DRESS TO IMPRESS - WOMEN’S WARDROBE

How you dress for an interview can convey a lot of information to a potential employer. Plan ahead and use care when choosing your outfit. Remember that it is always better to be overdressed than the alternative. Follow these simple guidelines and you will be dressed to impress!

SUIT: Suits should be a dark, neutral color such as gray, black, brown, or navy and can have a small, subtle pattern. Wool and wool blends are classic fabrics that work year-round. Your skirt should be at or just below the knee. Your jacket should be tailored to fit, and sleeves should end at the joint of the wrist and the hand. Dresses are not recommended for the interview. Avoid short skirts, tight jackets and skirts, and overly trendy styles. If you feel comfortable doing so, call the company’s human resources department and inquire about expected interview attire. This is not an unusual practice!

SHIRT: Your shirt should be white or a shade that complements your natural coloring and the color of your suit, in a material that does not look shiny or unnatural. If ironing stresses you out, a sweater shell can replace a button-down shirt and remain wrinkle-free under a suit. A simple gold necklace or small string of pearls is a nice touch.

FOOTWEAR: Sheer stockings or pantyhose in a skin tone give a professional look. The best shoes are simple, classic pumps with a 1- to 2-inch heel. The main criterion is that you can walk quickly and steadily. Shoes should be of high-quality leather in black or the color of the suit. They should be dark, clean, and polished.

ACCESSORIES: Less is best! Your jewelry should consist of no more than post earrings, one ring at most per hand, and a simple necklace. Make sure your jewelry doesn’t “jingle” when you gesture or move. Wear a classic watch with a leather or metal band.

You may want to purchase a professional leather portfolio and nice pen. If you carry a purse, it should be of good quality, preferably leather (avoid canvas purses, etc.). Purses should also be large enough to carry a wallet, small cosmetic bag, and keys but not big enough for your gym attire. They should never be as small as a “clutch.” Try to leave your backpack in a waiting area if interviewing on Grounds.

MAKE-UP, ETC.: Make-up should be used to enhance your natural features and should not detract from the professionalism of your outfit. Steer clear of frosted or bright lipstick, eye shadow, or nail polish. Avoid long, acrylic nails. Keep your hair neat and out of your face. If it is long, you may want to pull it back. If you use mousse or hairspray, keep it very light. Avoid perfume because the recruiter might be allergic to it.

DRESSING FOR THE RECEPTION

The formality of recruiting receptions varies considerably from one company to the next. The promotional materials or invitations to the reception will normally indicate the appropriate attire. In the absence of any dress guidelines from the company, the best approach is to dress in business attire, as you would for an interview.
A GUIDE TO CASUAL BUSINESSWEAR

Pantsuits are a nice compromise between formal businesswear and completely casual wear. Not only do they appear put-together and professional, but they can also be dressed up or down. Choose a dark neutral shade such as black, navy, brown, or gray and opt for pants with a bootleg cut. Pair them with a classic blouse or light sweater for a more casual look.

Stock up on different tops to give your wardrobe a bit of versatility. Crisp, cotton shirts in white and pale hues instantly add a casual element to your dress pants or khakis. Cardigan twin sets are an easy way to present a softer look while still looking professional.

WARDROBE TIPS FOR THE WORKPLACE

- The same color outfit adds length to the body. Monotone colors make you appear taller.

- Suits are appropriate for interviews and special presentations. Dresses are a good choice for everyday wear in the office. Dresses can be layered or worn with a jacket.

- Pay attention to the detail of accessories such as belts and jewelry that convey a sense of personality, style, and professionalism when coordinated properly. Accessories should be in proportion to your size.

- Shoes are a continuation of your outfit. If you wouldn't wear a wrinkled shirt, why wear scuffed shoes?

- Prior to your first day of work, check with human resources on the company dress code. Some organizations may not permit open toe-shoes or sleeveless tops and dresses.

Commerce Career Services, 2011