

SEEKING SUCCESS? AN OVERVIEW FOR DRESS



For both men and women, the most appropriate interview attire is a **conservative, well-fitting suit with polished shoes.**



MEN

Material:

- Suit - worsted wool, gabardine, lightweight wool, rayon (recommended for both men and women)
- Tie - 100% silk preferable, other fabric with similar appearance
- Shoes and belt - leather

Fit:

- Jacket - sleeve tapers, shirt cuff extends $\frac{1}{4}$ inch beyond jacket sleeve
- Pants - hem touches front of shoe, falls just above heel
- Tie - does not extend below belt
- Socks - go over calf

Color:

- Suit - dark color such as navy blue or charcoal gray, solid or with subtle pinstripes (avoid brown, black is not recommended)
- Shirt - white (light blue, tan, or yellow are also acceptable)
- Tie - darker color than shirt, conservative patterns okay
- Socks, shoes, and belt - dark color such as black, brown, or burgundy, that matches suit

WOMEN

Fit:

- Skirt - falls either just above or just below the knee
- Blouse - is preferably long-sleeved, sleeveless tops are unacceptable
- Shoes - have a mid-height (up to 2 inch) heel, are not open-toed

Color:

- Suit - neutral color (black, navy, tan, gray, burgundy), solid or with subtle checks or pinstripes, in same materials as suggested for men
- Blouse - light color that matches suit (large prints and "loud" colors are not recommended)
- Shoes - coordinated with suit (navy, black, or taupe), with no decoration
- Hosiery - neutral color that matches skin tone

Style:

- A skirt is still considered more acceptable than a tailored pantsuit among some employers.
- Never, ever wear a low-cut or see-through blouse.

ACCESSORIES

Hair:

- Wear in an up-to-date style, neatly trimmed. Long hair does not have to be pulled back, simply kept out of your face.
- Men: Facial hair should also be kept neatly trimmed or shave. In some fields, it is best not to have facial hair.

Make-up:

- Women: Make-up should be subtle and minimal - especially around the eyes. Light or neutral shades are best.

Nails:

- Nails should be well groomed, not ragged or bitten.
- Women: As with make-up, use a subtle shade of polish - and keep nails at a short length.

Jewelry:

- A carefully selected piece of jewelry, such as a lapel pin, can enhance and add personality to your ensemble.
- Don't wear anything too big, flashy, or casual - as with other aspects of your attire, avoid anything that will be distracting to your interviewer(s).
- Limit the amount of jewelry worn - in general, no more than one earring per ear and one ring per hand.

Tattoos and piercings:

- Tattoos should not be visible.
- If you have piercings (other than ears), remove them for the interview.

Briefcase/folder:

- Carry a standard-sized leather briefcase or professional folder containing copies of your resume, reference list, and any other materials you need (e.g., portfolio). (Women: This may serve as a more professional substitute for your purse.)

Handbags:

- Handbags should be small and not overstuffed.
- Do not carry a handbag if carrying a briefcase.

Fragrances:

- Avoid strong perfumes and colognes. If you must use a fragrance, apply at least 2 hours before the interview takes place.

Breath:

- Be sure breath has been freshened before the interview.
- Never chew gum during the interview.

Hygiene:

- Make sure you have showered, applied deodorant, and brushed teeth.
- Make sure your clothes are clean and neatly pressed.

TIPS FOR BEGINNING A BUSINESS WARDROBE

New to wearing a suit? Practice wearing your suit at least once before going on an interview, or you will be focused on being uncomfortable, not trying to impress. Doing a mock interview or attending a career fair in your business attire can solve this problem.

On a budget? A quality suit is a good investment, but you don't have to spend hundreds of dollars to look professional. Many less-expensive stores carry business attire and have sales associates that are willing to help you with your selection.

And what is a "quality" suit? A sales associate can help you select a durable material that matches your budget. A good way of testing the material of a suit is to crunch it up in your hand for a few seconds, then let it go. If the wrinkles fall out quickly, it's a good purchase. Material that stays wrinkled will give your suit a worn appearance.

How do I know that it fits? How do you know that other items of clothing fit before purchasing them? Be sure to stand up, sit down, and walk around in any suit you try on and remember to allow for the cost of any alterations needed.

Underneath it all. Avoid embarrassment! Women: Check to make sure "VPLs" (visible panty lines) are not a part of your ensemble. Also, bring along extra hosiery or clear nail polish in case of runs. Men: Always wear an undershirt but not a V-necked undershirt, as it may be visible.

So I have to wear a suit every day? Chances are, no. When you go on an interview, you are dressing for the interview, not necessarily the job. Dress professionally when you begin work until you learn the style of your work setting, then you may alter your attire if you find you are overdressing.

What's "business casual?" For men - khakis, loafers, and a collared shirt. For women - tailored pants or skirt, sweater or blouse, and flats. Business casual is not considered appropriate for an interview.

Looking for more information online? Check out SYMS Dress For Success ("specially designed for college students") <http://www.syms.com/dfs/index.htm> or Dress to Impress from Washington State University <http://amdt.wsu.edu/research/dti/index.htm>. Both are highly recommended by Career Center professionals.

Just how flexible are these rules? As with most rules of etiquette, there are exceptions to what's considered standard business dress. For example, creativity is much more acceptable in an arts-related field than in finance or management. When in doubt, however, it's always best to be conservative.