



Dressing for Success

Office of Career Development

Vassar College

Importance of Professional Attire

First impressions are important. If you want to present yourself as a professional, you need to look the part. Dressing to impress employers should be a crucial part of your job search strategy. Employers are not only concerned about your resume and interview, but also the image you project. How you dress is taken into consideration in hiring decisions because this is considered a reflection of how important you think the interview is and how well you know your chosen field. Also, when you are dressed professionally, you may feel more confident during the interview.

What to Wear: Tips for Women

SUIT OR DRESS: A conservative colored suit or tailored dress, but avoid floral prints. Skirt should be around the knee with no high slit. Pantsuits should not be low-rise where your torso is exposed.

BLOUSE: A business blouse that looks neat under the suit. Camisoles, tank tops, low-cut blouses and shirts are inappropriate. White or pastels are always good but a different color is acceptable if professional.

SHOES: Dress shoes in black, brown or navy. Wear heels that

you are comfortable walking in. Don't wear light color shoes or sandals. Make sure that your shoes are well polished and are in good repair.

PANTYHOSE: Must always be worn. Neutral color hose is always safe, but hose that blends with the hemline is also acceptable. No textures, patterns or opaque. Carry an extra pair in case you get a run.

ACCESSORIES: Conservative jewelry and simple style earrings, avoiding big hoops and bangles. Wear only single earrings and remove all other visible piercings. Your handbag should be conservative and in good condition. You may want to use a professional looking briefcase instead of a handbag. Carry a professional portfolio and keep extra copies of your resume, a note pad and a pen in it. If you smoke, do not have cigarettes visible in your briefcase or handbag.

GROOMING: Make-up should be natural and conservative especially with eye shadow and liner.

What to Wear: Tips for Men

SUIT: Conservative black, navy, or gray. Solid colors preferred or a very thin pinstripe may be acceptable.

SHIRT: Long sleeved, button down of white or light blue. Collar should fit perfectly and one inch of cuff should show

beyond suit. Your shirt must be tucked into your pants.

SHOES/SOCKS: Solid and dark (never white) to match your shoes or suit and high enough to cover the calf.

TIES: Conservative stripe or small pattern preferably of silk which coordinates with your suit; avoid flashy patterns and bright colors. Make sure the knot is neat and the tie comes to the top of your belt or pants.

ACCESSORIES: The only jewelry that should be worn is a conservative watch and perhaps a conservative ring if that is what is usually worn. Earrings and all other visible piercings must be removed. Wear a good leather belt to match your shoes. Carry a professional looking portfolio and keep extra resumes and a note pad and a pen in it. If you smoke, do not have cigarettes visible in your pocket or portfolio.

Additional Tips for Everyone

- Be sure your hair is well-groomed and not a distraction to the interviewer; be sure to shave facial hair
- Clean and trim your fingernails; nail polish is fine as long as it is subdued and not chipped
- Avoid or keep cologne and perfume to a minimum

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Career Brief: General Career Information

- Remember to freshen your breath: avoid gum, candy or cigarettes during the interview
- Shower before your interview, and wear extra deodorant!
- Visible tattoos should be covered to avoid distraction
- Apparel should be clean and neatly pressed; Check for lint and dandruff before your interview

Defining Business Casual

Business Casual May Include:

- Skirts, slacks, chinos or "docker"-type trousers
- Neatly pressed corduroys are acceptable
- Cotton shirts in solids, prints or muted plaids
- Sport shirts with collars or banded necks and collared polo shirts
- Sweaters (not too tight)
- Blazers (structured and non-structured) or sport jacket
- Low-heeled shoes or boots with stockings or socks and casual loafers or lace-up shoes with socks

Business Casual Does Not Include:

- T-shirts and bare midriffs
- Low-cut garments, front or back
- Hats, caps
- Ripped or tattered clothing
- Extremely tight-fitting blouses, leggings, short skirts or other suggestive clothing
- Jeans (depending on your business environment)
- Shorts

Tips for Dressing on a Budget

Shop Ahead of Time for Your Interview and Work Attire: If you wait, chances are that you will

pay more for clothing. Check local newspapers and stores for coupons and end of season sales.

Buy "Seasonless" Clothing:

Purchase a suit that can be worn year round. Avoid heavy wools; look for attire that is advertised as "seasonless" or "three season."

Invest in the Right Attire: Invest in a high quality wool blended suit (you can purchase discount high quality suits at local department stores) and cotton or cotton/blend casual attire.

Great Gifts to Ask For! Holidays, birthdays, graduation...browse stores ahead of time to decide where you would like to purchase your attire and request a gift card for that store (this is a great way to purchase a suit without dipping into your bank account)

Save Money on Dry Cleaning:

Invest in attire you don't have to dry clean each time you wear. It will save you money in the long term, since charges range from \$8 - \$12.

Local Shopping Resources

Poughkeepsie Galleria

Men's and Women's Clothing:

H & M, JCPenney, Macy's, Sears, Target, Banana Republic

Women's Clothing:

Ann Taylor Loft, Lane Bryant, New York & Company

Men's Clothing:

Christopher's

Shoes and Accessories:

Target, Payless Shoe Source, DSW Shoe Warehouse

A Final Note...

Generous Vassar alumnae/i have donated funding for students who would be otherwise unable to purchase interview clothing. To learn more about this funding, please make an appointment to speak with a counselor.