

Robert R. McComsey Career Development Center



DRESS FOR SUCCESS

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Hours: 8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday
Walk-in hours: 1:00-4:30 Tues., Wed., and Thurs.

No one enjoys being judged for employment based on looks. We would rather be hired because of our skills and abilities. But like it or not, appearance does matter in the interview and on the job. Your appearance sends messages to potential employers about your motivation, professionalism, judgment and "fit" within the organization. For an interview, you should dress a step above what you would normally wear to work at that organization, and, when in doubt, err on the conservative side. If you have no idea what people would normally wear and you are too far away to drop by and see, call the Human Resources office and ask about the dress code.

The Rules

There are three main categories of business dress: Business, Business Casual, and Casual. While there are no absolute rules regarding dress, here are some guidelines:

1. When interviewing on-campus, always opt for business dress. Likewise, if you interview off-campus, assume that business dress is called for, unless you research and find out otherwise, or unless you are headed for the west coast where interview attire is much less formal.
2. The primary goal of dressing for your interview is to feel good and look professional. If you feel uncomfortable in an outfit, even if people say you look great, don't wear it.
3. When in doubt, always overdress and be more conservative than you normally might be.
4. These guidelines apply to four-season climates. In the south, short sleeves are acceptable - look for cooler fabrics as well.
5. Regardless of whether you are dressing in business, business casual, or casual wear for work, you need to avoid rumpled clothes, scuffed shoes, ratty nails, garish print sport or tee shirts, athletic clothing, sneakers, hiking boots, flip-flops and athletic sandals. Women should avoid short shorts, camisoles, low-cut tops, miniskirts, bright nails and excessive makeup.

"Business" Dress means:

Men

- Conservative, two-piece business suit with a jacket (solid neutral colors are best)
- No visible piercings, no earrings
- No jewelry other than a watch and wedding or school ring
- Tie with a conservative pattern
- Dark shoes with dark socks
- Clean-shaven with traditional haircut. Facial hair should be conservative

Women

- Conservative, two-piece business suit with a jacket (solid colors are best and most colors are acceptable for women). Mixed color suits are fine for work, but keep to one color for the interview

- Skirt suits are still considered more professional than pants suits. Knee length or close to it, depending on what looks best on you. Should be professional, not sexy
- Tailored pants suit
- Skin-tone hosiery - always have an extra pair handy
- No visible piercings except for ears. Only one set of earrings
- Clean, polished, classy shoes. No open toed shoes
- Jewelry should be limited to earrings, watch, and one ring per hand

“Business Casual” means:

Men

- Tie is optional, non-conservative
- Collared shirt (polo or button down). Denim and patterns are fine
- Khakis, chinos, or gabardine pants
- Good casual shoes, like Bucs, loafers, or lug-sole shoes. Sandals are not considered appropriate for business casual

Women

- Two-piece pants suit
- Slacks, khakis, skirts and city shorts (top of the knee)
- Flat shoes
- Dresses or skirt/blouse combination
- Hosiery not required during the summer
- Sandals may be appropriate, but not flip-flops

“Casual” Dress Means:

Men

Anything listed as business casual, and:

- Jeans
- Sandals may be appropriate, but not sneakers
- Clean, plain t-shirts
- Shorts

Women

Anything listed as business casual, and:

- Jeans, Khakis, or similar pants
- Most types of shoes are fine, except sneakers
- Shorts (longer ones)
- Clean, plain t-shirts

Non-dress issues

Here’s what can really hurt you in an interview, even if you are dressed perfectly. Be sure you pay attention to personal grooming issues before meeting with an employer:

- Quality, cut and fit communicate a lot. An ill-fitting suit indicates a person who does not pay attention to detail, while a slouchy or too-tight cut may send an alarming message to a conservative firm.

- Women - accessories are great, but should not number more than 13 (including large buttons, jewelry, hair accessories, etc.) For men, your only accessories should include a belt, watch and possibly one ring on your hand.
- Hair should be neatly trimmed and clean. Avoid big hair if possible – women, when in doubt pull it back. Remember that conservative is the key with hair, as well as with clothes.
- Nails need to be clean and trimmed. Nail polish is not necessary, but if you decide to wear it, choose a light color.
- Iron your clothes before the interview – we get comments on candidates who did not.
- Do not chew gum or have hard candy in your mouth when you meet the interviewer.
- Empty your pockets of coins or anything that will distract someone.
- Carry a good briefcase or portfolio – ditch the ratty purse or expandable folder.
- Brush your teeth right before the interview, and you can't beat Altoids for those last minute emergencies.
- If you smoke, keep your interview clothes in someone else's room.
- Bathe and use deodorant.
- Women – make-up should be used sparingly for a natural look.
- Perfumes, cologne, or aftershave should be avoided or used *very* lightly. Even if you love it, what if the interviewer is allergic or hates it?

Remember, the goal of the interview is to get the job offer. Dress to make sure your potential employer is paying attention to *you*, not your outfit. Once you get the job, there is plenty of time to be fashionable – stay with the classic for now.