

Dress for Success

Career Development Center, Ventura College



While each industry and company has different standards for workplace attire, it is still important to get familiar with go-to standards to help you shine during the interview and after you land the job. This handout will help you:

- Dress appropriately for your workplace
- Keep it polished & clean for interviews
- Get organized & feel confident

DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR YOUR WORKPLACE

1. Let the corporate culture of the company be your guide

If people generally dress in professional business attire to go to work, so should you. Research the company's culture and environment by visiting the company website and social media to see if there are photos of employees.

2. Ask your contacts & recruiter about the dress code

Know someone who works at the company? Ask about the dress code. When speaking with the recruiter or interview coordinator, ask about the dress code to plan appropriate attire.

3. Dress to impress- err on the side of overdressing

Company research is important, and follow any particular instruction given to you by the recruiter. However, it is typically best to err on the side of overdressing for the interview, dressing a step up from the daily office attire regardless of the informal environment of the company. That may mean dressing a bit nicer than your prospective coworkers or even the interviewer. Even if you are interviewing at a tech startup where most people wear jeans and t-shirts to work, opt for business casual attire.

KEEP IT POLISHED & CLEAN

1. Pay attention to details

Make sure you always look polished. Do not show up in wrinkled, stained, ripped or ill-fitting clothing. This includes combing your hair, brushing your teeth, and trimming nails. Consider keeping a small grooming kit and mints with you for any last-minute touch-ups you may need.

2. Keep it simple

You want the attention to be on you, not your attire. That means going easy on jewelry, makeup, hair and clothing. Stay away from "outrageous" colors and patterns, as well as pieces that show off too much skin.

3. Use minimal or no perfume/cologne

People may be sensitive to scents, so it is important to shower and apply deodorant for a clean smell but avoid strong odors/scents.

GET ORGANIZED & FEEL CONFIDENT

1. Have a dress rehearsal

Always try on your interview clothes before the day of the interview to help prevent any possible wardrobe malfunctions and give you time to troubleshoot or dry-clean items ahead of time.

2. Invest in a padfolio or professional bag/briefcase

Keep your resume copies and notes organized during the interview and help add some character or a pop of color.

KNOW DRESS CODE LINGO

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

Business professional usually means some variation of a suit. While company cultures have changed in some fields, if a company requires standard, professional business attire these are safe go-to items to have on hand:

- Conservative skirt or pant suit with a coordinated long sleeve button-down shirt or blouse
- A professional business dress paired with a blazer or suit jacket
- Conservative tie, dark socks, pantyhose (optional), dress shoes, flats or pumps
- Solid, neutral colors

BUSINESS CASUAL

Business casual attire is less formal than traditional business professional clothing but still professional enough to be office appropriate. You can also easily add a jacket or blazer to these styles for important meetings. Below are examples of the types of clothing you can mix and match for business casual outfits:

- **Tops:** Collared and sleeved tops, button-down shirts, wrap-around cotton blouses, dressy tops, sweaters or vests, sheath dresses in neutral and solid colors
- **Bottoms:** Semi-formal pants, dress slacks, pencil-cut or knee-length skirts, dark jeans (ideally when paired with a blazer)
- **Shoes:** Closed-toe flats or heels, classic leather tie-up shoes, loafers

What NOT to Wear: Casual sandals, extra high heels, casual boots, worn/torn clothing, light denim, spaghetti straps

CASUAL

Casual dress code means that employees can dress in comfortable, informal clothing. Even in a casual work environment, such as an on-campus job, it is important to look polished and professional. Make sure your outfits are appropriate for work, modest, and always clean and put together. Think about what you wear in your free time, and then consider stepping it up a notch to present your professional self.

Casual attire is fairly flexible and dependent on the office culture. Take a cue from your coworkers and managers, and when in doubt refer to these go-to items:

- Cotton collared shirt, blouses or t-shirts, slim-fit dress shirts, cardigans
- Jeans or dark denim, skirts or dresses, khaki or cotton pants, cropped pants
- Boots, flats, oxford shoes, low-top leather sneakers

What NOT to Wear: athletic/gym/beach wear, obnoxious logos, revealing clothing, ripped, torn, or sloppy clothing