

Business Dress Guidelines

Business Professional Dress

Men. Buy wool. Wool suits last longer, breathe better, and wrinkle less than any other type of suit. If you have to wear suits, buy at least two and keep them basic: charcoal gray, dark blue, or black; pinstripes are permitted, but keep them conservative.

You will want at least seven dress shirts. They may be white (it goes with anything) or colored, but keep them conservative. Remember that fashion is fickle so colors change, throwing your shirts out of style much faster than basic white. If you are not into ironing, plan to take your shirts to a cleaners and expect to pay \$1.50 - \$3.00 for each shirt to be cleaned and ironed. It is worth it in the long run and you will always feel better dressed.

Dress shirts usually come with button-down or spread collars. Both are acceptable. Spread collars usually come with stays or stiffeners to keep your collars from curling up. Remember to take the stays out when you wash your shirt; otherwise you will have permanent collar stay marks.

Be conservative in your tie selection, especially in the finance industry. Match tie to shirt and suit, and refrain from wearing ties displaying characters. Polished shoes finish the professional look.

Women. Remember the hanger rule: Buy your entire outfit off one hanger. It is not acceptable to mix and match a skirt or pants with a jacket from a different outfit. If you purchased your jacket and pants from the same hanger, you will be safe in a business professional environment.

Stay away from open-toed shoes, too much perfume, high-heels (medium to flat is okay), sleeveless tops, dangling bracelets, more than one necklace, or anything too revealing.

Stick with black, gray, dark burgundy or navy suits with simple lines and no ruffles or pleats. Find something that you can wear with confidence. If you think you could go out dancing right after work without changing your clothes, you probably want to rethink your outfit.

Business Casual Dress

Every organization has a different definition of business casual. Some require suits without ties; others permit flip-flops. While no hard and fast rules exist, the following should be considered:

Business casual includes the word “business” and implies that work is not the playground. It is always safer to lean toward dressy instead of casual. Business casual is sometimes defined as conservative sportswear, such as dress pants, skirts, collared sport shirts, loafers, etc. Tuck in shirts, do not reveal too much skin, and always iron your clothes. Business casual does not include T-shirts, sweatshirts, jeans of any color, shorts, or sneakers. It is unacceptable at work to look sloppy.

Always overdress for the first day of work. Look at your colleagues on the first day and decide how casual you can be for the next day. It may be good to buy the majority of your wardrobe after your first day of work. You will see what is accepted and fashion consistent at the office. Your clothing purchases will then be items that you will want to wear at work.

If you look in the mirror and say, “I can get by with this,” it is time to rethink your outfit. Your clothing makes a very lasting impression. Always ask, “What message am I sending by my choice of dress?”