



The right clothes make an impression... and tell the employer how you see yourself. There's no single look for men and women. But, you will want to project an image that gives you a certain presence.



16 Always project the right image

Projecting the right image is mainly about dressing for success.

Guidelines for women

Clothes tell the employer how you see yourself. Your hairstyle and your choice of makeup is either going to reinforce or detract from your professional image. The accessories you choose—shoes, purse, jewelry—make a further statement about your awareness of that image. There is no single look for all women. Guidelines about dress have become more flexible. “Presence” involves not only appearance, but also self-confidence and knowledge. Here are some guidelines.

Hairstyle and makeup... nails and perfume

A good haircut is essential. Short to medium length hair is most appropriate. Keep away from an “extreme” look—anything frizzy, too full, teased or too long. Your makeup should appear natural.

If you have never worn makeup, recognize that most people feel their appearance can be enhanced by some foundation, a touch of blush, a light lipstick, and some mascara. Your nails should be medium length and filed attractively. No squares or points. Keep to an oval shape. Keep away from overly distracting shades, even though they may be fashionable at the time. If you are accustomed to wearing fragrance, don't use anything overpowering.

Clothing for interviews

A well tailored suit is always appropriate for an interview. When choosing colors, keep to an understated, conservative look. A solid color, a muted tweed or plaid, or a subtle pinstripe is always in good taste. You want your next employer to remember you, not your outfit.

If you generally wear bright or bold colors, choose a scarf or blouse in a shade you enjoy. Blouses or sweaters to go with your suit should either be white, off white, beige, or a color complementary to your suit.

A solid color dress, properly tailored and well fitting, is also appropriate for interviewing. A subtle plaid or stripe can also be correct. Since skirt lengths vary, select a length in keeping with the overall style of suit or dress you are wearing. Times change, and there are always exceptions, but a good rule of thumb is nothing shorter than an inch below your knee.

Shoes, stockings, briefcases and jewelry

Generally, stockings should be in a neutral shade, seamless, and snug fitting. Stockings in a complementary shade to your outfit are periodically in fashion and would also be acceptable. Stay away from heavily textured or patterned stockings. The leather of the shoes you select should be well polished. Keep away from clogs, sandals, and platform soled shoes.

If you plan to carry a briefcase, put your handbag items in it. Don't appear "laden down." Keep your jewelry simple. The key is never to use anything so startling that it detracts from the impression you want to make. Never wear a handful of rings.

Initial perceptions are difficult to change... for better or worse.

Your general appearance

There is an unspoken "managerial" dress code for women. It is more tailored than feminine (no plunging necklines or sheer fabrics) and enhances a "power" look. These emphasize a woman's ability to perform on the job, rather than femininity. Make sure you look like you are ready for the income level to which you aspire. Body language is also important. Straight posture says that you take pride in your appearance.

Guidelines for men

Looking good means feeling good and feeling confident. Before you launch your search, assess your wardrobe. You need several outfits because you must expect to go through a series of two, three, or more interviews. Use your clothing to project a personality that fits the situation and the firm.

Suits and shirts

Most people will do best if their suits are properly fitted and conservative. One of the most difficult things for most men to do is throw away suits. The time for such action may be now.

Before you make a purchase, prepare for your fitting by deciding how you will wear the suit. Allow for nothing in the pockets except a few bills and some change. When interviewing, your wallet can be kept in a briefcase.

Another important observation relates to the length of your jacket sleeve. Allow 5" from the top of your thumb to the end of your sleeve. Don't let tailors persuade you to take longer sleeves!

Clothing must fit properly. Go back at least twice for alterations. Allow for some slight shrinkage in dry cleaning. The front of your pants cuff should barely touch the shoe.

Regarding the fit of your shirt, if you have gained a significant amount of weight, you may be wearing your collar too tight. Ex-athletes who have trimmed down will often find that their collars have become loose.

Generally speaking, you will want to avoid short-sleeved shirts. Those who wear cuff links should make sure they are simple. A gaudy look is likely to be perceived as a negative.

Ties, shoes & accessories

Ties can be fun and can give you a unique look. To a great extent, this element of your wardrobe is a matter of preference. Above all, be sure your tie is clean. Bow ties do little to enhance most people's image.

Many people feel that shoes are a man's most important clothing item. This is because a person's appearance is immediately downgraded if he is wearing an unattractive pair of shoes.

A famous designer was recently quoted as saying, *"Whether a man is wearing relaxed, business or formal attire, you can assess him most quickly by the shoes and watch he is wearing."*

Your shoes should be well polished and light to medium in weight. Slip-ons are increasingly acceptable. The old military "spitshine" is still a real power builder.

Don't underrate accessories. Belts and belt buckles should be conservative. Socks should be over the calf in length and normally a solid color complementing the suit. It is not necessary to have a handkerchief nicked in your breast pocket, but it can be a nice touch.

A wallet and briefcase show a lot about a man. Thin wallets and neat briefcases are a nice complement to your overall appearance.

Your general appearance

As a rule, if you appear older than you would like, your hair should be on the short side. For most men in their 20s or 30s, however, a somewhat longer look is appropriate.

A clean shave is a must. For late afternoon interviews, carry an electric razor in your briefcase. As far as after-shave or cologne is concerned, keep it subtle.

For those of you who are overweight, clothes can cover up just so much. Try to lose some extra pounds if possible. If not, stand up straight and sit tall. Obviously, you want to look your best at all times.

Dress for success. Your image speaks for you before you say a word!

"Fashions change but style is forever."

—*Giorgio Armani*

"Project elegance and you'll project success."

—*Valentino*