

Business Attire Tips for Interviews and Beyond



Not sure what to wear to business formal events, such as an interview? Here is a basic guide to building your business formal wardrobe.

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.

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.

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.

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.