Dress for Success

Women
Why so much to-do about what to wear?

It’s important to understand that what you wear is a reflection of you. In business and professional settings, you want your choices to signal that you understand what is appropriate.

- You want to demonstrate respect for the employer (and yourself)
- Shows you are trying to “adapt” or “fit in” with company culture
- During the recruiting process, appropriate attire demonstrates you understand what the employer expects
- Once employed, you represent the company, always remember that!
Business Professional Guidelines

Keep in mind – the latest fashion isn’t always appropriate for business.

• Neutral colored suit in navy or another dark color with matching skirt or trouser that is properly fitted; should be comfortable to move in and not too tight.
• A skirt should be knee length when standing.
• Blouses should be conservative in color and fit properly.
• Natural/clear or neutral nail polish/nails no longer than one half inch.
• Showing cleavage is not business appropriate.
• Basic pumps with 1”-2” inch heel (no strappy sandals or platforms).
• Simple jewelry. Conservative watch. No visible body piercings.
• Minimal makeup in conservative tones.
• Minimal (or no) perfume.
• Light briefcase or portfolio case; if purse, small and matching suit.
Potential pitfalls...

**Skirt Length:** Your skirt should cover your thighs when you are seated. Showing a lot of thigh makes you look naive at best, foolish at worst. A skirt that ends at the knee when you're standing looks chic and professional.

Longer skirts are professional too; just make sure they are narrow enough not to be billowing, but not so narrow that you can't climb stairs comfortably.

Don't purchase a skirt or decide on a hem length until you sit in the skirt facing a mirror. That's what your interviewer will see, and what others will see when you are seated in a waiting area prior to your interview. Ask yourself whether it will be distracting or reinforce your image as a person who looks appropriate for a business environment or gathering. High slits in skirts are not appropriate. A small center-back slit in a knee-length skirt is appropriate.

**Pantyhose:** In most business casual environments, pantyhose are not required. Nude hose are recommended for skirts that are knee-length (or just above) and in some more formal environments.
Business Casual
Business Casual Guidelines:

*Crisp, neat and appropriate even for a chance meeting with the CEO (not clubwear or picnic attire)*

- Conservative pant or skirt in solid color.
- Sweater set, or button-down or round-collared blouse. Shimmery material and velvet are not business appropriate.
- Cleavage is not business appropriate.
- Jewelry/scarves should be simple.
- Cosmetics should be neutral. Nails should be short and have natural/neutral polish.
- Leather or fabric shoes. Closed-toed heels are best for a conservative look. Low heel. No strappy sandals or spike heels.
When to wear: BUSINESS CASUAL

Business casual means neat and appropriate dress that is classic rather than trendy

- On-Campus Employer Information Sessions
- Atrium Meet and Greet sessions
- Club or student organization networking events
- In-person informational interviewing
- Some off-campus networking events (ask about attire prior to attending)
Keep in mind....

**Suits/ dresses: Look for...**
- Classic fabrics (wool, wool blend, silk, cotton), patterns, and colors that are always in style and easy to accessorize.
- Dresses in solid color or conservative print.
- Contoured jacket collar that fits smoothly around the neck with no space between it and your shirt.
- Smooth, straight seams and hems.

**Suit care: Be sure to...**
- Hang suits on wooden or plastic contour hangers. Leave your jacket unbuttoned and be sure to empty pockets.
- Leave space between hangers so garments will be free of wrinkles.
- Read and follow the care instructions on your garment.

**Blouses/ shirts:**
- Tailored blouses/shirts, not a lot of frills or ruffles.
- Solid color or conservative prints to coordinate with suit.

**Shoes:**
- Wear low heeled pumps that coordinate with your suit/dress.
- Keep shoes clean and in good condition
Shop Smart!

✓ Buy clothing that can be used in multiple settings.
✓ Choose neutral and classic items.
✓ Select clothing items that are made of quality and easy to maintain fabrics, which can also travel well.
✓ For women, choosing to purchase a three-piece suit is always a good option because you can alternate between a skirt or pants look.
✓ Avoid purchasing trendy items that will go out of style easily and quickly; choose classic styles that are professional and timeless.
✓ You don’t need to shop for your business attire at name brand, expensive stores; quality and professional items can easily be found at Target, J C Penney, Kohl’s, Sears, Macy’s, Men’s Warehouse, and other common retail locations, discount stores, and department stores.
✓ Plan ahead; don’t wait until the last minute to purchase your professional business attire. Stores have great sales on attire throughout the year.