



Finding Work

Dressing for the Job

A Good First Impression

When interviewing for a job, it is essential that you make a good first impression. Your first impression must say to the potential employer that you are honest, reliable and friendly; get along with others; and are capable of handling the job. A major part of your first impression will consist of your clothing and your personal appearance. A good appearance cannot compensate for lack of skills and knowledge; but if you are well qualified, it may give you the edge you need to get the job. If an employer has several applicants with equal qualifications, the one who is most appropriately dressed will probably get the job.

When deciding what to wear for a job interview, you must consider the image the company wants to portray to the public and the position for which you are applying.

The Company's Image

Some companies want to appear very conservative, while others prefer a less conservative image. The product or service offered will determine how con-

servative a company wishes to appear. Banks, stockbrokers, insurance firms and law firms—those dealing with financial and legal matters—want to present a very conservative image. On the other hand, firms dealing with glamour, fashion and advertising will want a non-conservative image.

Another aspect of the company's image you will want to consider is how formal or informal it wishes to appear. The size and location of the business and its clientele will help determine the formality of the company. Usually businesses that are small or located in small towns are less formal than the same business that is larger and/or located in a larger city. Most companies or agencies will dress in a manner that makes their clientele feel comfortable. If they deal with the public, they will want to appear helpful and friendly and will therefore dress in a more informal manner. Companies that deal with a wealthy clientele will usually be more formal. The formality of the company usually dictates the basic style of clothes that are worn. A business suit is more formal than a blazer or no coat at all. A dark solid suit is considered very conservative, and a very stylish linen suit is considered non-conservative.

Position You Are Seeking

After considering the company's image, the next thing to consider is the position for which you are applying.

Management

If you are applying for a job in a management or supervisory position, you will need to wear a suit or business separates, depending on the company's image. The chart on the next page can be used as a guide.

Clerical or Technical

If you are applying for a job as a secretary, receptionist, bank teller, lab technician or other clerical or technical position, you can dress less formally than for a management position. If the position you are interviewing for puts you in direct contact with the public, then your appearance will be of utmost importance. Your appearance must comply with the firm's public image. For most of these positions, a dress or sport coat and tie would be appropriate.

Retail Sales

Appropriate dress, when applying for a retail sales job, will range from a business suit to very

Business Dress Scale

	Formal/Conservative	Informal/Less Conservative
Suit/Jacket		
Style	Business suit*	Business separates**
Color	Dark	Light
Pattern	Solid or pinstripe	Tweed or subtle plaid
Fabric	Firmly woven worsted	Loosely woven
Shirt/Blouse		
Style	Dress	Button-down
Color	White	Pastel
Pattern	Solid or Tone-on-tone	Pinstripe or small print
Tie/Scarf		
	Foulard ¹ , pindot or single stripe	Club ² , paisley print, multistripe or knit
Shoes		
	Black tie (men), Black closed-in pumps (women)	Slip-on in black or brown (men), shoes with heel or toe out but not both (women)

* A vest is usually seen as a "high authority" item and is usually not worn unless you are interviewing for a position of president or other high authority position in the company.

** Business separates consist of a blazer or sport jacket and coordinated slacks or skirt.

Definitions:

¹ Foulard: solid color background with small geometric or abstract pattern woven into the tie. The designs are evenly spaced, often two colors, and close together.

² Club: solid color background with small objects such as ducks, horse shoes, golf clubs, etc. embroidered onto the tie.

casual clothes, depending on the product to be sold and the clientele. If applying for a sales position with a major computer company, a business suit would be most appropriate; however, it would not be appropriate for a job in the local hardware store. Casual slacks and shirt would be more appropriate in this instance.

Skilled or Semi-Skilled

When applying for a job in a skilled or semi-skilled area in

which work is done with your hands, the clothes for an interview can be more casual than when applying for a management or clerical position. A casual shirt, twill slacks and loafers would be quite appropriate for a man, and a blouse and skirt or slacks would be appropriate for a woman interviewing for a job of this nature. In most instances, a coat and tie is inappropriate when interviewing for a job of this type. Avoid being too casual. Do not

wear jeans, T-shirt and sneakers or a sundress. Clothes must be neat, well pressed, fit well and be in good repair.

Grooming

Your grooming is just as important as the clothes that you wear in making a good first impression. Be well groomed and look as attractive as you can. Shower, use a deodorant and brush your teeth just before going for the interview. If you must go to the interview directly from work or another appointment, freshen up just before the interview.

For Men:

- Clean and neatly trimmed hair will give a good impression. However, avoid that "I've just been to the barber" look. Select a hair style that is becoming to you and your type of hair. Hair should always look natural. If you are beginning to lose your hair, avoid combing it in an unnatural way to cover up the bald area. Most businesses prefer hair styles that do not touch your collar or cover the ears. Short sideburns that extend no longer than to the center of the ear are best.
- Beards are not recommended when going for an interview, unless they are widely accepted by the company. You will want to appear freshly shaven even if you have to shave twice the day of your interview. Be sure to trim unsightly hair from your nostrils and pull any visible hair from your ears.

Clothing Don'ts For Men

- ✗ Don't wear slacks too long or too short.
- ✗ Don't wear clothes that are soiled or need repair.
- ✗ Don't wear loud, flashy clothes.
- ✗ Don't wear a tie that is too short or too long. (The tip of the tie should end near the center of the belt buckle.)
- ✗ Don't wear clip-on ties, they are seldom the right length.
- ✗ Don't wear shoes that are not shined or have run-down heels.
- ✗ Don't wear clothes that are out of style.
- ✗ Don't wear too many patterns. (It is difficult to coordinate several patterns in one outfit.)
- ✗ Don't wear neck chains unless you know they are accepted by the firm.

Clothing Do's For Men

- ✓ Do wear socks that blend with your slacks and shoes.
- ✓ Do wear socks that cover the calf.
- ✓ Do wear clothes that fit well.
- ✓ Do wear clothes that are coordinated. (If you are not sure they coordinate in color, style, fabric and pattern, ask someone to help you.)
- ✓ Do wear clothes that are pressed.
- ✓ Do wear clothes that you feel comfortable in.

Clothing Don'ts For Women

- ✗ Don't wear clothes that are too tight.
- ✗ Don't wear see-through fabrics.
- ✗ Don't wear plunging necklines.
- ✗ Don't wear jewelry that jangles, dangles, or sparkles.
- ✗ Don't wear shoes that are scuffed.
- ✗ Don't wear skirts too short.
- ✗ Don't wear faddish clothes.
- ✗ Don't wear sundresses.
- ✗ Don't wear childish clothes.
- ✗ Don't wear wrinkled or soiled clothes.
- ✗ Don't wear clothes in need of repair.
- ✗ Don't wear a coat shorter than your dress unless it is a 3/4 coat.
- ✗ Don't wear a skirt with a slit higher than the knee.
- ✗ Don't wear clothes that show bra or slip.
- ✗ Don't wear front-opening wrap skirts.

Clothing Do's For Women

- ✓ Do wear clothes appropriate for the job.
- ✓ Do wear clothes suited to your figure type.
- ✓ Do wear clothes that go well with your personal coloring.
- ✓ Do wear clothes that are neat and well-pressed.
- ✓ Do wear clothes that you feel comfortable in.

- Hands and nails need to be clean and in good condition. Fingernails that are free of dirt and neatly trimmed even with the fingertips will add to your overall appearance. Use a heavy-duty hand cleaner to clean nails that are dirty from working outside or on a car. Hand lotion will keep rough, chapped hands from giving a bad impression when shaking hands.
- Some individuals are very sensitive to fragrances, so use them sparingly. If in doubt, it is better to use no fragrance than too much.

For Women:

- Clean hair that is styled to require little attention during the day is recommended for an interview. Hair longer than to the shoulders, partially covering one eye or considered sexy will not give a professional image. A hair style that says "I am here for business" is best.
- Make-up should be very natural and flattering to your personal coloring. Avoid heavy make-up that gives the impression you are going to a party. Use a make-up base that matches your skin color. The purpose of a base is to even out skin tone, not give a suntan. After applying a base and powder, a little blush, lipstick and light mascara may be all that is needed. If you use eye shadow and liner or other eye make-up, use it sparingly.

- Clean hands and nails that are in good condition will make a good impression. Nails no longer than 1/8" beyond the finger tips and neatly shaped are best for business. If you use nail polish, be certain it is subtle and compliments your outfit. Chipped nail polish will detract from your overall appearance. Avoid rough hands by using a hand lotion.
- If you like to use a fragrance, use it sparingly as some people are sensitive to fragrances. If in doubt, it is best not to use one.

Non-Verbal Communications

Most interviewers are very conscious of non-verbal clues that tell a lot about you and your potential job performance. Things to remember when going on a job interview:

- Always be on time for the interview. If you are delayed, call ahead to say why you will be late.
- Use eye-to-eye contact during your interview. Looking around during the interview will make

you appear uninterested in what the interviewer has to say.

- Good posture is essential. Sit up straight and avoid fidgeting. If you cross your legs make certain that you don't shake your foot.
- Avoid crossing your arms over your chest. Some interviewers interpret this to mean that you are not open-minded or receptive to new ideas.
- Don't lean on or put things on the interviewer's desk. This may be interpreted as not respecting other people's property.
- Do not jingle change in your pocket while standing.
- Be careful not to interrupt when the interviewer is talking.

Being appropriately dressed for the job interview is just the first step. Maintaining a professional image is essential to career advancement. You owe it to yourself, to your employer and to your profession to look your best.

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