

# **DRESS TO IMPRESS**

## **Your Appearance Really Matters**

A nice appearance is an investment in your career. Although it will not take the place of a good education or competence in your job, it will enhance those requirements and increase your chances for getting ahead in the business world.

An interviewer's decision not to hire a job applicant is usually made within the first thirty seconds of an interview. That's a lot of sizing up in a little time – mostly on the basis of appearance. Your looks – with or without appropriate business attire – will make up approximately 80 percent of that impression before you even open your mouth. The right makeup and hairstyle can make a person look more professional and not only increase his or her chance of being hired, but increase his or her starting salary by as much as 8 to 20 percent.

### **Business Casual**

Business casual is slightly less dressy than regular business dress. Women's casual wear may consist of slacks or a casual dress. Men could wear an open-collared shirt with a sports jacket with coordinated slacks. Jeans, shorts, or t-shirts are not acceptable. When in doubt, go for the conservative side.

### **Formal & Semiformal Attire**

Formal wear is generally not required; however, if the occasion arises, a "white tie" tuxedo and full ball gown is preferred. For semiformal attire, women should wear a knee-length cocktail dress, a tea length dress, or a long dress. Men should wear "black tie" apparel which is a tuxedo or a dark suit.

### **A Few General Tips**

- Be clean and use (unscented) deodorant liberally.
- Arrive early. In a restroom, check your clothes, hair, hands and nails, and face. Carry and use a travel mouthwash.
- Take off your jacket prior to an interview or while traveling to keep it wrinkle free and to keep yourself cool.
- Hair should be neatly (and recently) cut and men's faces well shaven.
- Cologne or perfume is used in moderation so that the smell is not overpowering.
- Nails should be well manicured and hands should be well moisturized.
- Carry breath mints with you, but don't use them during the interview.
- Do not chew gum in an interview.
- Glasses should not be tinted. It is important for an interviewer to make eye contact with you.
- Always carry extra copies of your resume.
- Don't tap your feet, yawn, stare at the interviewer, touch your hair or otherwise appear nervous or bored during the interview.
- If you have a coat, umbrella, backpack, etc., ask if you may leave them with the secretary or ask if there is a designated area for storage.



## Men

For men, a pin-striped or plain colored suit, preferably in dark gray, gray, black, or navy is appropriate with a tasteful tie in a



pattern or stripe. A conservative style suit worn with a white shirt is appropriate for the interview. Make sure the collar is comfortable, because unbuttoning your top button in an interview

is not appropriate. Cotton or cotton/poly blends are appropriate. Also, an undershirt is a good idea.

Your ties should also be conservative in length, width (2  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 3  $\frac{1}{2}$ ), and design. The tip of your tie should just cover your belt buckle. 100% silk is the best bet in terms of quality and ease of care. Bow ties and clip-on ties should not be worn. You want the interviewer focusing on your ideas, not your tie.

Shoes are important, too: always buy leather, preferably brown or black. Lace-up or slip-on styles are fine, but avoid wearing boots to most interviews. The socks you pair with your shoes should also be dark, and should complement the suit. Make sure to buy over-the-calf socks with good elastic to avoid the top of the sock showing if you cross your legs. Choose a belt to match your shoes closely; it should be plain and have a small, simple buckle.

Keep jewelry conservative. A good watch with a nice leather strap or metal band may be worn. One tasteful ring on a ring finger is appropriate. Earrings should not be worn during the interview.

It is preferable that men do not have long hair; however, if you must have long hair make sure that it is neatly pulled back into a ponytail. Beards and mustaches should be neatly trimmed and well maintained.

## Women

Any suit pattern should be subtle; preferred colors are navy, any shade of gray, black, dark maroon, and taupe. A light-



colored polyester or silk blouse in white or cream is a good choice to pair with your suit, which has more leeway than a man's, but should still be conservative. Your skirt should be neither too long nor too short, falling

within an inch or two of the knee either way. Pant suits are also generally accepted as appropriate dress by employers.

Your shoes should be leather, closed toe pumps with a low to medium heel, no taller than two inches. The best way to choose a shoe color is to have the shoe match or be darker than the hem color of your skirt. Brown or black shoes are always good options. Always make sure your hose are lighter than your shoes; in fact, try to match you skin tone. Check for runs carefully, and it wouldn't hurt to carry a spare pair in your purse.

Ideally, you should carry personal items in a pocket of your briefcase to avoid any confusion with straps. Make sure the pocket can be sealed closed. Remember: if you take a briefcase, do not carry a purse. The color should match your shoes as closely as possible. For women, black shoes and bags are an excellent choice.

Women, you may add one pair of small earrings, preferably studs, and you may wear a matching necklace and/or bracelet. One ring per hand is permissible, preferably on your ring fingers. Stay away from colorful or largely patterned scarves because they distract from your outfit. Stay away from drastic hair cuts that require a lot of hair products to stay in place or hair that is brightly colored. When painting your nails, try to stick with neutral or light shades of polish and medium length nails. Make up should be light and simple, with no bright colors. Try to stay away from bright lipstick and blush; natural and subtle colors are most appropriate.

