

# Dress to Impress

## Your Professional Image



### The Importance of Dressing Appropriately

Dressing to impress employers should be a crucial part of your job search strategy. Although we may believe that no one should be judged by what they wear, the reality is that employers are looking for reasons to remove you from their selection process. They are not only concerned about your resume and interview, they are also aware of the image you project and often make a judgment on appearance within the first five minutes of meeting the candidate.

They are looking to see if the candidate respects them enough to confirm their perceived expectations. Whether we like it or not, how you dress is taken into consideration in hiring decisions. You want to have a competitive edge, especially when it comes to making initial impressions.

Research the employer before the interview. Explore the dress requirements typical of that career field. For example, Silicon Valley will call for a different image than Wall Street. One way to gauge this is to dress in the manner of the organization's representatives. **Do not dress casual for any interview!**

### Dress for Success for Both Men & Women

If you dress more formally, you may feel more comfortable and prepared for an important interview.

Rumpled and wrinkled clothing is out. Be sure your clothes are clean, tailored and sharply pressed. (If you are driving to the interview, hang your jacket on a hanger in the car and put it on when you arrive).

Shoes should be polished, well heeled, not scuffed, and coordinated with your outfit.

Fly-away or bizarre haircuts are out; make sure it is neat and well groomed. (If you color your hair, it should be a natural shade-no electric blue or neon green). Avoid wearing too much cologne or perfume.

Women, wear only one earring in each ear. Men, if you wear an earring, remove it before the meeting. Limit other jewelry. Do not wear anything that dangles, clangs or is distracting.

Your hands and nails should be clean and trimmed. A manicure with conservative polish is recommended.

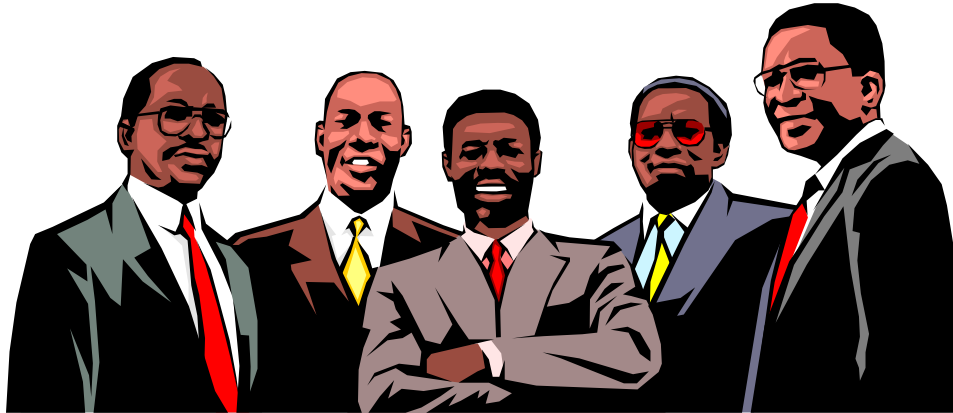
After you secure the job, you can dress less conservatively. For example, if you are applying for a teaching position, few will expect you to wear a formal suit each day on the job. If you have doubts about what you are considering wearing, then don't wear it.

**Err on the conservative side.**

Dress not for where you are but where you want to be. An interview isn't a beauty contest, but how you dress, and your overall appearance, almost always get noticed by the interviewer.

Don't give the interviewer a chance to rule you out because you didn't feel like ironing your shirt or polishing your shoes.

Dress in a business-like professional manner, and you will be sure to fit in wherever you interview.



### ***Advice for Men-Suggested Dress Code***

#### ***Suits***

The Office of Career Development encourages men to wear traditional business attire. This means a conservative dark navy, charcoal or gray suit and a white long-sleeved pressed dress shirt (even in summer).

If you don't own a suit, borrow one from a friend or consider investing in a high quality one. A tailored suit will last many years into your professional career. If you are unable to obtain a suit, a conservative sports coat or blazer and dress slacks are second best.

#### ***Shirts***

White shirts are always your first choice. Solid blue is an acceptable alternative. If you don't own either a white or blue shirt, go out and buy some. There is no short cut here, and if you get the job you will probably need more than one anyway. The material must be plain or button down cotton; polyester or nylon are out.

#### ***Shoes***

Polished leather—lace up or tasseled loafers, black or dark brown are best. Stay away from outlandish styles with buckles or chains. Never wear tennis or sport shoes, nor white or tan shoes. Avoid run down heels or holes in the soles. Keep shoes cleaned and polished.

#### ***Socks***

Wear comfortable dark socks. Depending on the outfit use black, dark gray, dark blue, but **never white**.



### ***Ties***

Ties can make a statement about you. Conservative silk ties are best. Be sure that ties coordinate well with the suit and avoid flashy patterns; the interview is not a time to prove what an individualist you are. Make sure the knot is neat and the tie comes to the top of your belt or slacks. The interviewer need not see your stomach. Be sure the tie is wrinkle free.

### ***Belts***

Wear a dark belt preferably black or conservative style. It should have a clean functional buckle .

### ***Advice***

#### ***For***

#### ***Women***

### ***Suggested dress code***



### ***Suits***

Lean toward the conservative side with skirted suits and use the same colors as men (navy, charcoal or gray). A power suit is a skirted suit, not a pant suit. Colors like brown, camel or beige are feasible. We encourage you to dress for the position and know the employer. Fashion, advertising and the arts often allow more creativity than more traditional careers such as finance, law and accounting, which favor conformity.

The hierarchy of conservative dress goes: dark suit, lighter suit, dress with dark jacket, and mixed color skirt and blazer. Project a professional image; even during “dress down” days you should still look professional.

### ***Shoes***

Shoes should be conservative; low to medium heels are best. Keep shoes cleaned and polished. In terms of colors avoid wearing lighter colored shoes especially if you are wearing a dark suit or dress. Navy and black are conservative colors and go with almost anything. Avoid tennis shoes or sandals. Wear full length pantyhose—do not wear knee high stockings with a skirted suit or dress.

### **Accessories**

Make-up should enhance your appearance. Avoid wearing any clothing, accessories, or jewelry that might distract or draw attention to yourself rather than reinforcing your look as a professional.

If you wear nail polish, make sure it's a subtle color and neatly done.

Hair should be freshly cleaned and neatly styled. Long hair should be worn as conservatively as possible.

Earrings should look conservative—avoid large, dangling styles.

### **Business Casual**

At last count, over 70% of American firms allowed some form of casual attire at least once a week, including GE and IBM. Many students will have a chance to work in situations where the dress code is more relaxed. The words “business casual” are subject to multiple interpretations depending on environment.

“Business or workplace casual” means charcoal pants and a white oxford button down shirt and a pair of casual shoes for men. A banded-collar shirt is another good staple that goes well with blazers and vests. Another option is a denim shirt with a sport tie. Choose your casual attire carefully, and use your common sense when dressing for work; looking neat should be a priority. Avoid t-shirts, baseball caps, sunglasses, and don't wear sneakers unless it is the norm. Sneakers, no matter how clean and new, are considered inappropriate for most employers.

Don't take “casual dress” too literally.

**You're better off dressing a bit on the conservative side than on taking a gamble only to find out that your idea of casual does not match that one of your employer.**

