

Dress & Grooming for Job Success



Many of us object to being judged for employment based on how we look. We prefer to be hired because of our skills and abilities, not because of our dress and grooming. **BUT** like it or not, appearance is important.

While the college campus may be the perfect forum in which to exhibit your flair for the latest in fashion style, the interview is not the place to do so. Even though many companies have relaxed the internal company dress code, interviews still follow the conservative standard.

Do not go out and buy a whole new wardrobe. Go for quality over quantity. One or two well-chosen business suits will serve you all the way to the first day on the job and beyond. Then, when you are making some money (and have a chance to see what the standard "dress" is for the company), you can begin to round out your wardrobe. If you have only one sharp outfit and desire some variety within a limited budget, you might consider varying your shirt/blouse/tie/accessories as a simple way to change your look without breaking your wallet!

Employers hire people they believe will "**fit**" into their organization. Skills, experience, and qualifications are important, but so are dress and grooming. Your appearance expresses motivation and professionalism. When in doubt, err on the conservative side and make a statement of who you are. Your clothing and grooming should create the image that will help you get the job offer.

First Impressions

Most of us have heard the expression, "**A picture is worth a thousand words.**" Remember this when preparing to meet with a prospective employer. The picture you create will greatly influence your chances of being hired. Most employers form a first impression during the first seven seconds of a meeting. Not much is said in this short time; early judgment is based strictly on appearance. Furthermore, studies reveal that employers consistently ask the question, "Does the individual look right for the job?"

Some basic guidelines to follow are:

- Be clean and neat, including your fingernails, teeth, shoes, hair and face
- Conservative two-piece business suit in a basic color
- Empty pockets; no bulges or tinkling coins/keys, etc.
- No gum, candy or cigarettes
- Light briefcase or portfolio case
- No visible body piercing (nose, eyebrow, tongue, etc.) -wear minimum jewelry and cologne
- Arrive ten minutes early and arrive alone
- Smile; be friendly
- Demonstrate a positive attitude
- Use good eye contact
- Shake hands firmly
- Use good manners
- Don't interrupt and don't argue!
- Don't chew gum
- Take resumes and/or other pertinent information

Clothing

The clothes you wear affect your attitude and confidence levels. When people take the time to dress for success, they tend to feel good about themselves. Image alone will not win the job offer, but it will go a long way in building respect.

There are no absolute rules regarding dress. Your selection will vary based on your occupation, location, and preference. A business suit for a construction job or overalls for an office job would not be appropriate dress! The goal is to look the part, and your appearance should be consistent with your occupation. Neat, clean work clothes would be suitable for assembly, production, or warehouse positions. Sales and office positions require business clothes. A conservative suit would be the recommended style for professional and managerial positions.



Common sense and good taste are the best guides in selecting clothing for the interview. Avoid faddish styles and loud colors. Jewelry should be conservative and kept to a minimum. Clothing should fit comfortably. You want the employer to focus on your skills, not on your clothes.

Grooming

Personal grooming is just as important as what you wear. You may select the right clothes, but neglecting personal hygiene can ruin the image you wish to present. Review the following grooming checklist before meeting with the employer.

ITEM	GROOMING
Hair	Clean, trimmed, and neatly combed or arranged.
Facial Hair (men)	Freshly shaved; mustache or beard neatly groomed.
Fingernails	Neat, clean, and trimmed.
Teeth	Brushed and fresh breath
Breath	Beware of foods which may leave breath odor. Beware of tobacco, alcohol, and coffee odor. Use a breath mint if needed.
Body	Freshly bathed/showered; use deodorant. Remove body piercings, tongue rings, and cover tattoos if possible.
Make-up (Women)	Use sparingly and be natural looking.
Perfumes/ Colognes/ After Shave	Use sparingly or none at all. Your "scent" should not linger after you leave.

Goals of Appropriate Dress and Grooming

The primary goal is to "feel good" about the way you look and project a positive image. When you feel good about yourself, you naturally convey confidence and a positive attitude. These nonverbal messages are as important in the interview as the verbal skills you use in selling your qualifications. Persistence and follow-up are the keys to a successful job search. If you are serious about employment, plan your follow-up. There is no such thing as a wasted effort, and the only dead lead is the one you chose to kill. Situations change and the employer who is not hiring today may be looking for someone with your qualifications in the future.

An interview isn't a beauty contest, but how you dress and your overall appearance almost always get noticed by the interviewer. Don't give the interviewer a chance to rule you out because you didn't feel like ironing your shirt or polishing your shoes. Dress in a business-like, professional manner, and you will be sure to fit in wherever you interview.