

DRESS TO IMPRESS

A guide on how to dress the part

A significant part of a hiring decision is based on nonverbal elements in an interview; handshake, eye contact, body language, posture, listening skills, clothing, grooming and accessories. Don't overlook the power of a good first impression. People make amazing assumptions about your professional credibility and potential performance based upon your appearance during a first meeting. It's very difficult to overcome a poor first impression, regardless of your knowledge or expertise.

To be successful, research and practice for the interview and carefully plan the professional image you want to project. If you come to an interview dressed professionally, you will feel a sense of confidence and others will sense your self-assurance. Many employers interpret your appearance in terms of what you know about the world around you and what attention you give to detail.

General Guidelines

- Less is more. Keep your look simple and successful until you become accustomed to the environment and learn about the company's dress code.
- Remove facial and body piercing other than single ear jewelry for interviews.
- Select apparel, jewelry, hairstyle, etc. that do not detract from your professional image. The interviewer's attention should be focused on what you say and your qualifications. Avoid overwhelming fragrances or use none as some fragrances cause allergic reactions for people.
- Apparel should fit well and remain in place while sitting and/or walking; and clothing should be clean and neatly pressed.
- Visible tattoos should be covered to avoid distraction.
- Make sure your hair is clean, neat and professionally styled. Avoid hair styles that cover your face and ones you have to continually brush back.
- Wear shoes that are well maintained; the way you take care of your shoes says a lot about you. It tells people if you pay attention to detail or have a tendency to let things go.
- Dress for the position you want, not the position you have. Company decision makers have said many times that even if people have the knowledge it takes to assume a position, if they don't look the part, they are passed over!
- Make sure your hands are clean and well groomed. Avoid using bright nail polish and art.

Guidelines for Men

- Wear a matching suit in navy, black or gray (pinstripe or solid) or wear a navy blazer and gray dress slacks. They serve as a visual background that draws the eye to the face.
- Wear white or a light blue (for example), dress shirt that contrasts with the jacket and/or tie. Typically, arms should be covered to the wrist. Exposing arms by rolling up your sleeves is interpreted as less powerful and is less formal.
- Wear an undershirt under your dress shirt. Why? There are four reasons: 1) An undershirt worn beneath a dress shirt makes a white shirt look even whiter; 2) it adds body to the dress shirt; 3) it keeps even a lightly starched shirt from itching; and 4) it protects the dress shirt from perspiration.
- Minimize jewelry. Avoid a necklace. Wear no more than one ring per hand and a dress watch. Be sure all jewelry supports a focus on the face.
- Well trimmed hair and facial hair is expected.
- Your briefcase is part of visual effect; consider a simple portfolio as an effective substitute, and try to select a color that supports your visual effect.
- Socks should be calf length or above the calf.

Guidelines for Women

- Select a skirted suit, pantsuit or conservatively tailored dress that draws the eye to your face. Skirts are traditionally knee-length but those slightly shorter or longer are also acceptable.
- Select blouses or sweaters that provide visual interest, but avoid transparent, tight fit, or have low necklines, revealing waistlines or details that detract from your face as a focal point. Typically, arms are covered at least to the biceps and often to the wrist.
- *Always* wear hose to interviews. Wear plain-style hosiery and select colors that flatter your coloring. For traditional industries, wear a neutral color. Carry an extra pair in case of runs.
- Use natural looking makeup and clear nail polish.
- Many women make the mistake of wearing too many accessories at the same time such as earrings, necklaces, and rings. These can accentuate your personality and can be an asset if worn in moderation. A scarf or necklace is an effective way to focus on your face. Keep it simple. Avoid dangling earrings and wear no more than one ring per hand and a dress watch.