

CHAPTER 2

Professional Appearance

Summary

Servers must always be in good health. No server, while infected with a communicable disease, should be allowed to work in a restaurant establishment in any capacity. The potential to contaminate food and food-contact surfaces, and to transmit the disease to other persons, is too great.

The server is in contact with customers at all times; therefore, their personal appearance is important. A good appearance is necessary to project the image of good service, quality food, and a pleasant atmosphere, which begins with taking proper care of oneself. The following personal grooming standards are basic for servers: bathing and deodorants, hair care, skin care, cosmetics, beards and moustaches, teeth and breath, hands and fingernails, and foot care.

The server should always convey positive body language, and stand and walk with poise and self-confidence. Poor posture detracts from the server's appearance. The way that a server walks and carries themselves is almost as important as the way they speak and look.

Most restaurants require servers to wear a special uniform and/or apron. If the restaurant does not require a specific uniform or apron, the server should select the type of clothing that projects a professional image. The server should have enough uniforms to allow for daily changes. A clean, fresh uniform is essential for good sanitation.

Shoes are a significant part of the server uniform and should be selected for style, appearance, safety, and most of all total comfort. Slip-resistant footwear is increasingly popular, as the number of slips and falls has been reduced with these types of shoes. An

investment in a pair of good-quality shoes pays for itself in a very short period of time.

Learning Objectives

As a result of successfully completing this chapter, readers will be able to:

1. Learn guidelines for maintaining good professional server health.
2. Learn good personal grooming standards for improving on-the-job professional server appearance.
3. Identify the personal grooming guidelines that are basic for servers.
4. Understand the value and importance of good body language, poise, and posture.
5. Know the importance of always wearing a clean fresh uniform each day.
6. Know the characteristics of a quality pair of work shoes.

Discussion Questions and Exercises

1. Why is server health so important for the restaurant industry?

The health of servers is critical. Poor health in the restaurant industry can create a food-borne illness outbreak that may require a hospital stay or even be fatal.

2. What does a server's personal appearance reveal to guests?

Your personal appearance will reveal important characteristics of your personality and attitude, because while you are in contact with your guests, they will be judging you. Remember, as a server, you are on stage at all times.

3. How does a server ensure good grooming?

The way to ensure good grooming is to check yourself in the mirror.

4. List 10 basic grooming guidelines that should be followed by servers.

1. **Bathing and Deodorants** Good personal hygiene begins with daily bathing and the use of unscented deodorants or antiperspirants. Offensive body odors caused by poor personal hygiene can cause coworkers and guests to complain to the management. Offended guests may choose never to return.

2. **Hair Care** The server should always have clean and fresh-smelling hair that is controlled in order to prevent hair from contacting or falling into food or onto food-contact surfaces. Servers should avoid fixing or touching their hair while in view of customers, and should wash their hands after coming in direct contact with their hair.

3. **Skin Care** When experiencing problems with skin—acne, or dry or oily skin—the server should take appropriate measures to control them. Servers should never scratch dry or itchy areas of the body in view of guests. Proper care of the skin requires cleanliness and protection.

4. **Cosmetics** The proper use of cosmetics can enhance one's appearance and overuse can detract from it. If the appropriate selection and application of cosmetics becomes a concern, the server should consult a cosmetic specialist.

5. **Fragrances** The use of any fragrance may be offensive to some coworkers and guests, and make those who suffer from severe allergies sick. Fragrances can also distract from the natural aromas of the food being served and should not be used while at work.

6. **Beards and Moustaches** A well-shaped clean beard or moustache can be very attractive and can enhance a man's appearance, but it needs to be washed and trimmed daily.

7. **Teeth and Breath** Good oral hygiene is maintained by frequent tooth-brushing and

flossing. A smile is always complemented by clean teeth and fresh breath. Breath fresheners should be used as needed. The chewing of gum should be avoided in order to maintain a professional image. Smoking should not be permitted during working hours. The smell of smoke in clothes and on one's breath can be offensive to guests.

8. **Hands and Fingernails** The hands and fingernails of a server should always be immaculately clean and properly maintained. Servers must thoroughly wash their hands and the exposed portions of their arms with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before starting work, during work as often as necessary to keep them clean, and after handling dirty dishes and utensils, eating, drinking, using the toilet, or after performing a nonfoodservice activity. During busy periods when a hand washing sink may not be available, an alternative may be the use of a health department-approved hand sanitizer.

9. **Foot Care** The correct type of shoes will minimize foot fatigue. The server walks many miles during the course of each shift. Therefore, it is essential to have well-fitting and comfortable shoes. Rubber heels and soles are best for reducing slips and skids on wet floors. Shoes should always be cleaned or polished and have clean laces. Clean socks for the men and clean hose or tights for the women should be worn daily, free of runs, and in a color that complements the uniform. The server may also find comfort in wearing support hose designed to help relieve leg stress. Support stockings or hose are available in basic black, brown, and navy blue for men and in a variety of shades for women.

10. **Jewelry** The jewelry worn by a server should be simple and should not interfere with the performance of job functions. A plain watch, smooth ring, or small earrings are acceptable and reflect a conservative image that does not bring attention to the server wearing it. When jewelry is large, ornate, or dangling, it becomes awkward and potentially hazardous if coming into contact with food or restaurant equipment. Such

jewelry may be displeasing to some restaurant guests.

5. What are some of the proper procedures a server should follow for maintaining their hair?

When hair is uncontrolled, it can be difficult to manage and distracting when serving food. The professional server will have her hair styled and the hairstylist can recommend a hairstyle that is attractive and easy to take care of. The hair should not be too long and preferably not go below the shirt collar. However, long hair should be restrained in a ponytail, twist, or hairnet.

6. Discuss the importance of good body language, poise, and posture.

Body language can convey positive or negative impressions to the guest. A server should always be aware of their nonverbal communication. It is very easy for a guest to read a server's willingness and enthusiasm to serve them, through their body language. The guest's perception of a server is critical to a pleasant dining experience and repeat business; therefore, it is important to be aware of body language.

The professional server is always on display and should stand and walk with poise and self-confidence. By moving more gracefully, confidently, and efficiently, the server will not only make a better impression, but also conserve energy for a hardworking day ahead.

7. What is an adequate number of uniforms and aprons for a server working five days a week?

The server should have enough uniforms and aprons to allow for daily changes. If a server is scheduled to work five days each week, then three uniforms and aprons would be appropriate, allowing the server to wear a clean uniform each day.

8. What should the server look for when purchasing a quality pair of work shoes?

Shoes should be selected for style, appearance, safety, and most of all total comfort. Shoes that have ergonomically designed shock-absorbent cushioned insoles, slip resistant outsoles to prevent slips and falls, and full-grain leather uppers are readily available and competitively priced.

9. If a server comes to work with a cough, and occasional sneeze, how should management respond?

A server cannot successfully work with a coughing and sneezing problem in view of customers, and should not be allowed to serve food. If a server suffers during an allergy season, the coughing and sneezing must be controlled with the proper allergy medication. “A server cannot successfully work with a coughing and sneezing problem in view of guests.”

10. Discuss a positive or negative grooming issue that as a restaurant guest affected your dining experience.

Solicit student responses in class discussion or as a written assignment.

11. Name three restaurants within your community that are noted for a professional server staff and impressive server uniforms and aprons.

Solicit student responses in class discussion or as a written assignment.

12. Visit a restaurant of your choice and observe the servers in relation to what you have learned in this chapter. Write a one-page summary of your observations.

REVIEW WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND RETURN TO STUDENTS WITH APPROPRIATE COMMENTS.