



HEALTH & WELLNESS

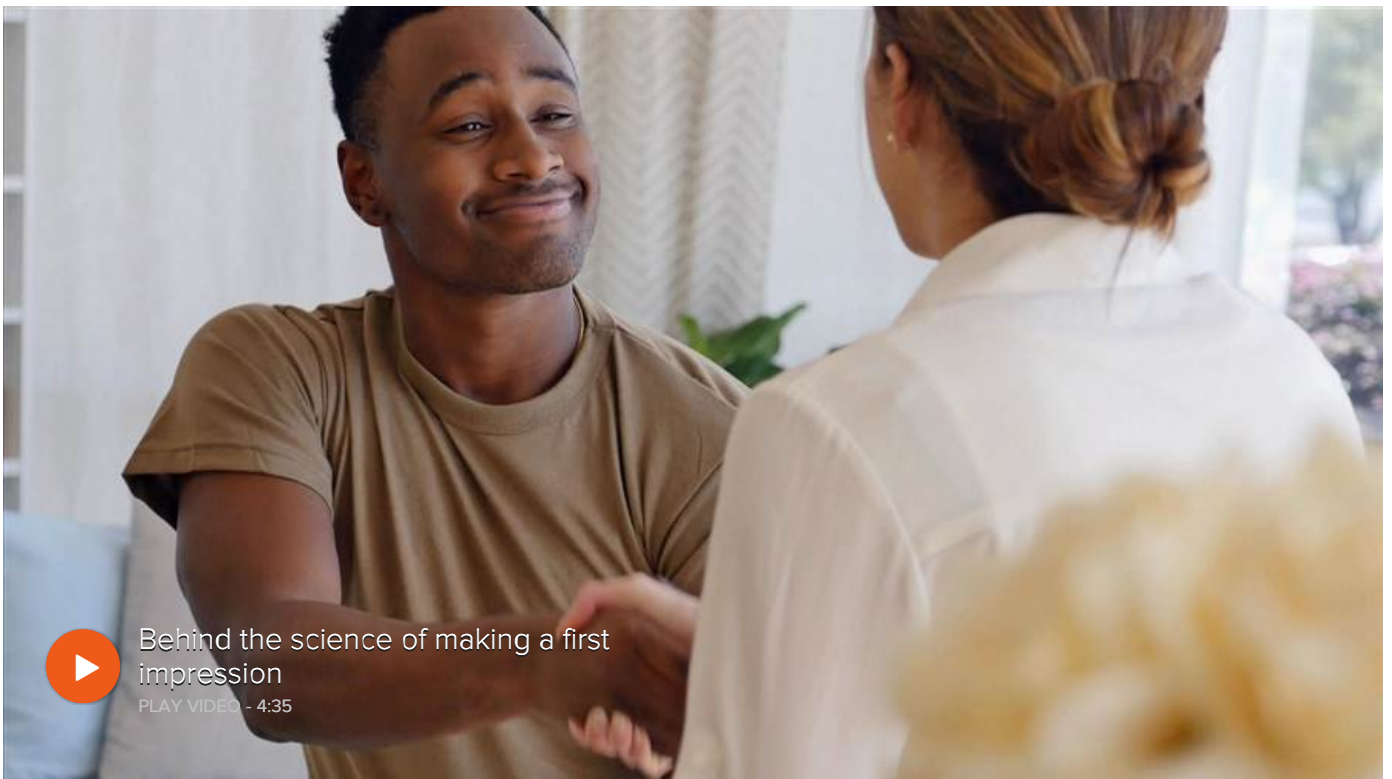
We make first impressions in less than a second — how to perfect yours

TODAY
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First impressions can play a big role in your love life, workplace and anywhere else you meet people. But how do we form them? And are you really making the kind of impression you want to make?

This week, TODAY is taking a closer look at the science of **first impressions**, revealing how they work, what attributes people really notice and how you can boost your chances of success.



We can size up new people in less than a tenth of second based on their face, said Alex Todorov, a psychology professor at Princeton University and author of "**Face Value: The Irresistible Influence of First Impressions.**"

"This very, very brief exposure is sufficient for people to make up their minds and make up all kinds of judgments, like whether you're trustworthy, whether you're competent, whether you're aggressive," Todorov noted.

"It's not about the person; it's about this temporary state at the moment."





How to make a great first impression, at the office or on a date

PLAY VIDEO - 5:41

Judging **people's character** based only on their facial appearance is nothing new. Some credit Aristotle with writing the first book about it. Leonardo da Vinci experimented with faces and the responses to them.

The results can be fascinating. When you show people a picture and ask them to pick a face that seems warm, trustworthy or criminal, many will pick the same faces for those categories, Jones pointed out.

“There are two interesting facts about first impressions from facial appearance,” Todorov said. “The first is that we form this incredibly rapidly, and the second is that they're kind of shared. So we agree on [these aspects] and... we have been trying to figure out, well, what is it behind this shared agreement?”

In Todorov's research, participants are shown computer-generated images of faces and have only a moment to decide whether the face is trustworthy or not. Much of it has to do with the shape of the eyes, eye brows and mouth.

In these studies, participants agreed on which faces they considered **trustworthy** as much as 75 percent of the time. Advertisers and political campaigns are seizing on this research in the hopes of getting a competitive edge.





Make a great impression with these body language hacks

PLAY VIDEO - 3:47

How can you make your best impression?

The research on first impressions and body language is evolving, but establishing trust is key, said Amy Cuddy, author of "[Presence](#)." Her [TED talk on body language](#) has been viewed more than 45 million times.

"Trustworthiness is the most important quality. It accounts for about 65 percent of the overall variance in how we judge other people. And that's because it does answer the most important question: Is this person friend or foe?" she explained.

In Cuddy's experience, impression management techniques don't work very well, so it's best to just be yourself. Be in the moment and be strong.

"Do not allow yourself to shrink... Because basically, what you're doing is protecting yourself like a scared animal that's being chased by a predator. You are not being chased by a predator. You're just in an [awkward situation](#)," she said.

Slow down your breathing, pull your shoulders back and down, stand up straight and firmly plant your feet on the ground, Cuddy advised. Prevent yourself from going into a "powerlessness death spiral" because it's very hard to get out of once you start going into fight-or-flight mode.

"If you're carrying yourself in a way that's powerful and proud, you're saying to yourself, 'I'm safe. I'm OK. I deserve to be here.' And that is what comes across," Cuddy said. "So I often tell people to not manage the impression they're making on others, but to focus on the impression they're making on themselves."

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