

How to tell your boss his breath stinks

Telling your boss he has bad breath can be a tricky business—done the wrong way, the results can be disastrous. Before you decide to broach the subject, you need to consider whether the problem is temporary or if it's something you need to brace for in the long haul. If you're certain your boss's bad breath wasn't caused by something he ate, remember that he could have a gum infection or some other type of infection that may pass in a few days. If a week has gone by and your boss's breath is still melting your nose hairs, it's probably time to take action.

If you're the brave sort, you can march into your boss's office and tell him yourself. If you go this route, put yourself in your boss's shoes and use "I" statements so you don't sound judgmental or accusatory. Also, make sure you walk in with a solution in mind. Better yet—bring samples of your favorite breath product to give as a gift. Even if you've never had bad breath a day in your life, you should say something like, "I've noticed that you and I share a similar problem. It seems like no matter how often I brushed my teeth, I still had difficulties maintaining fresh breath. This product worked for me." Then, hand over your miracle product, even if you've never used it.

If you think your boss might react badly to a breath critique coming from you, seek out a close friend or relative of the boss and ask to speak to them confidentially. Use the same type of "I" statement discussed above and ask them to pass on your miracle breath product to your boss.

If you don't know anyone who is close to your boss and don't feel like you can approach him yourself, go to <http://www.therabreath.com/tellafriend.asp> to send your boss a virtual breath mint. This web site sends a very polite anonymous email on your behalf offering solutions to chronic bad breath. If you decide to use this method, remember that many companies use software that reports which web sites their employees visit at work, so make sure to visit this site at home on a personal computer, off company time.

When deciding which approach to use, consider your audience. Which generation does your boss belong to? If your boss is an older Traditionalist or Baby Boomer, remember that these two generations highly value workers who show respect, work hard, and pay their dues. They don't like employees who are impertinent or who step out of line, so if you decide to broach the bad breath subject with them in person or via their family, take extra precautions to make sure you come across as very respectful. Generation X bosses, on the other hand, are likely to have a less formal management style and are more appreciative of innovation and independence. You probably have less to fear when broaching this subject with a Gen X boss. Just remember, regardless of generational makeup, nobody actually *likes* to hear their breath is so bad you're not sure whether they need mints or toilet paper. No matter who you're talking to, plan carefully and practice tact before you blurt out something you might later regret.

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