employment skills.

Topics of Discussion

- ⌘ Employment Rights
- ⌘ Where to look for Employment
- ⌘ Job Application
- ⌘ The Job Interview
- ⌘ Child Care
- ⌘ Culture at Work

Basic Laws for Employment



- ⌘ Minimum Wage is \$5.85 per hour. It is illegal for an employer to pay less than minimum wage. \$3.10 is common for Waiters/Waitresses + tips.
- ⌘ A normal work week is 40 hours a week. If you work more than 40 hours, you are entitled to over-time pay.
- ⌘ You must fill out a tax-return every year. Everybody pays taxes. Some public libraries offer free assistance.

Where to Look for a Job



- ⌘ Newspapers
- ⌘ Walk-ins
- ⌘ Employment Agencies
- ⌘ Job Lines
- ⌘ Churches
- ⌘ Networking

Job Training Programs

- ⌘ Provides job placement and/or job training.
- ⌘ **Job Corps**
- ⌘ **Americorps**
- ⌘ **Gulf Coast Jobs**
- ⌘ **Houston Community College**
- ⌘ **Houston Works Program**
- ⌘ **Bilingual Education Institute**

Job Application

- ⌘ Fill out the job application in detail.
- ⌘ Leave no blanks.
- ⌘ Make sure to spell everything correctly.
- ⌘ Print the information.
- ⌘ Sign and date your application! An incomplete application will end up in the trash can.

The Job Interview



- ⌘ Hygiene
- ⌘ Personal Appearance
- ⌘ Punctuality
- ⌘ Greeting
- ⌘ Eye Contact
- ⌘ The Interview

Hygiene



- ⌘ Bath or shower (use soap and shampoo).
- ⌘ Brush your teeth.
- ⌘ Use underarm deodorant.
- ⌘ Shave. Men that have beards or mustaches should trim.
- ⌘ You may use some cologne/perfume.
- ⌘ Women may also use make-up.

Personal Appearance

- ⌘ Men: shirt, tie and jacket or suit. Remove your hat when indoors.
- ⌘ Women: dress, skirt, or suit. Do not overdress for daytime or wear flashy or noisy jewelry.



Punctuality



- ⌘ Arrive 5-15 minutes before your scheduled appointment.
- ⌘ Arriving late is seen as a sign of disrespect. Americans view someone being late as having sloppy, undisciplined personal habits.
- ⌘ If you cannot make the appointment -- CALL AHEAD OF TIME!

Greeting

⌘ Most Americans, including women, greet with a firm handshake when meeting the interviewer. When closing the interview, give a handshake and thank the interviewer.



Tips on Greetings



- ⌘ Light handshakes are considered distasteful. Use a firm grip.
- ⌘ Eye contact is important when shaking someone's hand.
- ⌘ Stand while being introduced. Only the elderly, the ill and the physically unable persons remain seated while being introduced.
- ⌘ The only proper answers to the greetings "How do you do?" "How are you?" or "How are you doing?" are "Fine," "Great," or "Very well, thank you." This is not a request for information about your well-being; it is simply a pleasantry.

Eye-Contact

- ⌘ Have good eye-contact during the interview. In the USA, you can be considered not trustworthy if you do not look people in the eye.

Body Language

- ⌘ Sit straight in your chair.
- ⌘ Men and women may sit with legs crossed at the ankles or knees, or one ankle crossed on the knee.
- ⌘ Smile!
- ⌘ Try not to be nervous.
- ⌘ Look alert and interested.

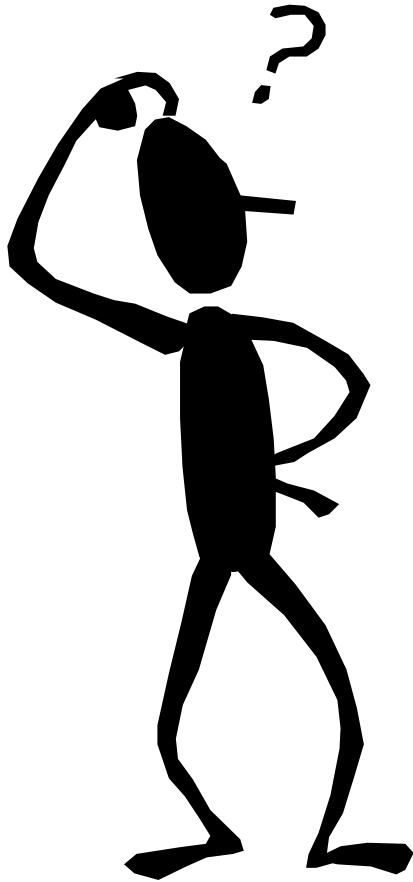
The Interview

- ⌘ Many potential employees start an interview with “tell me about yourself.”
- ⌘ Tell only the things about yourself that pertains to the job you are applying for such as your academic and professional background. You can also share personal strengths.
- ⌘ Avoid one-word answers such as yes/no.
- ⌘ NEVER downplay your abilities.
- ⌘ Never say “My English is not good.”

Common Interview Questions

- ⌘ What skills do you have that you can offer our company?
- ⌘ What is your greatest strength?
- ⌘ What can you offer us that someone else can not?
- ⌘ What is your greatest weakness?
- ⌘ What is important to you in a job?
- ⌘ What do you know about our organization?
- ⌘ What are your goals?

Ask Questions



- ⌘ Prepare a few questions in advance.
- ⌘ Ask questions that pertain to the job.
- ⌘ Don't ask about salary, benefits and vacation during the first interview.

Ask Questions



⌘ Don't ask personal questions about the employer. In the US, we usually avoid questions about age, weight, someone's salary, and religious beliefs.

Preparations



- ⌘ Prepare for an interview as much as possible in advance.
- ⌘ Have a friend or relative ask you questions and critique you in the way you answer them.

Follow-Up



- ⌘ Write a brief letter or e-mail thanking the potential employer for the time.
- ⌘ Restate your interest in the job.


Keeping Your Job

- ⌘ Be on time for your job or even a few minutes early EVERY DAY.
- ⌘ Always look your best. Your personal appearance is just as important in keeping the job as it is getting the job.



⌘ It is very important to meet deadlines. If you tell someone that you will have a report to them by a certain date, or that you will fax something to them immediately, they will take you at your word. People who miss deadlines are viewed as irresponsible and undependable.





⌘ Be willing to help others with their work. Offer your suggestions and help when you are needed.

⌘ Be friendly and cheerful, but don't "waste time" on the job. Always do your share of the work.

Business/Staff Meetings



- ⌘ Meetings are generally informal and relaxed in manner, but serious in content.
- ⌘ Participation is expected in meetings. A quiet person may be viewed as not prepared or as having nothing important to contribute.
- ⌘ Remember that "time is money" to Americans .

Child Care


- ⌘ Good child care is difficult to find.
- ⌘ Ask your neighbors with children for a good place.
- ⌘ Many religious organizations also provide child care.
- ⌘ Always ask for references and contact them to find out about their experience.




Culture at Work

⌘ Americans prefer directness in communication. When Americans say "yes" or "no," they mean precisely that. "Maybe" really does mean "it might happen"; it does not mean "no."





⌘ It is always proper to ask questions if you do not understand something. Americans ask questions -- lots of them. They are not ashamed to admit what they don't know. Americans will assume you understand something if you do not tell them otherwise.

- 
- ⌘ Americans are often uncomfortable with silence. Silence is avoided in social or business meetings.
 - ⌘ It is rude to interrupt someone who is talking. Say, "Excuse me" during a pause and wait to be recognized. Interruptions, however, are common. Do not be surprised if someone finishes your sentence if you hesitate when you are speaking.
 - ⌘ Keep appointments once they are made. You may not get a second chance if you do not.


Helpful Hints



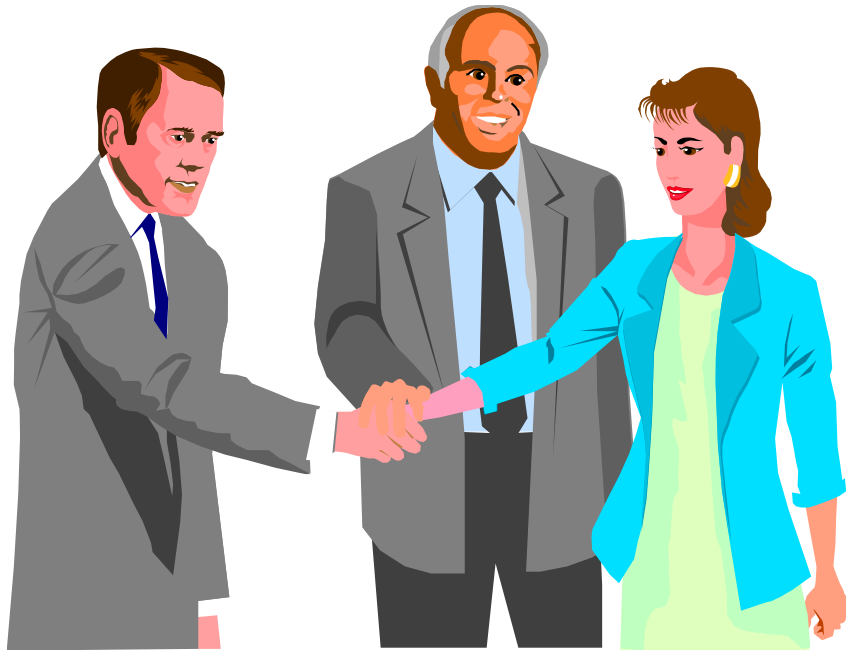
- ⌘ It is considered rude to stare, ask questions or otherwise bring attention to someone's disability.
- ⌘ Names are not held as sacred in the United States. Someone may mispronounce your name and laugh a bit as they do it.
- ⌘ "Please" and "thank you" are very important in the United States.

⌘ Smoking is very unpopular in the United States. Never smoke anywhere without asking permission from everyone present.




- 
- ⌘ Say "Pardon me" or "Excuse me" if you touch someone or even get close to someone.
 - ⌘ Social conversation in the United States is light. There is a standard format for small talk. People ask brief questions and expect brief answers.
 - ⌘ If you feel uncomfortable with a question asked of you, simply smile and say, "In my country, that would be a strange question."

Gender Equality



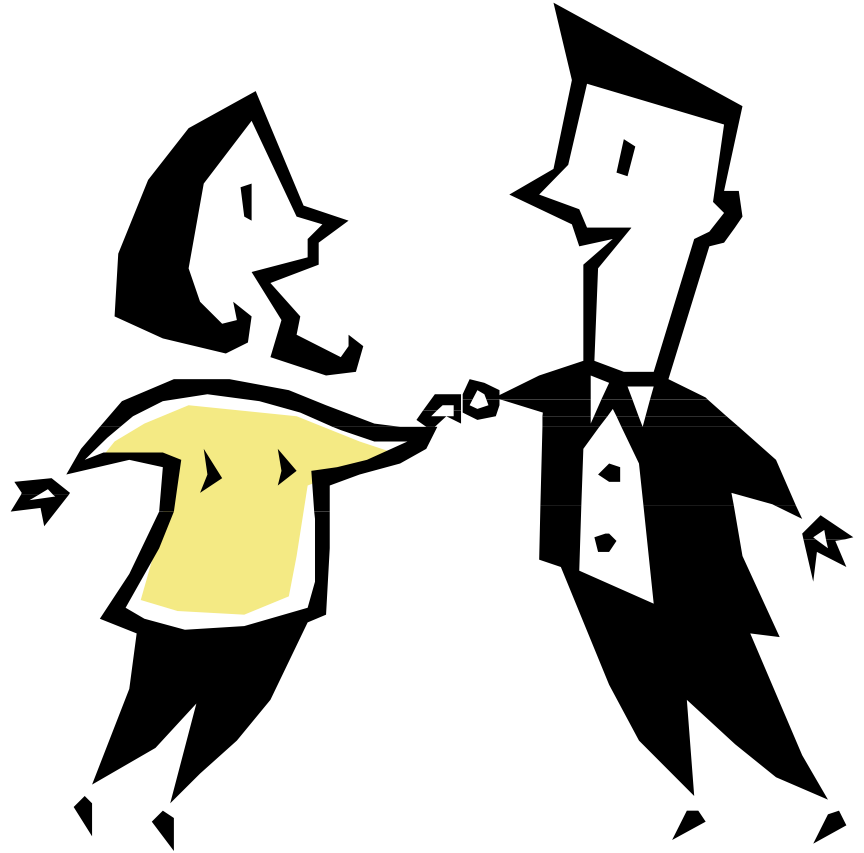
⌘ Women are leaders in all aspects of American life from business to education to government. Never assume that a working woman is in a subordinate position.


- 
- ⌘ American women are independent.
 - ⌘ American women pride themselves on the number of responsibilities they take on. Do not assume that a working woman is no longer the primary caretaker of her family and children.

- ⌘ Many women keep their maiden names after marriage. Some use both their maiden and married names.
- ⌘ When going to dinner or lunch, the person who invites pays, whether it is a man or a woman.

Sexual Harassment

⌘ Do not touch a woman or man in a business setting except to shake her/his hand. Hugging and kissing, even of people you know very well, is best left for social occasions.



- 
- ⌘ Do not tell sexual jokes at work.
 - ⌘ Do not talk about your sex life to co-workers while at work.

- ⌘ Always exhibit professional behavior!