

# Dressing for Success: A Guide to Interview Apparel

Updated 5/2016

## Why it Matters

Employers want students who communicate well, work effectively in teams, and are genuinely enthusiastic. During an interview, your attire plays a supporting role to these qualities, but that role is an important one. Your appearance is the first impression you make on an employer. Appropriate attire shows that you take the interview process seriously. It also demonstrates respect to the people you meet.

Although many employers have a relaxed or business casual dress code, interviews still require a traditional, professional, conservative approach. Your primary goal in dressing for an interview is to feel good about the way you look while projecting a professional image to the potential employer. Remember, you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression.

## Men: Interview Attire Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ Solid color, conservative suit – black, navy or charcoal gray
- \_\_\_\_\_ White, long-sleeved, button-down dress shirt
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conservative silk tie, coordinated with suit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dark socks – black, dark gray or dark blue
- \_\_\_\_\_ Polished leather dress shoes – black or brown
- \_\_\_\_\_ Belt – black or brown, to match your shoes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Minimal or no jewelry – no earrings or facial piercings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Neat, professional hairstyle
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clean-shaven or neatly trimmed facial hair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Light aftershave and/or cologne
- \_\_\_\_\_ Neatly trimmed nails
- \_\_\_\_\_ Portfolio with a pen, paper and extra copies of your resume

## Women: Interview Attire Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ Solid, dark color, conservative suit – skirt suits are considered more professional than pant suits; skirt length should be at least to the knee
- \_\_\_\_\_ White or light-colored blouse – avoid low-cut necklines and busy patterns
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conservative shoes – moderate heel, closed toe, coordinated with suit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Limited, conservative jewelry – no facial piercings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Neat, professional hairstyle
- \_\_\_\_\_ Neutral hosiery – no runs, bring an extra pair just in case
- \_\_\_\_\_ Light make-up and perfume
- \_\_\_\_\_ Manicured nails with light polish
- \_\_\_\_\_ Small purse, coordinated to match shoes and suit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Portfolio with a pen, paper and extra copies of your resume

### **What Not to Bring to the Interview**

- Cell phone – even if it is set on vibrate, the interviewer can still hear it
- iPod
- Gum
- Cigarettes
- Coffee, soda or water bottle
- Visible tattoos

### **Interview Attire Tips**

- Try on your clothes at least a week before the interview to be sure you have appropriate interview attire and everything fits correctly. Clothes should not be too tight or too loose.
- Get your clothes ready the night before. This will save you time and worry on the day of your interview.
- Iron your clothes and make sure everything is wrinkle-free.
- Polish your shoes. Shoes should not be scuffed or worn out.
- Bring a breath mint and use it before you enter the building.
- Smile!

### **Business Casual**

Business casual attire should be worn for information sessions or if instructed by the employer for a specific function. Business casual attire for men includes pressed khaki or solid colored pants and a long-sleeved, button-up collared shirt. A tie and/or coat are not required. Business casual attire for women includes solid-colored khaki pants, dress pants, or a skirt with a tailored shirt or blouse. Tailored knit sweaters and sweater sets also are appropriate. Polished, conservative shoes should always be worn.

### **Know Your Industry**

These guidelines are a general overview of appropriate, traditional interview attire. Be aware that there are many career fields, such as finance and law, which are very conservative. If you are interviewing in such an industry, be sure that you err on the side of conservatism. Other industries, such as fashion and marketing, may be trendier, but conservative, professional attire is always the best choice for an interview. Once you accept a position, ask your supervisor what the expected dress code is and dress to that standard.