

Business Attire Resource Guide

for Interviews and Beyond



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.