

# Business Attire Resource Guide

## for Interviews and Beyond



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Not sure what to wear to business events, such as an interview? Know what the difference is between formal business attire and "business casual" attire? Here is a basic guide to building your business wardrobe for interviewing and on-the-job.

# Interviewing

## For Women

### Suits

- Choose a solid colored suit in a conservative style. Navy, black and dark gray are best for most industries.
- For versatility, consider buying a suit that has a jacket with both matching pants and skirt or dress.
- Pants are becoming more acceptable. Consider wearing a skirt suit for an interview, however, in conservative professions or if you're not sure pants are appropriate.
- Jackets may be single or double breasted; short or long. Choose a style that looks best on your body type. Avoid flashy buttons or trim.
- Knee-length skirts are most appropriate. Skirt should be no higher than 2" above the knee. Test fit by sitting down.

### Stockings

- Always wear pantyhose. Choose nude colors.
- Avoid ultra-sheer.
- Make sure there are no runs in your stockings and carry an extra pair in your briefcase in case of emergency.

## For Men

### Suits

- Conservative single-breasted, two- or three-button jacket
- The jacket can be with or without a vent, but avoid two-vent jackets.
- Choose dark, solid colors -- black, dark gray, charcoal or navy in a tightly woven fabric. In some industries, olive, pin-stripes, or glen plaid may work. Avoid flashy or showy fabrics.
- Pants should be pleated and cuffed.
- Make sure your suit is altered to fit properly -- sleeves should break just below your wrist.
- Have your suit pressed to keep it looking crisp.

### Ties

- Purchase at least two good quality silk ties. Once you have the job, expand to seven or eight.
- Colors should work back into your suit or work well with the shirt. A simple pattern is best for interviews.
- The tie should end at your belt line.
- Use a double Windsor knot to minimize a bulky appearance.

### Socks

- Match your socks to your suit, shirt or tie.
- Solid colors are better. Black or navy is best.
- Socks should be high enough so no skin is visible when you sit down and cross your legs.

### Tops

- Tailored blouses in solid colors are best.
- Look for fabrics that resist wrinkling and staining. Washable fabrics may be best.
- Don't wear sleeveless blouses and dresses.
- A silk or fine-gauge wool sweater shell can replace a blouse.

### Shoes

- Basic pumps (no higher than 2" – 2½" heels)
- Black, navy or neutral colors for shoes
- Make sure leather shoes are well-polished.
- Always look for comfort when purchasing shoes and practice walking ahead of time.

### Accessories

- Limit jewelry to two pieces at most.
- Scarves are an inexpensive way to change an outfit's look.
- Carry a neat bag, preferably a briefcase, that matches your shoes. Avoid having multiple bags (e.g. purse, briefcase, etc.). Don't carry your backpack.

### Shirts

- Purchase at least two good quality dress shirts for interviewing. Once you have the job, expand to seven or eight.
- White or light blue wrinkle-free cotton is a good choice for shirts.
- Never purchase polyester or polyester blend shirts.
- Collars should be stiff but comfortable (too loose looks unprofessional; too tight, you'll feel like you're choking).
- If buying a shirt with a pointed collar be sure that it has collar stays or can be buttoned down.

### Shoes

- Have one pair of basic black or brown shoes.
- Always keep your shoes polished and well-maintained.
- Wingtip shoes are more conservative. Lug or platform soles are not as professional. Ground down soles are out!
- Make comfort a priority.

### Accessories

- Belts should match shoes.
- If you wear suspenders, don't wear a belt.
- Limit jewelry to watch and wedding ring.
- Carry a neat, matching briefcase or padfolio. Avoid backpacks.

# Professional Attire

## Women

### Business Professional

#### Suit

- Avoid trendy styles
- Jacket sleeve length should fall ½ inch below wrist
- Neutral Colors: black, grey, brown, navy



#### Pants

- Pants are good for site visits
- Capris and cropped pants are not appropriate



#### Skirt

- Skirts should be knee length and not too tight
- Avoid high slits



#### Shirt

- Blouse or camisole
- Preferred colors are white or light colors
- Cleavage should not be showing



#### Shoes

- Avoid open toed shoes or sandals
- Wear basic pumps with a low heel, 1-2 inches high
- No stilettos or platforms
- Wear neutral hosiery or trouser socks



## Women Business Casual

### Jacket

- You may wear a blazer or suit jacket with pants or skirt
- Trendier or casual suits are also appropriate



### Pants

- Dress pants or khakis are acceptable
- Avoid capris



### Skirt

- Should be knee length and not too tight
- Avoid high slits



### Shirt

- Blouse
- Sweaters including knit sweater sets and cardigans



### Shoes

- Avoid open toed shoes or sandals
- Heels or flats are acceptable



## Men Business Professional

### Suit

- Suit should be solid or have subtle pinstripes
- Jacket should be buttoned while standing and unbuttoned while seated
- Avoid double breasted jackets
- Neutral Colors: black, grey, navy, brown



### Pants

- Jacket and pants must match
- The pant leg should touch the front of the shoe and fall above the heel in the back



### Tie

- Conservative colors are most appropriate
- Length: tie should reach your belt



### Shirt

- White or muted shirt with collar
- Long sleeves
- The sleeve of shirt should extend ½ inch beyond the suit jacket sleeve

### Shoes

- Polished, leather shoes
- Wear dark socks that match shoes and are calf length



## Men Business Casual

### Jacket

- A sports coat without a tie



### Pants

- Khakis
- Solid color slacks



### Tie

- Tie may be worn with long sleeve collared shirt
- Conservative colors are most appropriate



### Shirt

- Shirt with collar
- Sweater
- Polo Shirt (this is more casual, appropriate for outdoor or hot temperatures)



### Shoes

- Oxfords or loafers
- Wear dark socks that match shoes and are calf length



## Accessories

### Women

#### Jewelry

- Should be simple -avoid big, dangly earrings
- Wear only one pair of earrings
- Maximum of one ring per hand



#### Handbags

- You may use a small and simple purse or professional bag
- No backpacks or large purses



### Men



- Be conservative with watches and other jewelry
- Earrings might not be viewed positively
- Match belt to shoes



## Other Tips

- All clothes should be neatly ironed
- Suits usually have tacking stitches to hold vents in place before purchase; make sure these are removed
- You should also carefully inspect for dangling threads, lint, and missing buttons
- Tattoos and piercings (other than ears) should be covered
- Bring a portfolio with copies of your resume, transcript, a notepad, pen, and your list of questions for the employer