

Dress for Success

And Get an Edge On Competition

By Robert Bellucci, P.E. and David Coreen

The interview for your dream job is tomorrow and the butterflies are fluttering in your stomach. You are confident that this interview will result in a job offer and want to ensure you make a good visual impression to work with your great resume. How you dress for the in-person interview can be an important part of the first impression as it often reflects your respect for the interviewer, the company and yourself.

Your dress often signals to the prospective employer how sincere you are about wanting the job and your values and attitude. Unless the prospective employer tells you otherwise, dress in your “Sunday best” clothes. You should never have to apologize for how you are dressed. Wearing club or flashy clothing with your shirt not tucked or buttoned sends a clear message that work may not be your top priority. Make your appearance either a neutral or positive factor in the interview and never a negative. You want an edge that will result in a job offer. So what do you wear to ensure you send the right message about you?

Men:

- For an office position, dark colored, two-piece (single breasted) business suit; Clean and pressed; Ensure the suit fits well
- No lapel pins supporting controversial causes or addressing political issues
- Solid white or light colored long-sleeve shirt; Clean and ironed; Cuff links are optional
- Simple necktie; No loud colors or bold patterns; Avoid clip-on or bow tie
- For a field or general labor position, wear a long sleeved, solid color shirt and slacks; No jeans
- Dark colored leather shoes that match your suit or slacks; Clean and polished; Soles in good condition
- Socks that match your shirt; No holes or snags
- Belt that matches color of shoes; No gaudy or large belt buckles
- Fresh haircut; Comb your hair before you enter the interview
- Fingernails clean and clipped
- No or minimal cologne or aftershave
- Wrist watch and simple ring; No expensive or flashy jewelry, bracelets, rubber bands or earrings
- Cover exposed tattoos with a bandage, if possible

Women:

- For an office position, a dark colored, two-piece business suit; Clean and pressed; Don't wear tight-fitting clothing

- Skirt suits are preferred and skirts should be no more than two inches above the knee; Avoid Koulats or form-fitting pants
- White or light colored long-sleeve blouse or sweater with a conservative neckline; Scarf is optional
- Simple, closed-toed shoes with low to medium heels; Avoid metal taps on heels
- Skin-colored hosiery
- For a field or general labor position, long sleeved, solid color blouse and skirt or slacks; No jeans or tight-fitting clothing
- Minimal make-up; Skip the eye shadow
- Simple earrings; No dangles or multiple earrings
- Well-groomed hair
- Nails polished and appropriate
- No or minimal perfume or cologne
- No additional rings, bracelets, necklaces, or piercing jewelry; Jangling bracelets are distracting to the interview
- Cover exposed tattoos with a bandage, if possible
- Carry a small purse containing only basic needs

Money Saving Tip - If you find that your wardrobe closet is lacking for an appropriate outfit for the interview, try a local consignment shop or charity organization thrift store. They often have clean, fashionable outfits at very reasonable prices.

We have seen our fair share of interviews start poorly and taint the interview because of inappropriate dress. You may very well be the most qualified candidate, but imagine if someone less qualified got the job because that person wore a suit and you chose to wear your jeans and a polo shirt. You just don't get a second chance to make that first impression a good impression.

Oh, and one last thing, wear a smile. People like friendly people; no one wants to work with a grouch.