



Social Skills

Impressions from Appearances

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Impressions from Appearances

I tell my students that they are constantly being judged by their appearance. Not that it's right to be judged or judge others from how they look—it just is. Strangers on the street are getting an impression of them just from how they look: their face, their hair, their body, their clothes, their posture, and their actions. I also tell them that the impressions derived from appearances are often not accurate. I use the *Impressions from Appearances* activity to increase my students' awareness of this phenomenon, and also to demonstrate that the conclusions we may jump to from appearances can be wrong. For the activity, we take turns “being judged”, as the others fill out the form together. I always go first, and I never make a student who seems uncomfortable take a turn. Also, almost every appearance feature on the form is one that we have control over, such as clothing. I purposely didn't include body features such as height or weight. For “face”, we focus on controllable features, including makeup or beards. I make sure to point out that the possible impressions various appearances give are often mistaken stereotypes, e.g., women with a lot of tattoos are radical or men who wear jewelry must be gay. After the form is filled out for each turn, the person judged goes through the “possible impressions” and tells if each is accurate, somewhat accurate, or inaccurate.

Name _____

Date _____

Impressions from Appearances

Appearance

Possible Impression

hair

color: _____

length: _____

other: _____

face

shirt/blouse/top

pants/skirt/shorts

shoes

accessories

body language

eye contact: _____

arms: _____

legs: _____

miscellaneous:

actions



Name _____

Date _____

Impressions from Appearances Sample (teenage girl)

Appearance

Possible Impression

hair

color: red

wild, outgoing

length: long

youthful, not conservative

other: purple streak

adventurous

face

no makeup

natural, young

shirt/blouse/top

bohemian, embroidered shirt

liberal, hippie-ish

pants/skirt/shorts

ripped jeans

casual, easy-going

shoes

motorcycle boots

tough

accessories

nose ring

a little radical

gold locket

old-fashioned, sentimental

body language

eye contact: sporadic

shy, uncomfortable

arms: crossed

annoyed or uncomfortable

legs: shifting from foot to foot

impatient or nervous

miscellaneous:

eyebrows up

expectant

not smiling

serious

actions

biting nails

nervous, stressed

keeps looking in mirror

self-conscious

