

# PROFESSIONALISM AND NETWORKING

*Project your best image and create a professional social network*

Office of Public Health Practice and Career Services



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## Professionalism

The most important lesson in professionalism is that the image you project online is just as important as the one you project in person. This guide will help you create a professional image. Before continuing, take a look at this story shared by a recruiter on LinkedIn in 2017:

"I received an email from a candidate the other day that made me laugh and also made my blood boil. The email was in response to an email I sent him with an update on the position and told him I would be in touch as soon as I heard anything. He waited two days and then responded with

*'????????????????????????????????????'*

That was it, no actual words, just question marks. I hope that most job seekers have a bit more sense than this guy, but just in case you've ever thought about sending a recruiter, hiring manager or anyone for that matter an email with nothing but question marks, I can say that it's probably not a very effective method to land the job you want. Needless to say, I sent the candidate a very nice email back letting him know that our client has decided to pursue other applicants. Receiving an email like that is refreshing because it lets you know as a recruiter that if that person is hired they will probably be disrespectful at some point in the office, they obviously don't play well with others. It's sometimes nice when candidates self-select themselves out of the process!"

## Online Image

Your online image includes everything you use electronically such as the MySpace, Flickr, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat, Reddit, LinkedIn, and blogging sites like WordPress. You do not want your employer to find an image of you that compromises the integrity of your position or the company for which you work.

### Email

Email is usually the primary form of communication within an office and throughout an entire company. It is important to be clear and concise and clear in your emails. It is also important to check your emails on a daily basis and to respond promptly.

- Be sure you are using a professional email address when emailing employers and professors. Use your UTHHealth or an appropriate free service like Gmail or Yahoo (Jack.Frost@gmail.com).
  - A professional email address usually does not include numbers.
- If you use a signature on your email, make sure it is appropriate.
- Do not write emails like the one above. Professional emails are written like a business letter.
  - Be sure each one is addressed to the proper person/people.
  - Make sure to include an appropriate subject. Do not send an email without a subject line.
  - Include a salutation to the appropriate person/people, the body of the email, followed by an appropriate signature.
  - Read twice, send once. Make sure you spell check and use appropriate language.

- Make sure you are aware to whom you are replying and double check your use of “Reply” vs. “Reply All.”
- Do not write emails the same way you text.
  - Never use shorthand like Thx (thanks), U2 (you too), NP (no problem).
- Don’t use a stationary email setting.
- Remember you never know where your email may end up. Write your email as though it could end up in the inbox of the president or CEO of the company.

## Social Media

All forms of social media are becoming more and more pervasive in our society. It began as a more personal form of connectivity within one’s social circle; however, organizations are increasingly present on social media as a way to connect with their communities. This is especially true of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where companies often post about events, advertising, and otherwise involve their target demographics. As an employee, you are a representative of your employer, and the things you post publicly online reflect the organization for which you work. Use this information to also help maintain your professional image as a graduate student of UTHealth.

- Every site has its own rules for privacy. Make sure to review them. Remember privacy settings often change, so check your account frequently.
  - Set rigorous privacy settings for your account. It is usually a good idea to keep your accounts on private.
- Double think everything you upload onto social media and remember everything is searchable.
- Know who you are befriending and connecting with. If you do not know the person, do not accept the connection.
- Do not share your location, your vacation plans, or party plans on public accounts.
- If your position allows you to post to a company’s public profile, triple check that you do not post something you meant for your personal account.
- Do not post photographs of yourself drunk, participating in illegal activities, or otherwise participating in unprofessional behavior.
- If something you do not want online is posted by someone else, take the initiative to ask them to remove it. Here are a few site specific suggestions for this situation:
  - On Facebook you can un-tag yourself from a post.
  - On Instagram, similar to Facebook, you can simply un-tag yourself.
  - On Snapchat, the original sender can delete a “snap.”
  - On Twitter, you have the option of determining who is allowed to tag you in posts.
  - Please remember for any of these social media sites, once something is posted—even if it only out there for a few seconds— it is there for the world to see. It can easily be screenshot and put on other sites.
- Realize that when you connect with your coworkers on social media, you blur the line between work and your personal life.

## Personal Image

You want to dress for the job and atmosphere in which you will be working. If you are working in a new non-profit company, the dress may be more casual than if you are working as a consultant. However, when you attend the interview, you will want to dress one step better than the industry or employer's dress code. If you are in doubt about the employer's dress code, dress more conservatively.

### For Women

- Conservative Settings
  - Suit (navy, black, or dark gray)
    - Skirts should be knee length
  - Long-sleeved, button-down shirt with collar (white or subtle color that matches the suit)
  - Dark socks and closed toe dress shoes
  - Little or no jewelry (watch, wedding ring, simple necklace)
  - Portfolio, briefcase, or nice tote bag
  - Heels that are not too high
  - Conservative makeup
  
- Less Conservative Settings/Business Casual Settings
  - Trousers or dress pants
  - Button-down shirt with collar in a subtle, flattering color
  - Matching jacket or cardigan
  - Stay away from bold patterns
  - Matching dress shoes and belt
  - Little or no jewelry
  - Conservative makeup



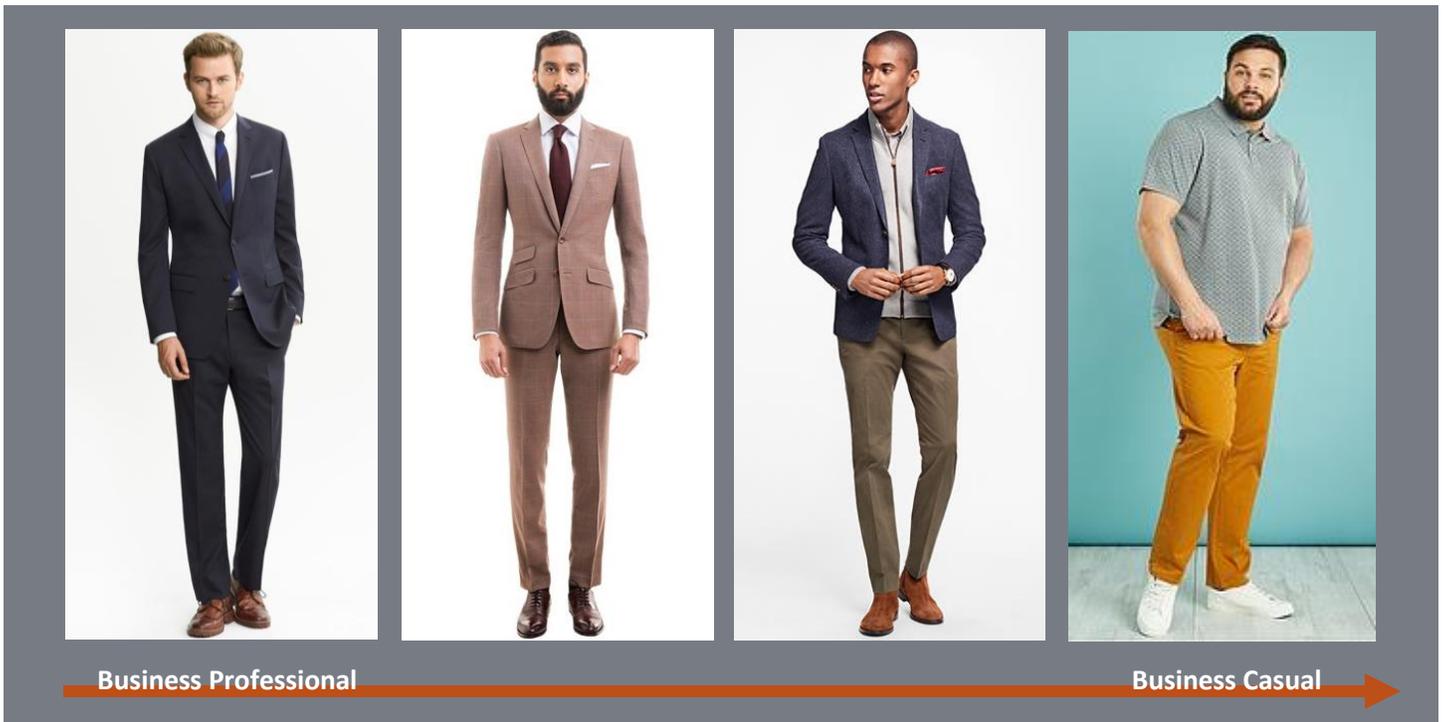
Business Professional



Business Casual

## For Men

- Conservative Settings
  - Suit (navy, black, or dark gray)
  - Long-sleeved, button-down shirt with collar (white or subtle color that matches the suit)
  - Matching belt and shoes
  - Dark socks and dress closed toe shoes
  - Little or no jewelry (watch, wedding ring)
  - Your portfolio or briefcase
  
- Less Conservative Settings/Business Casual Settings
  - Trousers or dress pants (dark or neutral color)
  - Long-sleeved, button-down shirt with collar in a subtle, flattering color
  - Matching sports jacket and tie
  - Stay away from bold patterns
  - Matching dress shoes and belts
  - Little or no jewelry



Pictures:

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/04/92/8a/04928a45710fed0b16ddfe370b0a1ed5--business-clothes-for-women-plus-size-business-suits-for-women.jpg>

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<http://www.frerez.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/business-professional-attire-men-700x600.jpg>

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## Professional Conduct

Professional conduct applies to both your time in the workforce and your time as a graduate student. Below are some recommendations for putting your best foot forward.

- Be tolerant of each other and offer professional courtesy to classmates, faculty, and staff.
- Turn off cell phones in class and during interviews.
- Create and participate in an environment where honest feedback is seen as valuable and not seen as criticism.
- Be honest and kind in all interactions.
- Refrain from disruptive behavior, discrimination, or any type of harassment.
- Be punctual.
- Display a professional and positive attitude at all times.
- Be friendly and helpful to co-workers.
- Do the right thing— even when no one is watching.
- Be respectful of everyone you come in contact with.
- Be aware of your body language and present yourself professionally.
- Avoid gossip.

## Networking

There are several ways to network; you can network both online and in person. It is important to remember that the world is very small and the world of public health is even smaller. Given the breadth of public health, you can meet people in numerous fields without knowing where your contacts may lead.

### Online Networking

- LinkedIn- LinkedIn is a great tool that allows you to network with people from all over the world. Look for people in public health professional associations, the UTHealth School of Public Health Alumni Group, faculty, peers, undergraduate Alumni group, and follow any company you might be interested in. Be active and post information and comment on other people's posts. Remember this is networking.
- Facebook- Facebook may not be the first place you would think of for networking, but opportunities can be hiding in certain areas. Seek out Public Health groups where they can post job openings, roundtable topics, resources, and feedback. Alumni groups can also post various networking events.
- Twitter- If you tweet regularly, this is another place you can network. Tweet out your own ideas to get feedback from others, follow other public health professionals and influencers in the field, and follow journals online to keep up with the articles they post.

\*\*As with any social media site, be aware of the image you are presenting. Be sure all your information is clean, proper, and you have privacy settings turned on. \*\*

## *In-Person Networking*

- **Alumni Networks:** Utilize the UT School of Public Health alumni network as well as your undergraduate alumni networks (and any others) you may be a part of to make connections. You can do this by attending local chapter events, attending reunions, volunteering at events, or attending student/alumni events.
- **Meetup.com:** A website that posts events around the city and suburbs for all kinds of people. Events range from formal networking events to sports. This is a great way to meet people and you never know what kind of connections may arise from it. This is also great if you are looking for some informal networking or to build a network.
- **Volunteering:** You can volunteer anywhere that you find interesting from a local pet shelter to a professional association or hospital or at a charity event. Volunteering will allow you to meet others who have similar interests. They may or may not be in public health, but they may know someone who works for a company you are interested in.
- **Professional Associations:** Look at APHA, TPHA, and other professional associations to see what events they have in your area. These can be conferences, meetings, or other events. You can also volunteer for these organizations.
- **Remember you do already have networks in place all around you—** family, friends, classmates, faculty, and family friends. Don't necessarily rule out people because they do not hold the same degree as you or in the same field. You never know where a connection may lead.