

# Professionalism

Acting “professional” means following guidelines for expected behavior in the workplace. Professionalism varies some from workplace to workplace. For example, wearing steel-toed boots to work in an office wouldn’t be considered professional, but it’s expected of someone who works on a construction site.

It is important to always consult your employer handbook to learn about specific guidelines of your workplace. While some of the guidelines for professionalism might be written down, most are not. For example: An employer might have rules against saying mean things to coworkers, but the handbook will not state specifically that employees should not use curse words at work.

Though professionalism may look slightly different in various settings, there are some qualities that are expected from nearly all employers. The statements below demonstrate professional behavior. If you haven’t worked before, think about how you would act in a group, class, or volunteer setting. For each statement, select whether you agree or disagree. Be honest!

Statement	Agree	Disagree
I am usually on time for work, appointments or other time commitments.		
I am OK with being told what to do by someone in a position of authority, or by someone who has more experience than me.		
I ask questions when I’m not sure what to do.		
I don’t use my phone when I’m at work or in class, even if it’s slow or if I have downtime.		
If a conflict arises with someone, I talk to them calmly and directly, and work with them to solve the problem.		
I always try my best to do a good job on any task I’m assigned, even if it is something I don’t enjoy doing.		
I follow dress codes and keep good hygiene habits.		
I do my best to get along with my others and treat everyone with respect.		
I communicate in advance if I need to take a day off and give plenty of notice if I am sick.		
I try my best to stay busy at work.		

For the statements that you selected “disagree,” think of ways you could work on improving those behaviors. Write your thoughts about professionalism in the space below.