

WORK ATTIRE

Even though we would like to think that our skills and abilities alone get us the job, appearance does count. First impressions are made within five minutes of meeting someone and help shape all future impressions, so it is important to dress professionally. When meeting potential employers, it's helpful to dress for the job you want.



LEARN THE EMPLOYER'S DRESS STYLE

For an interview:

In general, it's best to lean towards traditional business wear for an interview. You can learn more about the company to gain more insight into what to wear.

- Research the organization's culture. Some employers like accounting, finance, and law tend to dress in business professional clothing. A more creative employer like advertising or education might offer more flexibility.
- Look at the organization's brochures, website, and employees to guide your dress. What style of clothes is being worn by people who work there?

At a new job:

Before starting a new position, it's a good idea to reach out to your supervisor via email or have a conversation to inquire about the company's dress code policy and typical attire. Some companies may not have a formal dress code or might have an outdated one. Additionally, expectations for dress can vary for different events or on certain days that might be more casual.

Remember...

- Always try on your entire outfit prior to the interview day.
- Don't forget to look at the back of your outfit to ensure you have a polished look
- Dress codes still apply over zoom. Although your whole body is not usually visible, what is in view should still follow the dress code.
- These are customs of the U.S., but clothing expectations may vary by location.

Avoid:

- Overly large accessories
- Heels that are three inches or higher
- Any clothing with profanity or possibly offensive imagery or phrases
- Ill-fitting clothes
- Stained or damaged clothes and footwear
- Improper grooming
- Ripped clothing
- Tight clothing
- Transparent clothing

BUSINESS CASUAL

Business casual is very common and appropriate for many interviews, client meetings, and office settings. This is usually an appropriate way to dress if you're unsure about the setting. Start simple and adjust as you feel out your new workspace.

Where you might find it: Media and marketing firms, non-profits, education

- Dress pants, pencil skirts, or khaki trousers
- Modest dresses: knee-length or longer with a high neckline
- Sweaters, blouses, button-down, or polo shirts
- Sport coats, blazers, and cardigans
- Oxfords, loafers, mules, boots, heels, or clean sneakers
- Accessorize with jackets, ties, simple jewelry, scarves, and belts.

On a Budget: Much of what you already own can be elevated to business casual when paired with traditional business professional pieces such as blazers, sports coats, and dress shoes that can be mixed and matched to create a variety of outfits.



BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

Business professional is a traditional form of attire used in more conservative settings or companies with strict dress codes.

Where you might find it: Government, finance, law

The expectations of business professional are the most standardized and are generally the same anywhere you go.

- Matching pant suit or skirt suit in dark neutral colors
- Button-down shirts or blouses
- A necktie, scarf, belt, and minimal jewelry
- Dress shoes, black or brown (depending on your suit)
- Modest dresses, slacks, skirts

On a Budget:

This dress code emphasizes simplicity, so there's no need to invest in a large wardrobe. Start with one or two suits and a few button-down shirts or blouses to mix and match, and a pair of dress shoes.



CASUAL OR SMART CASUAL

Casual attire is informal clothing that may be worn in business settings and in many settings outside of work. You should avoid wearing casual clothing to an interview, even if the office is casual overall. **Smart casual** is a newer term to describe a dress code in between casual and business casual in level of formality.

Where you might find it: Small companies, the arts, tech companies

- T-shirts, button-down shirts, blouses, and sweaters
- Khakis, linen pants, cropped pants or shorts
- Sneakers, loafers, low heels, or sandals.

On a Budget: Many of the clothes you already own likely fit into a casual dress code. Be sure the pieces are still appropriate for the workplace (See What To Avoid on page 1).



EXPRESSING YOURSELF IN THE WORKPLACE

Feeling confident at work is key to success! One way to boost your confidence is to develop a work wardrobe that reflects you. The guidelines laid out in this guide are just a starting point. Finding pieces that fit within the guideline but are made in a color, pattern, or texture you love can show off your unique personality. Accessories such as jewelry or ties can be a way to add some personal style in settings where the dress code is stricter. More permanent forms of self-expression like dyed hair, tattoos, and piercings are becoming more accepted in many industries. Always be sure to check the policy at your workplace to make sure you are still following guidelines.



TIPS FOR GENDER-NEUTRAL DRESSING

Historically, office dress codes have been heavily gendered, but today, there's more flexibility to express yourself professionally without conforming to traditional norms. Opt for items and styles that are commonly worn by women and men such as blazers, slacks, sweaters, jeans, button-up shirts, loafers, and sneakers. Be sure to choose these items using the general parameters of the office dress code, such as business casual.

