

Dress For The Job You Want



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Chapter 1

Introduction

People make up their minds about an individual's talents and abilities in the first 30 seconds of an interaction. That interaction may have not even begun to be verbal before that 30 seconds is completed, hence, the first and lasting impression that you make will be defined by your appearance, demeanor and body language – all elements of interviews and interactions that are largely ignored.

It is tempting to believe, for example, that this is not true, frequently we heard while interviewing job candidates that attire was not critical to the job interview process. Here are some examples of feedback:

“I don't need to dress up for this job interview, it is a software company so no one cares”

“My role is not customer facing so I doubt dressing well would have much impact on my interview”

“I doubt a flashy accessory says anything about my skills and abilities”

Unfortunately, this simply is not true, in fact, quite the opposite: even for very technical roles dressing well for an interview can give you one leg up on the competition. Reflect on the last time you made a high end purchase or at least looked at an expensive item – would you buy a luxury item, even if it were branded, from a drab looking store. Something just wouldn't fit, how could something of quality be associated with plain surroundings.

For better or worse, people are wired up to take in visual images and match them against expectations, in this case, you want your image to create the expectation of job success, not just for the job you are applying for but also for future roles with your prospective employer. That is a critical subtlety often lost on job seekers – they often pick their outfits based on company dress policy for their function. The best companies expect to hire future leaders, even if it is in the call center, and you need to look the part to differentiate yourself.

Even companies that pride themselves on selling very technical products or cerebral consulting companies have clients and will expect their hires to make outstanding impressions, after all, they have no product outside of their people. It is these people that will drive the next round of growth of their companies.

Another mistake made by job candidates is under-investing in their attire. “I can't spend \$1,000 on a suit,” is a common and valid point. But, that is not an excuse. If funds are tight, shopping at a discount store for a suit is very feasible and making a \$400 investment in a suit that will help you earn more than a hundred

times that amount every year is a no brainer. If cost is still an issue, you can borrow items from friends or family.

Frustratingly, even MBAs with potential starting salaries in the six-figures sometimes under-invest; for these candidates dressing well is even more critical and the difference between a great job and a mediocre job is easily \$20K per year and even more importantly places you on a completely different career trajectory. A great first job will define your career – working at the right companies will set up your career for the rest of your life, even if you leave after a year to work in industry, the brand stays with you. So take advantage of the opportunity you have when interviewing and make your best impression, it's the only impression your prospective employer will have of you.

Chapter 2

Business Suit

The interview you have in a few days time is very important - it could mean a complete turn-around to your life. You so badly want to create the very best impression to secure the job. The problem is, you really don't know what to wear to the interview to create this great impression that you crave so badly. It is highly unlikely that you are the only person being interviewed for that particular job, so you want to make every effort to have one up on all other applicants, by dressing appropriately. So what do you wear to set you up for success?

The answer depends on what type of job you are going for, and what type of dress code the company is looking for in your interview. For instance, if the job you are interviewing for is in banking or consulting, say, then leaning toward the more traditional, conservative, style of dressing. On the other hand, work attire is usually a lot more contemporary in advertising, the arts, entertainment, and fashion, where what you wear is almost part of your portfolio and is expected to express more personality.

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The safest thing to do if you have any doubts is to dress up and not down, by wearing a two-piece matched suit. However, do remember that it is your skills and experience that should be the focus of your interview, and not what you're wearing. If part of your interview process requires you to attend an evening event or dinner, then business dress is your best bet, unless the invitation specifies otherwise.

Unless the job you are interviewing for is fashion related, then avoid obvious trendy fashion clothes. It IS very possible to achieve the elegant, professional look without having brand name labels where everyone can see them. If you stick to the guidelines in this book, you WILL achieve the look you are going for, no matter what your age. It will therefore not be necessary for you to try to look younger or older than you are - the outfit works!

The most common question I get from young women going to an interview is whether to wear pants or a skirt. When I started my career the answer was clearly skirt, but I think the balance has shifted over time and now both are good choices.

If you are in doubt as to whether to opt for pants or a skirt in your interview, spend some time taking notes on what other women in the industry are wearing by looking through trade publications, industry websites, or by asking the advice of some alums in the sector.

Even more important than the question of pants or skirt is making sure you wear the right pants or the right skirt.

Pants

Tailored pants suits are very appropriate for women to wear to

an interview, especially in cases where you are required to visit a site or you need to get in and out of a vehicle. The emphasis is on tailored and not flowing or tight fitting. Your aim is to look conservative, so make sure that the pants are neither too tight nor low-cut. At the same time you don't want the pants to be so baggy that they flap around like sails.

Flat front pants are not only very flattering, but are also ideal for work or interviews. Make sure that they have horizontal pockets with shallow pocket bags, as side pockets will make hips appear larger.

They should also be long enough to prevent your ankles from showing, and not so long that they wrinkle. To get pants the perfect length, take them to a tailor and wear the shoes that you plan on wearing to the interview so the tailor can make accurate measurements. The length will differ considerably depending on whether you are wearing heels or flats.

If your pants have pockets, keep them empty during your interview for the same reasons. If the pants are not made from a wrinkle-free material, make sure to press them properly, with creases, on the day of your interview.

Skirts

Skirts are a good choice too. But, there are a few important things to consider. You do not want to show a lot of thigh at your interview so make sure that your skirt length hit at or below the knee. With this length, when you are standing up, you WILL look both chic and professional as well. . To make sure that you are not showing a lot of thigh, put the skirt on and sit in front of a mirror

- what you see is what your interviewer will see as well. You should be totally comfortable when you sit down while wearing the skirt and not have to worry about pulling it down constantly in an effort to hide your thighs.

Wearing a longer skirt will also look professional, but you need to make sure that it is narrow enough to not billow, yet not too narrow that climbing stairs is uncomfortable to you.

If you do opt for a knee-length skirt, remember that a high slit is very inappropriate for an interview, while a small slit in the center back of the skirt is acceptable. A slit to the knee on a longer skirt to make walking and climbing stairs more comfortable is also acceptable. Do make sure to wear nylons if you are wearing a skirt.

Jacket

The safest choice for a jacket is to use a jacket made of the same fabric as you pants or skirt. More adventurous choices where you mix jackets can look great, but it is also easy to get wrong, so play it safe and go matching. Similarly you cannot go wrong with a classic two or three button jacket.

Your jacket should not be too short - a longer jacket looks more professional. Make sure that the jacket is loose enough to allow enough room for wearing a blouse underneath. A tight-fitting jacket will crinkle if you need to button it for



your interview - wearing a loose-fitting jacket will prevent this.

Like with your pants, if your jacket has pockets, make sure that they are empty at the time of your interview. The best approach is when you buy the jacket, if the pockets are sewn shut, never open up the pockets so you won't even be tempted and the jacket will better hold its shape. Keys and other items will make the pockets bulge and look very untidy. Very importantly, your jacket will

Biotech Blunder

Carry was a HR major for the University of Minnesota Business School with a background in laboratory management. She went to business school for a career change; coming from the laboratory, she understood the biotech industry well, unfortunately, she did not understand the nuances of big corporate culture.

Expressing interest in an HR role at a major biotech company, she received an invitation to meet with on campus recruiters. While she was nervous, she was confident that she could provide immense value on business and employee relations issues.

Unfortunately, both the lab environment as well as the typical business school environments were laid back and casual cultures, including their dress codes. On the day of her interview which occurred during the first day of on campus recruiting, she got dressed in her nice work clothes and proceeded to the interview suite at her school.

Carry was shocked to be surrounded by people in elegant and professional looking business suits – she was dressed in some nice khaki slacks and a sweater, hardly casual attire but certainly not business attire appropriate for a big corporate job. Recruiters are recruiting the next round of talent that will eventually run their company and Carry was dressed appropriately for running her lab, nothing more.

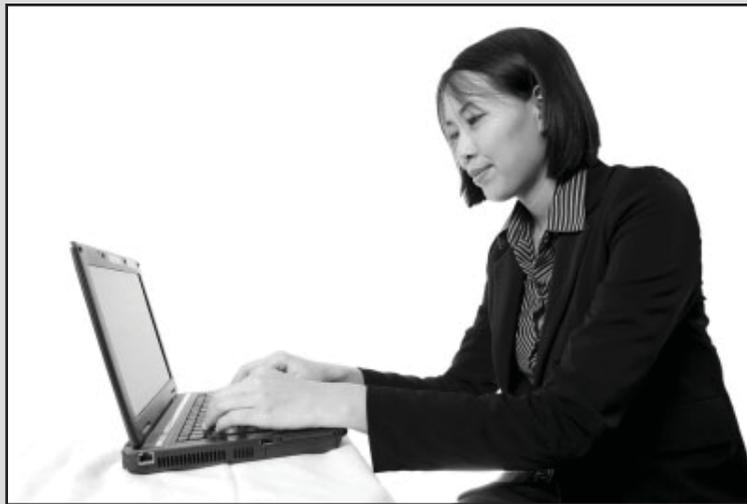
The recruiter was cordial although a little taken aback by her perceived casual interaction. By the end of the interview it was clear Carry had a passion for the business and could bring a unique perspective to the HR function at the company. What the interviewer lacked was a sense of confidence that Carry was the right person from a profile perspective.

A myriad of questions came to mind: when Carry interviews with senior managers, would they question the recruiter's judgement? Particularly given that Carry could not dress for the role, how could she be expected to understand the other elements of appropriate etiquette? What else was Carry missing from her suite of skills and abilities?

At the end of the interview, Carry was respectfully escorted to the door and Carry knew something was amiss. After the interview Carry ran into a friend from a tier one bank based in New York, she gave Carry some tips on dressing appropriately – it had never occurred to her friend that anyone would think of going to an interview in anything less than a polished business suit. After all, first impressions are the ones that last

and are often the only ones that matter.

Carry was turned down for a summer internship at the company but learned her lesson well. She never went to an interview again without being dressed appropriately. She purchased the best business suit she could afford and borrowed her banking friend's briefcase for her next round of interviews. These interviews went quite well, she felt well prepared and confident in her new attire. This impacted her performance in the interview and her ability to establish rapport quickly. She ended up landing a job at another leading biotech and retaining the lifelong lesson regarding dressing for success.



not look good unless you are wearing a suitable bra. Under-wire, contoured bras in nude are perfect, especially if you are wearing a white blouse. Avoid wearing a white blouse, as this will show through the fabric of the top you're wearing.

Colors

As far as the colors for your business suit goes, you cannot go wrong by choosing either navy, brown, black, or dark grey - all these colors are perfect for an interview. Definitely avoid bright colors, as this will be a distraction for your interviewer. Also, if the interview is of a formal nature then the buttons of your jacket should be closed. However, if your interviewer is more relaxed, then it is appropriate for your jacket to be unbuttoned.

Fabric

Although you are not expected to be able to afford the same type of clothes that the executives of the company would wear, you would be wise to invest in a suit of good quality fabric - the best that your budget will allow.

Wool and wool blends are excellent choices due to the fact that they can be worn in any season. In particular, the new wool blends that include a small amount of stretchy fabric like elastane or lycra work well, and tend to travel well.

Pure synthetic, such as nylon and rayon acceptable, but be discerning. Some of these synthetics can have too much sheen and look artificial. You want something that looks natural even if it isn't.

Distractions

Now that you are presenting at your elegant best, you want to remove anything that will distract from your person. If chewing gum is your way of dealing with stressful situations, then resist the

urge to do this to your interview - it is very distracting and unattractive. Also, don't enter your interviewer's office carrying coffee or a soda. In the first place, it is not professional, and secondly, there is a good chance that you will be offered tea or coffee during your interview.

Do not take anything electronic into your interview with the possible exception of a pacemaker. In particular do not take your mobile phone into your interviewer's office. If you must take it in, switch it completely off. Vibrate mode is contrary to popular opinion not silent.

Bad breath is very distracting and extremely off-putting so make sure to brush your teeth just before your interview, or you'll have your interviewer concentrating on your mouth instead of the important business of interviewing you! To make extra sure that you have a fresh breath during your interview, have a mint while you are waiting to enter your interviewer's office.

These distractions all get in the way of your interviewer getting to know the real you. So remove all distractions and let your true self shine.

Janet's Story

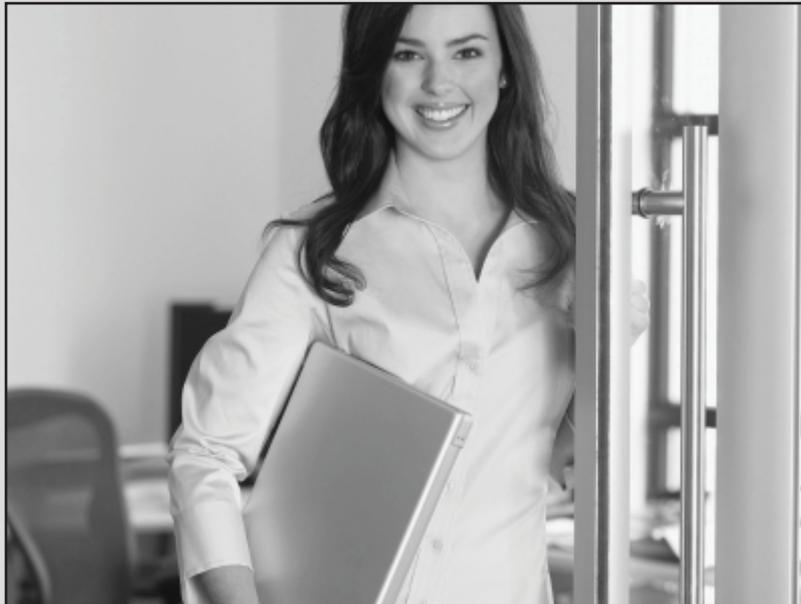
Janet was a 37 year old executive assistant to a Director level managers in a big company in St. Louis. While Janet enjoyed her work, particularly organizing her boss's activities and keeping him on point, she knew that a change was in order. She studied hard in night school and on weekends and eventually obtained her accounting designation. The company she worked in had various openings within finance and accounting, some of which were junior in nature.

Thankfully, the company had a policy of promoting from within and she had the support of the human resources department – they had paid for part of her schooling and had given her one half day per week to prepare for exams. Her boss was also appropriately supportive although he dreaded the day he would lose his superstar administrative assistant.

Janet completed her studies and explored opportunities internally. Being a lively and enthusiastic individual, she always felt it was most appropriate to express her personality in her clothing and appearance. Being in high school in the late 80's and early 90's, some of her style still reflected this era. Indeed, some of her clothing was from this era, the combination of the two made for a potentially disastrous combination. Of course, no one was going to tell her that she was not appropriately dressed for her role, no one in the company wanted to be turned in to HR for inappropriate commentary towards a female employee.

When it came time to interview, the accounting executives were appropriately impressed with her resolve at completing her studies part-time while holding down a job. However, she had no truly relevant accounting experience. This, coupled with the fact that she showed up to the interview dressed a little bit like Janet Jackson on her day off did not impress the rather conservative staff (although it provided private amusement for the break room crowd in the accounting wing).

Unfortunately, she never received the concrete feedback regarding interview attire and appropriate business etiquette that could have saved her from a failed interaction in a company that she loved.



Chapter 3

Blouse

Wearing a a business suit as we suggested in the previous chapter is the best and safest option. And to pair with the perfect suit, you need a blouse. The right blouse will compliment the suit, creating a soft contrast to the more structured suit.

Fabric

As with the suit, the fabric that the blouse is made from is of utmost importance. For you to stick to that conservative, professional look, there are a few things to consider. Make sure that the blouse you purchase is made from natural fabrics only, such as linens, cottons, or silks. Shiny fabrics are a definite no-no, as these will spoil the look of the suit that you have so painstakingly chosen.

Colors

Colors that you should go for are white, ivory, pastels, or any

other light, plain color that matches and compliments your suit. If you are undecided as to what color blouse to wear then purchase a white one. A white blouse looks clean, crisp, and definitely professional, and will give you the appearance of having a slight tan as well. Bright colors are not conservative, so avoid them at all costs. Light, subtle patterns are also considered appropriate. Your blouse or shirt should only have the top button undone, and the collar placed neatly over the lapels of your jacket.

Fit

Of course, no matter how perfect your blouse is, if it doesn't fit properly, then it won't look good at all. It should be well tailored and fit correctly. If the blouse is too tight, not only will it look wrong, but it will gape around the bust line as well, and feel very uncomfortable. If you are not comfortable in your clothing, it will show, and you will immediately feel less confident. So take a little bit of extra time to decide on what blouse you are going to wear - it's well worth the effort if it makes you look great and feel like a million dollars!



To make sure that your blouse will fit you comfortably for your

interview, try it on, lift your arms to shoulder height, bend your elbows, and move your elbows towards each other. If there is any tightness around your shoulders, rather opt for a blouse that is one size larger. This way, your blouse will not pull across your shoulders and will still feel comfortable under your jacket.

Style

Again, style is terribly important if you want to keep that professional look. It cannot be stressed enough that you need to look conservative when you go to your interview. So, what exactly is a conservative-looking blouse?

Low necklines that show too much cleavage, blouses with no shoulders or sleeves, and those with decorations such as ruffles, embroidery, lace, and so forth, should be avoided at all costs, as



Julie & the Low Glass Ceiling

Julie was an energetic sales rep from Tennessee with aspirations for a managerial position with her company. She sold frames for eye glasses with great success – her clients were mainly male and appreciated her bubbly personality. She was known for her low cut blouses and showing a little leg – hardly inappropriate but definitely pushing the limits for business attire.

While her attire most likely contributed to her be-

ing able to obtain face time with her male clients, her bosses were women with a long history of sales experience. Many of the higher up executives in her company were in their 50's and were very conservative. This never phased Julie Ann, she always felt that she added something special by dressing in a provocative fashion. While she was not a top performer, she had consistently made her numbers over the years and felt overdue for a promotion.

However, she was consistently passed over and often wondered why. The executives found her a bit forward in her dressing and personality and while they appreciate her contributions in terms of sales numbers, they were not very interested in her as a manager. There was always a question regarding fit with a managerial role although the issues that were raised during the interview process never outlined her style of dress.

Julie could have done a lot to change the impression she was making with management – she could have shifted her attire to make it more business like when not in front of clients. Expressing her individuality is possible and definitely should not be lost in the process, however, expressing this individuality without keeping her audience in mind held her back.

these will immediately make you look too casual. In other words, the plainer, the better, and don't show too much skin. Doing this will ensure that your interviewer is not distracted in any way, and will actually be looking you in the eye during your interview!

Your blouse should have long sleeves and have buttons up the front. You definitely don't want to show cleavage during your interview, so make sure to button your blouse up two buttons above the cleavage line.

“ The culture and trends today are more relaxed, but the some worlds like accounting have stayed conservative. Know your audience, but we suggest that conservative is always better. ”

Anthony Herrer

Director of Accounting Internships

Baylor University-Hankamer

terview, so make sure to button your blouse up two buttons above the cleavage line.

As neatness is vital to your professional look, make sure that your blouse is short enough to fit under the jacket or that it can be comfortably tucked into your skirt or pants. The last thing you need when you leave your interviewer's office is that your blouse is hanging out of the bottom of your jacket at the back!

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As neatness is vital to your professional look, make sure that your blouse is short enough to fit under the jacket or that it can be comfortably tucked into your skirt or pants. The last thing you need when you leave your interviewer's office is that your blouse is hanging out of the bottom of your jacket at the back!

Make sure on the day of your interview that your blouse, like the rest of your outfit, is clean and wrinkle-free. Even if you paid a lot of money for your outfit, if it looks as if it has just come out of the laundry basket, your chances of landing that job you are after will be lowered drastically.

To keep to that polished look that you need at your interview, make sure that your clothes have no missing buttons. Check too for stray bits of fluff that might be sticking to your outfit. If the clothes you are wearing to your interview were newly purchased, then it would be a good idea to check for and remove any external tags, as well as tacking stitches, if any.

Elena's Story

Elena was an Eastern European admit to the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business. She was extremely aggressive during the recruiting season, making frequent trips to New York to interact with the investment banking community. This took a considerable amount of work, managing her school course load and showing up for interviews with prospective employers as well as attending all of the on campus and off campus events was more than a full time job. She studied diligently, particularly because she did not have a corporate banking background, she was from a little known accounting firm in her home country.

Elena had the added stress of not having the funds to pay for her business school fees, she had to borrow the entire amount which, while not unusual in the United States, was something that she personally was not accustomed to doing.

The stress levels were high for many people in her class, but particularly for her given her background and the fact that she had to obtain work in a new country during a down economy. While she did not have the financial resources to purchase the best suits, she had made sure that she was appropriately dressed for interviews, at least as much as she could afford.

On the second day of interviews she had in New York, she did not check her outfit prior to entering the offices of a prestigious investment bank on Wall Street. Little did she know

that she had a long string that hung off of the upper arm on her right side. Every time she went to shake someone's hand, this string made its presence known!

She noticed that some interviewers were glancing at her in an odd manor and made sure to check her appearance before starting the second half of her day. She quickly fixed the issue in the ladies room and moved forward with her interviews confidently. Elena eventually received several offers from top tier investment banks and ended up paying down her loans quickly after business school – the returns on her invested time and effort paid off handsomely.

Chapter 4

Hosiery

If you are wearing a skirt as part of your business suit, then it is essential that you wear hosiery. Love them or loathe them, they will complete that professional appearance you are striving for, so for those couple of hours, wear them. It must also be mentioned that even if you notice that the employees of the company dress casually, you are not one of them - yet. Once you have become part of the staff, then you can go casual - but for your interview, stay conservative and professional.

When you go into a store with the idea of purchasing hosiery for your interview, you will be met with a huge variety of hosiery - so many different styles and colors that you will find quite daunting. How on earth do you choose which pair to purchase for your interview?

Actually, it's not that difficult to purchase hosiery for your interview. As with the attire mentioned in the previous chapters, keep it conservative. This means plain, with no patterns, sheer and not

opaque, no wild colors, no thigh highs with seams, and very definitely not fishnets! You are purchasing hosiery for an interview - not a party.

Your safest bet is to stick to neutral colors that are as close to your natural skin color as possible. These would normally lean to natural, beige, or tan - don't be tempted to buy white - they just don't work! If you are still undecided as to which to purchase, then ask for some help from an assistant. Just make sure that you DO purchase the correct hosiery for your interview.

Whether you have white, blotchy legs, or those that are beautifully tanned, it is important that you wear hosiery to your interview to look professional, feel feminine, and know that you are dressed in a way that will definitely impress.

As with the rest of your attire, your hosiery should fit properly. If they are too large, they will sag and bunch around your ankles and look very unattractive. There is always a chance that you will snag your hosiery before your interview, so make sure to bring an extra pair in case of an emergency.

The last thing that you want to happen during your interview is that your interviewer becomes distracted because the tops of your hosiery are showing. This can very easily happen when you sit down and cross your legs while wearing a skirt. Prevent this from happening by wearing pantyhose to your interview. Pantyhose will also prevent you from constantly tugging at the top of your hosiery in an attempt to keep it in place. Once you have the job you can get rid of them!

Maybe hosiery is not something you enjoy wearing, but, if you

want to create that professional look and raise your chances of getting that job, then accept that it is necessary to complete the picture if you are wearing a skirt.

“ Dress like you want the position, not like you already have it today our society is more casual in general but that doesn't necessarily translate well to career interviews. ”

Dawn Clark
Career Counselor
Pacific Lutheran University

Chapter 5

Accessories

Now that you have that perfect business suit with a blouse that looks amazing, you need accessories to enhance your appearance even more. A few pieces of jewelry and the correct purse, bag, or briefcase, will do enough to keep you looking professional, and yet not be distracting to your interviewer.

Jewelry

The trick here is to not go overboard with jewelry, but to keep to the conservative look - remember, less is more! In fact going sans-jewelry is fine and if in doubt, go without.

You will definitely be wearing a watch to your interview - punctuality is of utmost importance! A conservative-looking ladies watch is perfect - just make sure that the alarm is switched off so that it does not beep during your interview!

Wedding rings and engagement rings are always acceptable for job

interviews. If you want to wear more jewelry, limit this to one ring per hand, and make sure that the ring, necklace and earrings are a matching set. Remember, subtle is the key to conservative-looking jewelry, so keep it as plain as possible, with earrings small and not hanging below the ear lobe. Plain and simple jewelry with pearls is also very appropriate to wear to an interview.

When wearing jewelry, real gold or silver only, as cheap jewelry will spoil your whole look. If you do not have real gold or silver, then wearing no jewelry at all is your safest bet. This means no plastic or acrylic beads, and definitely no dangling earrings.

If you are young and hip and have plenty of piercings, then those that are visible should definitely be removed and left at home. Tongue and eyebrow piercings just don't fit into the conservative mould! One set of earrings can be worn, as long as they are plain and simple, such as pearls. Also, avoid armfuls of bangles - they are noisy and will take your interviewers attention away from your interview.



If you have any doubts as to which type of jewelry is acceptable, aim for minimal and elegant, or better still, wear none at all.

Bags and Briefcases

If you need to carry a briefcase to your interview, then it is not necessary to carry a purse as well. Whatever you usually carry in your purse can go into your briefcase on the day of your interview. Just make sure that if you have your cell phone in your briefcase,

to turn it off before your interview.

Your briefcase should be conservative, clean and polished, and preferably black leather. If you cannot afford leather, then a good leather-like material is also quite acceptable, as are micro fiber and fine woven materials. Canvas bags or bags with prints are not appropriate for an interview.

Of course, your briefcase should be well organized and not bulging with unnecessary items. It should contain only your important documents such as your resume, pen, and paper. Don't take the bag that you use everyday to your interview - more so if it is filled with your belongings - buy a purse especially for your interview if you need to.

If you are a college student, then do note that a backpack is definitely not appropriate to carry into an interview - if you have one with you, then leave it at reception.

If it is not absolutely necessary for you to carry a briefcase, then a small, plain purse will be totally acceptable. Your purse should match the color of your shoes and belt, if you are wearing one. Your purse should not be one of those that you would use to the beach or a party - brightly colored and covered with dolphins, for instance. It should also not be one of those huge brand-name bags either - when you leave the office after your interview, your interviewer should remember you and your skills and not your fancy fashion accessories.

Chapter 6

Shoes, Hair and Make Up

Shoes, hair and makeup (SHAMU) more than awaken passion in students I coach. Many of my students have their own personal style and strongly resist any change. But, this is another case of less is more. You want to be noticed, but for your accomplishments - not for what you wear. S

Shoes

Your shoes, like the rest of your outfit, should be conservative in order to complete the professional appearance you are going for. They should be of plain leather or fabric, without patterns or decorations, and should have closed toes. Avoid snakeskin or textures, and make sure that your shoes fit properly. Very importantly as well, make sure that your shoes are not noisy when you walk - the receptionist will announce your arrival to your interviewer!

Stilettoes are very feminine, but are more appropriate for a party. The shoes you wear to your interview should either be low-heeled

pumps or have heels no higher than about two and a half inches. Brand new shoes are risky to wear to an interview as they could cause blisters or pinch your feet, causing you to hobble when you walk. This is neither comfortable nor will it create a professional appearance - get around this by wearing your new shoes a few days before your interview. Avoid wearing chunky platform shoes as well - they have been known to cause wearers to fall over!

Boots of course, are definitely not interview material. If the weather is cold and you need to wear boots, then take a pair of closed toe pumps with you, to change into before your interview. Strappy sandals, even in the height of summer, are also a no-no. Sneakers of course, should not even be considered.

Your shoes should not be brightly colored, but rather a dark color, one shade darker than the color of your suit, and should match the color of your purse and belt - if you are wearing one.

If you already have the perfect pair of shoes to go with your suit, and don't need to purchase a pair, then inspect them the night before your interview. See that the heels aren't scuffed, and if necessary, clean and polish them - you should be perfectly clean and well groomed from top to toe, to create the best impression possible.

Hair

Very obviously, you should first make sure that your hair is perfectly clean. If you normally have a fashionable, way out hairstyle, then make sure to tone it down for your interview. It might be a good idea to go for a whole new look and have your hair cut especially for the interview.

Either way, your hair should be well styled, neat, and professional looking, with no large hair clips, bows, or other decorations. Don't wear sunglasses on your head - this is completely inappropriate for an interview. As eye contact is essential during your interview, make sure that your hair does not cover your face in any way, especially your eyes.

Ladies with long hair should wear it in a style away from the face - a ponytail, single plait, or a bun - you don't want to be constantly flipping your hair back during your interview - this will be distracting to both you and your interviewer.

As it is important that you attend your interview with a well-groomed hairstyle, if there is a remote chance of rain or snow on your big day, carry an umbrella to protect your carefully styled hair from frizzing and being ruined.

Make Up

Unless you are one of those extremely fortunate ladies who look totally amazing as they wake up in the morning, you will definitely need to wear make up on the day of your interview. Natural is definitely best, but as there are few of us who can get away with this and still look good, a little make up works wonders - for the way you look and your confidence as well.

Again, the key to achieving that professional look is to be as conservative as possible with your make up - keep yourself looking as natural as possible. Your foundation should be as close as possible to your own skin tone, with a soft shade of lipstick, no false eyelashes - just some mascara. If you wear eyeliner, make it as subtle as possible. Eye shadow, if you have to wear it, should be skin

toned as well. Finish it off with a hint of blush on your cheeks, and a light dusting of powder - to prevent your cheeks and nose from becoming shiny.

Make sure to use daytime colors only in order to create that polished, fresh look. Dramatic colors might look stunning on you, but are not appropriate for an interview. Also, when applying your make up, do so in a bright room, as near as possible to the type of lighting in the office of your interviewer.

If you can get away with wearing no eye shadow, then do it, as eye shadow sometimes smudges and causes dark circles around the eyes. Definitely steer clear of eye shadows that contain glitter, and false eyelashes - these are only for parties and when you go out clubbing. In short, make sure that your make up is not too noticeable by keeping it natural and simple.

Hands, Nails, and Perfume

Your hands and nails will be exposed all the time, so it is very important that you pay particular attention to this detail. Your nails should not be too long, and they should of course be clean. Sheer polish is the best, but if you feel like you need a little color, then beige or pink will be appropriate - definitely no designs on your nails, or glitter-effects at all!

As far as perfume goes, your usual deodorant will be sufficient. Again though, if you want to use perfume, then use it very sparingly, as there is always the chance that your interviewer does not like the perfume, or worse still could be allergic to it! If you are in doubt, then to be on the safe side, rather don't wear any perfume at all.

Above all, if you are a smoker, then have your last cigarette about two hours before your interview, before getting dressed for your interview - you really don't want to smell like smoke as you enter your interviewer's office! You look beautiful from head to toe - complete the picture of confidence and professionalism by adding a smile to your perfect make up.

“ The way you dress for a meeting is an indication of how you perceive the importance of the interaction. ”

Al Cotrone
Director, Career Center
University of Michigan

Chapter 7

Business Casual

Aaaaagh. The dreaded business casual - seemingly an oxymoron. Less fitted and structured than a suit, but still projecting professionalism. But, how? So lets try and crack the code.

While business casual attire is usually more comfortable than formal office wear, you should still aim for that neat, professional, conservative look. It is advisable to stick to conservative colors for your business casual attire - if you want to add a bit of color to your office clothes, then make use of a scarf, or a brooch perhaps, to brighten up your outfit.

As there is no strict definition for business attire, different companies have different ideas as to what business casual attire for women really means. Your best bet is to confirm with the company what they consider business casual attire to be, and then work around that. This way, you will be sure to wear the correct clothes for the position you hold, and there will not be a risk of you dressing too casually for work.

Very importantly, on days where you are to attend meetings, make sure that you wear formal business attire.

Blouses

A good quality white shirt or blouse is of course the best for office wear. However, for business casual you can veer away from this slightly. Colored or print blouses are quite appropriate business casual wear, as long as it is not too loose or too tight. Also, if you are wearing a print blouse, then make sure to wear a solid color jacket or cardigan over it. Cotton, silks, and blends are perfect fabrics for business casual blouses.



There is a cotton-spandex blend blouse that is available that prevents you

having to tuck in your blouse. They have collar and cuffs and a nipped in waist that, provided you have purchased the correct size, fits great, and has a tailored look as well. If you do decide to include one of these tops as part of your business casual wardrobe, make sure that you do not get one that is too tight - it will cause the buttons to gape and you will not look neat and professional at all.

Velvet or shimmery blouses are not appropriate office wear for women, and definitely no blouses or shirts that show too much cleavage. Your blouse or shirt should be neat with buttons up the front, and the collar should not be too large.

Keep your blouse or shirt as plain as possible - you still want to go for that conservative, professional look. Also, the plainer your blouses, the easier it will be to mix and match your working clothes from day to day. As for the sleeves of your blouse, it is usually best to wear three-quarter or long sleeves, but for business casual, short sleeves and cap sleeves are perfectly appropriate in some companies.

Steer clear of sequins, glittery fabric and too many frills, ruffles, and embellishments. Tank tops, strappy tops, and t-shirts should be avoided at all costs. Stained, faded, or broken blouses are of course completely out of the question. Tight fitting, sleeveless, or sheer, suggestive blouses or shirts are totally inappropriate attire for the workplace.

Dress Trousers

Your business casual trousers should not consist of the latest fashion trends, but should still lean toward the conservative look. They should be neither too tight nor too loose, but have a well tailored cut and should have solid colors, such as navy, black, grey, brown, or khaki, and should fit you well. For that proper business-like appearance that you want, make sure that your trousers are always pressed with a crease. Avoid wearing pants that are too loose, as they will immediately make you look sloppy. The trousers can be of various types of fabrics such as linen, linen blends, cotton, cotton blends, wool, and gabardine. Twill and corduroy are also

appropriate fabrics for your business casual wardrobe.

Some businesses accept long shorts or city shorts as office attire for women, but you should check with the company policy before wearing them to your workplace. If denim is accepted at your place of work, then go for the darker denim, as it gives a less casual appearance than the lighter colors. Again, keep the jeans that you buy as plain as possible, with no embroidery, fancy buttons, or other forms of decorations. Skinny pants of course are an absolute no-no, as are short shorts and leather pants as well.

One pair of black tailored pants is an absolute must for your business casual wardrobe, as it goes with absolutely any other color and always looks good.

Sweaters and Knits

Wearing a twin sweater set with your dress trousers is a great way to be casual at work, but at the same time still have that professional look as well. This of course is provided that the twin set is tailored, fits your body properly, looks dressy, and does not show too much cleavage. Remember too, that knitwear that you would wear to a party or nightclub should be kept for that purpose only, and is definitely not appropriate to wear to the office.

Your sweaters and knits can be round neck, roll neck, or v-neck as long as it does not show cleavage. Keep to the classic neutral colors, and you cannot go wrong.

As with the blouses and shirts, your sweater, cardigan, or twin sweater set should be a solid color, free from decorations, too many frills, and other embellishments. Make sure before you wear your knitwear that it is stain-free, clean, and has no loose threads,

hanging from it.

Jackets and Blazers

If the weather is slightly chilly and you have a need for a jacket, then wear one over your knitwear by all means, as long as it is not a bright color and has no distracting details either. Your jacket should fit comfortably over your blouse, and be neither too loose nor too tight. Too loose and it will look too big for you as well as untidy, and too tight will have the buttons gaping, should you need to close them.

Jackets for business casual attire can be tweed, leather, or suede - depending on your body type, and the best style to work with are those jackets that are tailored to fit in the waist, and are hip length. Plain solid colors are considered perfect for business casual attire - a black jacket is of course, a must - other dark colors are also acceptable. Denim jackets are considered too casual for business casual office wear.

You might even find it necessary to wear a coat as well. Again, this is perfectly appropriate, but make sure that the coat is longer than the jacket you're wearing, and is a simple style, with no brand name labels on the outside of the coat.

Shoes

The most important thing about your shoes is of course, that they be totally comfortable. It's no good if they look absolutely fabulous but cause you to limp through your day at the office - this is definitely not a professional look! If they are new shoes, then make sure to wear them in at home a few days before wearing them to the office.

Appropriate colors for shoes are black of course, navy, brown, tan, or taupe. The shoes you purchase should match the colors of your business casual pants and jacket.

If the weather is hot and you want to wear sandals to work, do make sure that they are a comfortable fit and match the conservative look of the rest of your outfit. Very importantly too, ensure that your feet and toenails are clean and well manicured.

Thin straps, stilettos, platforms, and shoes with chunky heels should not be part of your business casual attire for the office - they are simply inappropriate and will not give you the professional look you are going for.

In colder weather it is perfectly appropriate to wear boots as long as they are plain and one or two inches below the knee. You can also opt for shorter ankle boots if you prefer. Black or brown are perfect colors for footwear for business casual attire, but off-white is also appropriate, as long as it matches the rest of your outfit. Of course, if you are wearing a belt, it should match the color and fabric of your shoes.

Plain and simple closed toe leather shoes, with heels no higher than two-and-a-half inches, will be perfect and allow you to be comfortable and at the same time walk with confidence. Your shoes should always be clean and polished, with heels that are not worn down or scuffed.

