



ADULTING 101

DRESS FOR SUCCESS



Dressing for Success: What You Need to Know

Business Professional

In an office that requires business professional attire, professional dress is required. Most frequently, women are expected to wear a skirt or pants suit with heels or dress shoes. Men would most frequently wear a blazer or suit jacket with a button down shirt, tie, dress pants, and dress shoes.

Business Casual

Business casual attire is a bit more flexible than business professional. In this setting, men usually wear dress shirts, button down shirts, or polos with khakis or dress pants. Women may wear dress pants with a blouse or a dress or skirt at below knee length with a sweater or blazer. Both men and women would wear appropriate work shoes.

Specific Advice for Women

- Do not wear jeans, leggings, or jeggings (unless office culture permits you to do so).
- Jewelry and makeup should be conservative.
- Avoid overly fragrant lotions and/or perfumes.
- Follow the rule of 13 (count earrings, necklaces, rings, watch, bracelets, scarves, belt, pins, etc).
- Dresses and skirt should be no shorter than the knee.
- Make sure all clothing is neatly ironed.

Specific Advice for Men

- Keep facial hair neatly trimmed.
- Wear dark colored socks and dress shoes.
- Avoid overly fragrant colognes.
- Make sure all clothing is neatly ironed.

Understand Office Culture

Some offices have a strict dress code while others allow for more freedom and flexibility in the work place. While on your first day it is important to overdress, following that it is best to follow office culture. For instance, if all of your coworkers wear jeans and t-shirts everyday, you can start to feel comfortable doing the same. Each profession and workplace has a different expectation so it is best to take cues from your coworkers and supervisors.

Business Casual vs. Professional

Have an interview or professional event coming up? Learn how to decode dress code.

The infographic illustrates the differences between Business Casual and Professional dress codes. On the left, a woman is shown in Business Casual attire, and on the right, a man is shown in Professional attire. Callouts provide specific guidelines for each.

Business Casual (Woman):

- Suit Jacket or Cardigan Can Be Added for a Classy Look
- More Colors & Patterns Acceptable
- Khaki Pants, Nice Trousers, or Fingertip-length Skirt
- Flats or Heels Acceptable
- Low-Heels Acceptable
- Keep Colors To: (Black, White, Grey, Brown, Blue)
- Suit Jacket or Business Dress
- Skirts & Dresses Extend to Knee

Professional (Man):

- Jacket or Vest Can Be Added For Classy Look
- Collared or Polo Shirt
- More Patterns & Colors Accepted
- Tie Optional
- Khaki Pants or Nice Trousers
- Dress Shoes
- Keep Colors To: (Black, White, Grey, Brown, Blue)
- Suit or Sports Jacket
- Suit Pants or Nice Trousers

Tips for Success in Any Business Situation

- 1 When in doubt, dress conservatively.
- 2 A suit (suit & tie for males) will suffice in most situations
- 3 Make sure your outfit is wrinkle-free.
- 4 Stick with solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics or simple patterns.
- 5 Accessories should be kept simple: basic pumps, modest jewelry, light make-up & light perfume.
- 6 Wear a belt and a watch.
- 7 Be sure your hair is neatly trimmed or groomed. Avoid the "messy" look.
- 8 Shirts with lettering or graphics should not be worn.
- 9 Check your outfit for missing buttons, lint, or a crooked tie.
- 10 A skirt should be no shorter than the tips of your middle fingers (or just above the knee for good measure).

PURDUE CCO