



Dress for Success

Ready Reference ♦ G-3

College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology ♦ Career Services

People tend to be visual--and interviewers are no exception--so how you present yourself in terms of dress and grooming will shape the interviewer's first impression of you, and can be a deciding factor in whether or not you get the job. An interviewer will make assumptions about your competence, abilities, trustworthiness, and personality based on your appearance. Thus, for any interview, a conservative and neat appearance is the safest choice.

Clothing: (Men)

The majority of interviews will require you to wear a suit. A smart job applicant will invest in a good-quality suit in black, dark gray, gray, or navy blue. Solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics are safer than bold prints or patterns. A two-piece suit will be sufficient in most instances.

Before you try the suit on, gather and squeeze the fabric to see if it will wrinkle easily. If it does, the suit is not for you. Remember, you may have more than one interview a day, and may be required to spend time sitting and waiting, perhaps in a hot place. Your suit should stay looking as freshly pressed at the end of the day as it did when you first put it on. A good 80/20 wool-polyester blend is both resilient and multi-seasonal.

Once you have just the right suit, pair it with an unstained, well-ironed and starched, long-sleeved shirt, preferably in white or solid light blue. Be sure the collar is comfortable since unbuttoning your top button in an interview is not appropriate. Cotton or cotton/poly blends are appropriate. Also, an undershirt is a very good idea.

Your ties should be conservative in length, width (medium), and design: you want the interviewer focusing on your ideas, not your tie. Bright ties bring focus to your face; therefore a simple pattern is best. Do not wear bow ties or clip-ons, and make sure the tip just covers your belt buckle. 100% silk is the best bet in terms of quality and ease of care. For larger men, using a double Windsor knot will bring balance to your appearance.

Shoes are important, too: always buy leather, preferably brown or black. Lace-up or slip-on styles are fine, but avoid wearing boots to most interviews. Be sure your shoes are freshly polished before the interview. The socks you pair with your shoes should also be dark, and should complement the suit. Make sure to buy over-the-calf socks with good elastic to avoid the top of the sock showing if you cross your legs. Choose a belt to match your shoes closely; it should be plain and have a small, simple buckle.

Clothing: (Women)

The majority of interviews will require you to wear a suit. A smart job applicant will invest in a good-quality suit in dark gray, gray, navy blue, black, or taupe. Avoid suits with any kind of pattern. Although patterns are permissible, a solid-colored suit will satisfy all purposes.

Before you even try the suit on, gather and squeeze the fabric to see if it will wrinkle easily. If it does, the suit is not for you. Remember, you may have more than one interview a day, and may be required to spend time sitting and waiting, perhaps in a hot place. Your suit should stay looking as freshly pressed at the end of the day as it did when you first put it on. A good 80/20 wool-polyester blend is both resilient and multi-seasonal. If your suit has a skirt, it should be knee length.

Once you have just the right suit, pair it with a light-colored blouse. A tailored blouse will be more flattering and less bulky. The blouse should not be tightly fitted or revealing. No undergarments should be visible.

Your shoes should be leather, closed-toe pumps with a low to medium heel. The best way to choose a shoe color is to have the shoe match or be darker than the hem color of your skirt. Make sure your hose are lighter than your shoes; in fact, try to match your skin tone. Check for runs carefully, and it wouldn't hurt to carry a spare pair in your purse.

Ideally, you should carry personal items in a pocket of your briefcase to avoid any confusion with straps. Make sure the pocket can be sealed or zipped. If you must carry a purse, it should be small and have a shoulder strap. The color should match your shoes as closely as possible. For women, black shoes and bags are an excellent choice.

A Few General Tips:

- Be clean and use unscented deodorant liberally.
- Arrive early. In a restroom, check your clothes, hair, hands and nails, and face: corners of eyes, nose, and teeth. Carry and use a travel mouthwash.
- Take off your jacket prior to an interview or while traveling to keep it neat and wrinkle-free and to keep yourself cool.
- Keep jewelry conservative.
 - For men, a good quality watch with a metal or leather strap and one ring on your ring finger is acceptable.
 - For women, a good quality watch with a metal or leather strap, one pair of small earrings, preferably studs, and a matching necklace is acceptable. One ring per hand is permissible, preferably on your ring fingers.Any evidence of body piercing should be removed, with the exception of a single earring in each ear for women.
- Hair should be neat and recently cut. Facial hair should be cleanly shaved.
- Nails should be neatly manicured. Women should avoid overly long nails and should keep nail polish colors simple, preferably clear and un-chipped.
- DO NOT wear scents: wear unscented deodorant and do not wear cologne, aftershave, scented hairspray, or perfume.
- Women's make-up should be light and simple, and appear as natural as possible.
- Carry breath mints with you, but don't use them during the interview. DO NOT chew gum during the interview.
- Glasses should not be tinted. It is important for an interviewer to make eye contact with you.

Finally, when you are impeccably groomed, make sure you have good directions to the interview. Always try to arrive early in order to have time to check yourself and take those important few minutes to compose yourself and mentally prepare for the task ahead by going over your notes.