



**O'level**  
**Foundation**  
**Week 25**

**The Write Tribe**

## COMPO PLANNING

### Composition Topic

The way we dress reveals who we are: Yes or No?

Yes

No



**YES! It reveals who we are.**

## **1. First impressions matter!**

### *In a blink...*

Studies have demonstrated that it only takes 100 milliseconds to create a first impression about a stranger. During the 100ms, the human brain pieces together information from memories, past personal experiences, and intrinsic values to generate calculated judgements. These includes stereotypes surrounding clothing. For example, if a person dresses shabbily to an interview, the interviewer may associate feelings of tardiness, unreliability and even a lack of seriousness. This could affect the job seeker's prospects.

We're taught to stop and think carefully before making an important decision. But in [Blink](#), [Malcolm Gladwell](#) finds that in complex situations, our initial two-second judgments are often more accurate than judgments derived from lengthy, painstaking analyses.

### *Parts of the brain responsible for this phenomenon*

The two brain regions that were found to be most influential in commandeering the formation of these impressions were the amygdala and posterior cingulate cortex (PCC.) The amygdala is an almond-sized structure located near the the back end of the brain. Despite its deceptively small size, it is incredibly powerful in its ability to combine learned qualities from memories with emotions from past experiences to enhance learning. Studies have shown that this is also where social stimuli are processed, where we determine trustworthiness, and where we evaluate the harmfulness of objects we encounter. Therefore the way we dress can have a huge impact on our opportunities.



**YES! It reveals who we are.**

People are often very skilled at person perception—the process of learning about other people—and our brains are designed to help us judge others efficiently.

Our brains seem to be hardwired to detect negative behaviours), and at an evolutionary level this makes sense. It is important to tell the “good guys” from the “bad guys” and to try to avoid interacting with the latter. Our brains are always looking at signals to tell if the person we are interacting with is safe or not!

It has frequently been said that “first impressions matter.” Social psychological research supports this idea. The primacy effect describes the tendency for information that we learn first to be weighted more heavily than is information that we learn later.

Leroy Koh can be trusted!



No! Leroy Koh is an alien mutant who has come to destroy all of humanity... and his sister.

## 1. First impressions matter!

Social psychologist Elliot Aronson says our brains work hard to make us think we are doing the right thing. Once the brain has convinced itself, it is a little difficult to dissuade it! This is why first impressions matter. If someone has decided that you appear to be a thief, it will take a lot more convincing to shift his or her perspective.

*This is because of cognitive dissonance*

Cognitive dissonance happens when you have 2 opposite/contradictory ideas of someone or something.



**YES! It reveals who we are.**

## **2. How we dress gives a general impression of how we feel about ourselves**

What you wear can inform passersby of your type of employment, as well as your ambitions, emotions and spending habits. The clothes, colours, cut and shape we choose can give a glimpse of our psyche. Are we attracted to brighter colours or darker colours. Brighter colours may be associated with happiness.

| <b>If you ...</b>                                 | <b>You might ...</b>  |
|---|---|
| Keep every piece of clothing you've ever owned    | Be clinging to the past through the sentimental value of your pieces  |
| Wear only neutrals, largely devoid of accessories | Be stuck in a psychological rut, too comfortable to shake it up, or too afraid to draw attention to yourself. |
| Dress in clothing too large for your body         | Dress in clothing too large for your body   |
| Covered in designer logos                         | Think you need to broadcast wealth in order to be treated well by others                                      |
| Are always in work clothes                        | Value yourself primarily through your work and work-related accomplishments                                   |

**YES! It reveals who we are.**

### **3. Our dressing sense has the power to shift our internal self**

#### **“Enclothed cognition”**

A study this year from Northwestern University examined a concept called "enclothed cognition." Researchers define it in their report as "the systematic influence that clothes have on the wearer's psychological processes," meaning what your clothes are saying to you, not about you. And how they make you feel.

#### **For example,**

The researchers distributed standard white lab coats to participants, telling some that it was a doctor's coat and some that it was a painter's smock. All participants performed the same task, but those wearing the "doctor's coat" were more careful and attentive. Their actions were influenced by their clothing.

The same may be true of you. When your friend dragged you out of the house and told you, "Get dressed up! You'll feel better!" after your last breakup/failed interview/lousy day, she was onto something. "When you dress in a certain way, it helps shift your internal self," explains Dr. Baumgartner. Enclothed cognition gives scientific proof to the idea that you should dress not how you feel, but how you want to feel. Which clothes make you feel powerful? Sexy? In control? Wealthy? The clothes you choose are sending a message to those around you, but also to you, yourself.

#### **Decision fatigue and why CEOs like Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs were the same clothes everyday?**

A study on favourable judgements found that as the day progressed, lesser favourable judgements were passed by judges. After taking a break, it spiked up (65%). This proved the more decisions one makes, the more tiresome it is. It's said the average person makes 35,000 decisions every day. What to eat for breakfast? What shirt to wear? Which door to go through? Where to go for lunch? The fewer choices you have to make, the more energy you have left for more important decisions. This is why Zuckerberg and Jobs wear the same outfit everyday!



**YES! It reveals who we are.**

**QUIZ TIME!**

**1. How many decisions does the average person makes in a day?**

- a. 30
- b. 35,000

**2. The more decisions we make, the easier it becomes.**

- a. True
- b. False

**3. What is encloded cognition**

- a. The way you dress can influence those around you
- b. The way you dress can influence the way you feel

**4. Can the colours, cut and shape we choose can give a glimpse of how happy or sad our psyche is?**

- a. Yes
- b. No



**5. What is cognitive dissonance?**

- a. Happens when you have 2 opposite/contradictory ideas of someone or something.
- b. The tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's prior beliefs or values

**6. Once the brain has convinced itself, it is a little difficult to dissuade it**

- a. True
- b. False

**7. How many milliseconds does it take to create a first impression?**

- a. 10 milliseconds
- b. The children might feel that their parents don't care enough about them

**8. Which 2 parts of the brain are responsible for first impressions?**

- a. amygdala and orbitofrontal cortex
- b. amygdala and posterior cingulate cortex



**NO! It does not reveal character.**

Clothing is quite often used as costume, to convey a character or persona, which may or may not truly reflect a person's character. Bikers have a specific dress code, as do goths, and preppies. Ted Bundy dressed preppy and was a serial killer. Bikers appear as social outcasts, rebels, and violent in nature, yet many live middle-class lives with loving families. We miss out on many opportunities by judging by appearance only."

Coming to 'appearances'. Let us consider the example of Mahatma Gandhi, the man who was responsible for 'Indian Independence'. Who would have thought that the simple man, who just wore a "dhoti" (A simple Indian garment) would have the determination to free his country from the British. That is why the British who had then colonized India at first did not even feel threatened by Gandhi. Only after repeated encounters and experiences with this simple looking man did they realize how powerful his concept of "Non-violence" was. 'Appearances can indeed be deceptive'. Another example would be Abraham Lincoln. He was not the most handsome president that the US had. But he had the beautiful mind to free slaves from slavery, not to mention the courage to go through the turmoils of the Civil war.

## **1. True character is revealed in how we behave, not how we dress**

For example, Mark Zuckerberg dresses in a plain T-shirt. No way is his wealth or affluence reflected in his sense of dressing. If people see him on the street, they may mistake him for someone who is casual and not a founder of a famous company.

