

Professional Dress Guide

WHY PROFESSIONAL DRESS MATTERS

Professional attire helps create positive first impressions, demonstrates respect for the opportunity, and can increase your confidence. While dress expectations vary by industry and employer, presenting yourself in a clean, polished, and professional manner allows employers to focus on your qualifications and potential. Remember: The goal is not to change who you are, it's to ensure your appearance supports your professional goals.

PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE BASICS

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Regardless of the event or dress code, personal hygiene is an important part of professional presentation.

Recommended

- ✓ Shower regularly
- ✓ Wear clean clothing
- ✓ Use deodorant
- ✓ Maintain good oral hygiene
- ✓ Keep nails clean and well-groomed
- ✓ Ensure clothing is free of stains, wrinkles, and strong odors

Avoid

- ✗ Excessive cologne, perfume, or body spray
- ✗ Clothing with visible stains or damage
- ✗ Strong odors from smoke, food, or pets

HAIR

Professional hairstyles can vary widely. The key is that hair appears intentional, clean, and well-maintained.

Recommended

- ✓ Clean and groomed hair
- ✓ Hair styled so it does not distract from communication
- ✓ Natural or fashion colors if maintained professionally

Consider

Some employers and industries may have specific safety requirements regarding hair length or facial hair.

JEWELRY & ACCESSORIES

Accessories should complement your appearance rather than become the focus.

Recommended

- ✓ Watches
- ✓ Simple necklaces, rings, bracelets, and earrings
- ✓ Professional portfolios or padfolios
- ✓ Belts that coordinate with your outfit

Use Moderation

- Large statement jewelry
- Excessive accessories
- Items that create noise or distractions during conversations

MAKEUP & GROOMING

Professional makeup and grooming choices should enhance confidence while remaining workplace appropriate.

Recommended

- ✓ Natural or polished makeup looks
- ✓ Well-maintained facial hair
- ✓ Clean-shaven appearance if preferred

Remember

Professionalism is less about a specific style and more about appearing intentional and well-groomed.

UNDERSTANDING DRESS CODES

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

Business professional attire is the most formal workplace dress code commonly expected for interviews, career fairs, networking events, and corporate environments.

When to Wear It

Career fairs | Interviews | Networking events | Presentations | Corporate office settings

Suggested Pieces

Tops

- Blazer
- Suit jacket
- Professional blouse
- Dress shirt
- Button-down shirt

Bottoms

- Matching suit pants
- Dress pants
- Professional skirt

Dresses

- Business dress
- Dress paired with a blazer

Shoes

- Dress shoes
- Loafers
- Flats
- Professional boots
- Closed-toe professional footwear

Example Outfit Combinations

Option 1: Blazer + dress shirt + dress pants + dress shoes

Option 2: Professional dress + blazer + flats

Option 3: Suit jacket + matching pants + professional footwear

Common Colors

- | | | |
|---------|--------|--------------|
| • Navy | • Gray | • White |
| • Black | • Tan | • Light blue |

BUSINESS CASUAL

Business casual maintains professionalism while allowing greater comfort and flexibility.

When to Wear It

Mock interviews | Job fairs | Internships | Most office environments | Employer site visits

Suggested Pieces

Tops

- Polo shirt
- Button-down shirt
- Professional blouse
- Sweater
- Quarter-zip sweater
- Cardigan

Bottoms

- Khakis
- Chinos
- Dress pants
- Professional skirts

Dresses

- Casual professional dresses
- Dresses paired with cardigans

Shoes

- Loafers
- Flats
- Clean professional boots
- Professional sneakers (if appropriate for the workplace)

Example Outfit Combinations

Option 1: Polo + khakis + loafers

Option 2: Button-down shirt + chinos + professional shoes

Option 3: Professional blouse + dress pants + flats

Option 4: Dress + cardigan + professional footwear

INDUSTRY CONSIDERATIONS

Not every industry expects a suit.

Commonly Business Professional

- Finance
- Accounting
- Banking
- Law
- Government
- Healthcare administration
- Corporate business roles

Often Business Casual

- Agriculture
- Natural resources
- Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Construction
- Education
- Nonprofit organizations

Research Before You Go

Review:

- Company website
- Social media pages
- Employee LinkedIn profiles
- Event instructions

When uncertain, ask the employer or Career and Professional Development staff.

What to Avoid

Regardless of dress code, avoid:

- X Clothing with offensive language or graphics
- X Excessively wrinkled clothing
- X Visible stains
- X Pajamas or loungewear
- X Extremely revealing clothing
- X Dirty or damaged footwear
- X Hats indoors (unless culturally or religiously significant)
- X Sunglasses during conversations

Quick Guide by Event

Event	Recommended Attire
Career Coaching Appointment	Casual
Job Fair	Casual to Business Casual
Mock Interview	Business Casual to Business Professional
Career Fair	Business Professional
Interview	Business Casual to Business Professional (depending on industry)
Networking Event	Business Casual
Internship	Follow employer expectations
First Day of Work	Slightly more professional than everyday workplace attire

Final Tip

The best professional outfit is one that fits well, is clean and comfortable, and allows your skills, experiences, and personality to shine. When you feel confident in your appearance, it becomes easier to focus on building connections and pursuing opportunities.

