

Discussion & Debate

Building an Argument

1

Michael Dyer

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Content

About the Course	iv
------------------	----

Course Aim

Unit Components

Lesson at a Glance	v
--------------------	---

Unit	Topic	Discussion Topic Supporting Structure Discussion Language	
Unit 1	First Impressions	First impressions are always right Analogies Introducing your argument	1
Unit 2	Honesty	We should always tell the truth Common Knowledge Expressing your position	7
Unit 3	Being Single	It's better to be single Expert Opinion Expressing reasons for your position	13
Unit 4	Social Media	Social media use is negatively affecting our lives Case Studies Introducing evidence	19
Unit 5	Nuclear Energy	We should continue with nuclear energy Examples Illustrating a point	25
Unit 6	Superstition	Being superstitious can be beneficial Empirical Evidence Hedging statements	31
Unit 7	Decision Making	All decisions should be made with logic Statistical Raw Numbers Expressing pros and cons	37
Unit 8	Business Ethics	Businesses cannot be entirely ethical and survive News Reports Making a declarative statement	43
Unit 9	College Education	You do not need to go to university to become successful Statistical Probabilities Introducing surprising evidence	49
Unit 10	Common Justice	Not everyone is equal in the eyes of the law Statistical Trends Expanding an argument	55
Unit 11	Artificial Intelligence	We must not let artificial intelligence surpass human intelligence Technical Details Giving clarification	61
Unit 12	Risk Taking	Success only comes from taking risks Statistical Averages Summing up and drawing a conclusion	67

Appendices

Answer Key	73
------------	----

Sources	74
---------	----

Lesson at a Glance



A. READ AND DISCUSS

Read the following text and identify the key ideas.

As writer Andrew Grant famously said, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." But why is it that we put so much trust in our initial reaction when we meet someone? Perhaps the reason is more primal and biological than we think. According to statistics from the *Harvard Study of Communications*, it takes only seven seconds for us to form a first impression. It seems that we are pre-programmed to make snap judgments about someone or something we encounter for the first time to avoid possible danger when time is of the essence. That said, can we really make accurate and reliable assumptions about how kind, trustworthy or competent a person is based on such limited information? In those crucial first few seconds of meeting someone, how much information can we absorb and assess from visual and verbal clues? Can we learn anything about a person's character based on their superficial appearance? The fact is that we tend to draw on existing knowledge from previous experiences, and, according to Bond and DePaulo, we are attracted to familiar faces. Not surprisingly, research also suggests that first impressions are somewhat indecipherable. In fact, we need to meet someone on average seven more times before we reform our initial judgment of them. That means that if you make a bad first impression, it is going to follow you around for a very long time. So perhaps it is time to reconsider the rash judgments that we make.

B. COMPREHENSION CHECK

- Discuss the following questions with a partner.
1. Why do we say you never get a second chance to make a first impression?
 2. What could we learn about someone in seven seconds that could warn us about them?
 3. What other primal reasons may there be for needing to make quick judgments about a person?
 4. What do you suppose are the pros and cons of the long-lasting nature of first impressions?
 5. How might we avoid rushing to judge a person?

Practice useful discussion strategies.

Explore the topic and its key ideas.

E. DISCUSSION LANGUAGE

Introducing your argument

- First of all, I'd like to state that...
- I'd like to begin by stating that...
- When discussing..., one point of view is...
- While..., the primary concern with...
- In terms of..., nothing is more... than...

Example

In terms of meeting new people, nothing is more important than making a good first impression. First impressions shape how others see us. Therefore, we should think carefully about the energy we project.

F. FOR AND AGAINST

First impressions are always right.

For

In terms of meeting new people, nothing is more important than creating a positive first impression. Although first impressions are not always perfect, I believe they are usually right for three main reasons. One reason is that our initial reaction is often based on useful information. Before someone even speaks, we notice their facial expressions, behavior, and physical characteristics. A person who appears approachable and trustworthy usually makes us feel more comfortable talking to them. Another reason is that psychology research suggests first impressions can be surprisingly accurate. Psychologist Nalini Ambady argues that people can often judge certain personality traits after only a brief interaction. Forming a first impression is like reading the title of a book. A title does not tell us the whole story, but it usually gives us an idea of what to expect. Likewise, a first impression does not reveal everything about a person, but it provides a useful starting point. Finally, social situations have clear expectations about appropriate behavior. Someone who arrives at an interview on time, dresses professionally, and treats others politely is likely to be responsible and well-prepared. Such behavior often leaves a positive, indelible impression. Although we should continue learning about people over time, first impressions often help us make sensible decisions. For these reasons, I believe first impressions are usually right.

Against

I'd like to begin by stating that while first impressions can sometimes be useful, they are often based on incomplete information. For this reason, I believe first impressions are not always right. One reason is that people can deliberately change the way they come across to others. Through clothing, speech, and behavior, they may create an image that does not reflect their true character. Another reason is that we often make a snap judgment before we know enough about someone. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman argues that our brains often depend on quick thinking when making decisions. This can cause us to make an assumption without enough evidence. Judging someone after one brief meeting is like judging a movie after watching only the trailer. The trailer may appear exciting, but it cannot show the complete story. In the same way, a first impression may seem convincing but still be inaccurate. Finally, our opinions are influenced by nonverbal clues, our emotions, and our past experiences. A nervous person may avoid eye contact during an interview, but this does not mean that they are dishonest or unfriendly. If we focus only on a person's superficial appearance, we may get off on the wrong foot and misunderstand them from the beginning. We should therefore take time to know people better before forming a firm opinion. Overall, first impressions should not always be trusted.

G. COMPREHENSION CHECK

- Compare the arguments and discuss the questions with a partner.
1. What is the speaker's main opinion in each example?
 2. Which piece of evidence in each example do you think is the most convincing? Explain your answer.
 3. Choose one reason from either argument and explain how you would rebut it.

Learn key topic vocabulary.

C. VOCABULARY BUILDING

Topic Language

- a. approachable
- b. come across
- c. initial reaction
- d. make a snap judgment
- e. make an assumption
- f. nonverbal clues
- g. physical characteristics
- h. indelible
- i. superficial appearance
- j. trustworthy

1. Despite its ____, it is a dangerous predator to any passing animal.
2. Gestures and other ____, often communicate as much as words do.
3. He is often curt and may sometimes ____, as a little rude.
4. His smile gave the impression that he was friendly and ____.
5. I believe she is being honest as she is the most ____ person I know.
6. It would be wrong of you to ____ of his abilities from just one attempt.
7. My ____ was that the movie was not going to be as good as the book.
8. The experience was invaluable and left an ____ impression on me.
9. The fossil gives us a good idea of the ____ of the creature.
10. We should not ____ about the research findings before reviewing them.

D. USEFUL IDIOMS

Idioms

1. Janine forgot to take her notes to her first meeting and **got off on the wrong foot** with her colleagues.
a. stumble while walking b. start a relationship badly c. make a mistake
2. Martin **has been in the manager's good books** since he worked an extra shift when staff were short.
a. be seen to be working hard b. be listed in a book c. be liked by someone
3. We met at a seminar and really **hit it off** well. Now we are inseparable.
a. play sports together b. form a positive connection c. have similar interests
4. They are both obsessed with soccer and **speak the same language**.
a. have the same values b. love the same thing c. use the same vocabulary
5. I'm glad you finally met my sister. I knew you would **get on famously**.
a. become famous b. get along very well c. argue a lot



Analyze and discuss topic data.

H. SPRINGBOARD

Our first impressions are generated by our experiences and our environment, which means that we can change our first impressions. By changing the experiences that comprise those impressions.

Malcolm Gladwell

Support ideas with quotations.

Explore model for and against arguments.

I. EXPLORING EVIDENCE

Match each statement with a supporting analogy.

Statement

1. Once formed, an initial opinion can be difficult to change.
2. An initial encounter can remain especially vivid in memory for years.
3. It takes just 5-15 seconds for someone to form a first impression of a person.
4. First impressions are often wrong as they are based on past personal experience.
5. We should not rush to judge a person as first impressions can be deceiving.

Analogy

- a. Forming an opinion of someone within a few seconds is like tasting a single bite of a meal and immediately deciding whether you like the whole dish. Both judgments can be made almost instantly.
- b. Judging someone after meeting them only briefly is like buying a house after seeing only a few photographs. Without looking more closely, important information can easily be missed.
- c. Trying to change how someone initially sees you is like trying to remove footprints from wet cement after it has hardened. Once the mark has been made, it can be difficult to erase.
- d. Meeting someone new is like looking through a pair of colored glasses. Just as the lenses affect how we see what is in front of us, our previous experiences can influence how we see a person we have never met before.
- e. Remembering an initial encounter is like remembering the opening scene of a dramatic movie. Even after seeing everything that follows, that first moment can remain especially vivid in our memory.

J. SUPPORTING AN ARGUMENT

Write a reason statement and support it with an analogy.

Explore different types of evidence.

Build and present your argument.

L. BUILDING AN ARGUMENT

State your position and provide reasons with clear supporting evidence.

Position	
Reason 1	
Supporting Evidence	
Reason 2	
Supporting Evidence	
Reason 3	
Supporting Evidence	

Student Name: _____



Unit 1 First Impressions

A. READ AND DISCUSS Read the following text and identify the key ideas.



As writer Andrew Grant famously said, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” But why is it that we put so much trust in our initial reaction when we meet someone? Perhaps the reason is more primal and biological than we think. According to statistics from the *Harvard Study of Communications*, it takes only seven seconds for us to form a first impression. It seems that we are pre-programmed to make snap judgments about someone or something we encounter for the first time to avoid possible danger when time is of the essence. That said, can we really make accurate and reliable assumptions about how kind, trustworthy or competent a person is based on such limited information? In those crucial first few seconds of meeting someone, how much information can we absorb and assess from visual and verbal clues? Can we learn anything about a person’s character based on their superficial appearance? The fact is that we tend to draw on existing knowledge from previous experiences, and, according to Bond and DePaulo, we are attracted to familiar faces. Not surprisingly, research also suggests that first impressions are somewhat indelible. In fact, we need to meet someone on average seven more times before we reform our initial judgment of them. That means that if you make a bad first impression, it is going to follow you around for a very long time. So perhaps it is time to reconsider the rash judgments that we make.

B. COMPREHENSION CHECK Discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. Why do we say you never get a second chance to make a first impression?
2. What could we learn about someone in seven seconds that could warn us about them?
3. What other primal reasons may there be for needing to make quick judgments about a person?
4. What do you suppose are the pros and cons of the long-lasting nature of first impressions?
5. How might we avoid rushing to judge a person?

C. VOCABULARY BUILDING Complete the sentences with the words and phrases on the left.

Topic Language

- a. approachable
- b. come across
- c. initial reaction
- d. make a snap judgment
- e. make an assumption
- f. nonverbal clues
- g. physical characteristics
- h. indelible
- i. superficial appearance
- j. trustworthy

1. Despite its ____, it is a dangerous predator to any passing animal.
2. Gestures and other ____ often communicate as much as words do.
3. He is often curt and may sometimes ____ as a little rude.
4. His smile gave the impression that he was friendly and ____.
5. I believe she is being honest as she is the most ____ person I know.
6. It would be wrong of you to ____ of his abilities from just one attempt.
7. My ____ was that the movie was not going to be as good as the book.
8. The experience was invaluable and left an ____ impression on me.
9. The fossils give us a good idea of the ____ of the creature.
10. We should not ____ about the research findings before reviewing them.

D. USEFUL IDIOMS Complete the sentences and choose the meaning of each idiom.

Idioms

1. Janine forgot to take her notes to her first meeting and **got off on the wrong foot** with her colleagues.
a. stumble while walking b. start a relationship badly c. make a mistake
2. Martin has **been in the manager's good books** since he worked an extra shift when staff were short.
a. be seen to be working hard b. be listed in a book c. be liked by someone
3. We met at a seminar and really **hit it off** well. Now we are inseparable.
a. play sports together b. form a positive connection c. have similar interests
4. They are both obsessed with soccer and **speak the same language**.
a. have the same values b. love the same thing c. use the same vocabulary
5. I'm glad you finally met my sister. I knew you would **get on famously**.
a. become famous b. get along very well c. argue a lot

E. DISCUSSION LANGUAGE Introduce the topic using one of the discussion phrases below.

Introducing your argument

- First of all, I'd like to state that...
- I'd like to begin by stating that...
- When discussing..., one point of view is...
- While..., the primary concern with...
- In terms of..., nothing is more... than...

Example

In terms of meeting new people, **nothing is more** important **than** making a good first impression. First impressions shape how others see us. Therefore, we should think carefully about the energy we project.

First impressions are always right.

For

In terms of meeting new people, **nothing is more important than** creating a positive first impression. Although first impressions are not always perfect, I believe they are usually right for three main reasons. One reason is that our **initial reaction** is often based on useful information. Before someone even speaks, we notice their facial expressions, behavior, and **physical characteristics**. A person who appears **approachable** and **trustworthy** usually makes us feel more comfortable talking to them. Another reason is that psychology research suggests first impressions can be surprisingly accurate. Psychologist Nalini Ambady argues that people can often judge certain personality traits after only a brief interaction. Forming a first impression is like reading the title of a book. A title does not tell us the whole story, but it usually gives us an idea of what to expect. Likewise, a first impression does not reveal everything about a person, but it provides a useful starting point. Finally, social situations have clear expectations about appropriate behavior. Someone who arrives at an interview on time, dresses professionally, and treats others politely is likely to be responsible and well prepared. Such behavior often leaves a positive, **indelible** impression. Although we should continue learning about people over time, first impressions often help us make sensible decisions. For these reasons, I believe first impressions are usually right.

Against

I'd like to begin by stating that while first impressions can sometimes be useful, they are often based on incomplete information. For this reason, I believe first impressions are not always right. One reason is that people can deliberately change the way they **come across** to others. Through clothing, speech, and behavior, they may create an image that does not reflect their true character. Another reason is that we often **make a snap judgment** before we know enough about someone. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman argues that our brains often depend on quick thinking when making decisions. This can cause us to **make an assumption** without enough evidence. Judging someone after one brief meeting is like judging a movie after watching only the trailer. The trailer may appear exciting, but it cannot show the complete story. In the same way, a first impression may seem convincing but still be inaccurate. Finally, our opinions are influenced by **nonverbal clues**, our emotions, and our past experiences. A nervous person may avoid eye contact during an interview, but this does not mean that they are dishonest or unfriendly. If we focus only on a person's **superficial appearance**, we may **get off on the wrong foot** and misunderstand them from the beginning. We should therefore take time to know people better before forming a firm opinion. Overall, first impressions should not always be trusted.

G. COMPREHENSION CHECK Compare the arguments and discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What is the speaker's main opinion in each example?

2. Which piece of evidence in each example do you think is the most convincing? Explain your answer.

3. Choose one reason from either argument and explain how you would rebut it.

H. SPRINGBOARD Introducing the following quote, then explain its meaning and relevance to the topic.

Our first impressions are generated by our experiences and our environment, which means that we can change our first impressions. By changing the experiences that comprise those impressions.

Malcolm Gladwell

I. EXPLORING EVIDENCE Match each statement with a supporting **analogy**.

An **analogy** explains an idea by comparing it to something familiar. It helps listeners understand unfamiliar or complex ideas more easily.

Statement

1. Once formed, an initial opinion can be difficult to change. _____
2. An initial encounter can remain especially vivid in memory for years. _____
3. It takes just 5-15 seconds for someone to form a first impression of a person. _____
4. First impressions are often wrong as they are based on past personal experience. _____
5. We should not rush to judge a person as first impressions can be deceiving. _____

Analogy

- a. Forming an opinion of someone within a few seconds is like tasting a single bite of a meal and immediately deciding whether you like the whole dish. Both judgments can be made almost instantly.
- b. Judging someone after meeting them only briefly is like buying a house after seeing only a few photographs. Without looking more closely, important information can easily be missed.
- c. Trying to change how someone initially sees you is like trying to remove footprints from wet cement after it has hardened. Once the mark has been made, it can be difficult to erase.
- d. Meeting someone new is like looking through a pair of colored glasses. Just as the lenses affect how we see what is in front of us, our previous experiences can influence how we see a person we have never met before.
- e. Remembering an initial encounter is like remembering the opening scene of a dramatic movie. Even after seeing everything that follows, that first moment can remain especially vivid in our memory.

J. SUPPORTING AN ARGUMENT Write a reason statement and support it with an analogy.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE BEHAVIORS ON A FIRST INTERVIEW



Behaviors Viewed Positively

SIMPLY HIRED



Providing a portfolio or work sample



Arriving early to an interview



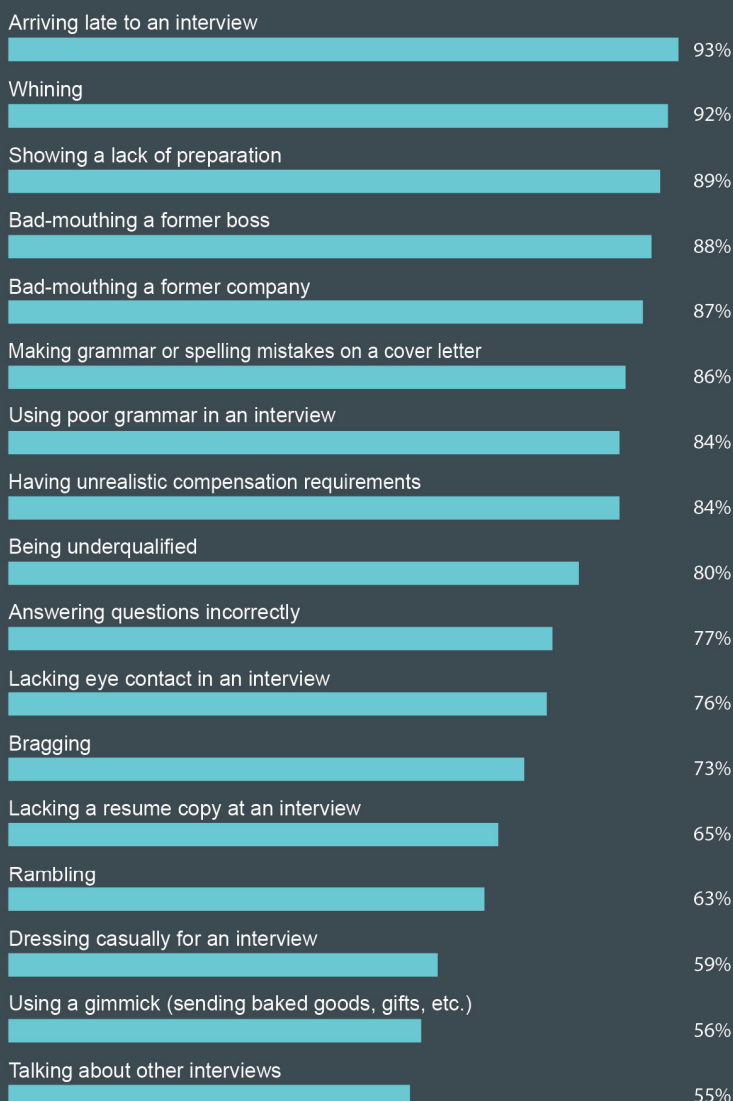
Following up the application with a phone call



Following up with a single email



Behaviors Viewed Negatively



Facial Features Remembered Most after Meeting Someone

INVISILIGN



Eyes
55%



Teeth
24%



Complexion
12%



Nose
4%



Other
6%

What People Remember of You Most

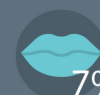
FORBES



55%
Appearance



38%
The way we talk



7%
What we say

Empirical Research

We tend to judge people based on their **facial similarity** to other people we know. *Accuracy of Deception Judgments.* Bond and DePaulo, 2006.

One tenth of a second is sufficient for people to make a specific trait inference from facial appearance. *First impressions* Willis & Todorov, 2006.

A firm handshake was related positively to extraversion and emotional expressiveness and negatively to shyness and neuroticism. Handshaking, gender, personality, and first impressions. *Chaplin et al, 2000.*

Experienced spinal surgeons achieved only **26%** accuracy when trying to identify distressed patients, based on their first impression. *Do first impressions count?* Grevitt, Pande, O'dowd, & Webb, 1998.

Participants **required less evidence** to arrive at a guilty verdict and were more confident in this decision for untrustworthy-appearing defendants. *Dangerous decisions.* Porter, Brinke & Gustaw, 2010.

Perceiver experience in executive business management positions may inhibit them from accurately judging leadership ability from nonverbal information. *Making a (False) Impression.* Re & Rule, 2016.

L. BUILDING AN ARGUMENT State your position and provide reasons with clear supporting evidence.

Position

Reason 1

Supporting Evidence

Analogy

Reason 2

Supporting Evidence

Reason 3

Supporting Evidence

Student Name: _____



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