

Ten Interview Fashion Blunders: What Not to Wear to the Interview

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Any article about what to wear to an interview might well begin with a qualifying statement covering the extremes in various states (New York and California, for example) and industries (technology, manufacturing), which are possible exceptions to the normal rules of fashion. But it might surprise you to learn that those extremes have, over the last couple of years, begun to move closer to the middle ground.

Nowadays, if you were to ask 100 people their opinion about what to wear to an interview, the majority would answer, "Dress on the conservative side." With that in mind, here are some suggestions on how to avoid fashion blunders.

Anna Soo Wildermuth, an image consultant and incoming president of the Association of Image Consultants International, says, "Clothes should be a part of who you are and should not be noticed." She cites 10 dressing faux pas to avoid when interview time comes around:

- **Wild Nail Polish:** This tip is for women or men. Extremely long or uncut nails are a real turnoff, too. Your nails should be groomed and neat.
- **Jewelry That Jangles:** Don't wear more than two rings per hand or one earring per ear. And no face jewelry or ankle bracelets allowed.
- **Open-Toed or Backless Shoes:** And mules are a definite no-no. Out-of-date shoes should be thrown out or kept for other occasions.
- **Bare Legs:** Wear stockings, even in humid summer weather. Stockings can be in neutral colors or a fashion color to match your shoes.
- **Out-of-Date Suits:** These have lapels that are too wide (three inches or more) or too narrow (one inch or less). A good tailor can alter lapels. The style for men's jackets is full-body and looser rather than fitted or tight.
- **Short Skirts:** Hemlines should not be more than three inches above the knee. Don't wear capri pants or leggings to the interview.
- **Leather Jackets for Men or Women:** Even leather blazers are not good for interviewing purposes. They look like outerwear.
- **Turtlenecks for Men:** A tie is preferable, at least in the first go-round. At the very least, wear a collared shirt.
- **Printed or Trendy Handbags:** Purses should be conservative and inconspicuous.
- **Red Briefcases:** Briefcases, purses and shoes should all be conservative in color and in good condition.

Conservative colors in various shades of blue and gray are best. Wearing black to the interview could be viewed as too serious. If you do wear black, make sure that there is another color near your face to soften the look. Brown is still considered questionable as a business color and probably should be avoided. Change your outfit's look for a second interview by wearing a different color blouse, shirt, scarf or tie.

An interview is not the place to make a fashion statement, though those in the art fields and the very famous can be more adventurous. Everyone else should opt for a conservative look. "More and more companies are returning to traditional professional dress," says Wildermuth.

Whatever you wear should accent the fact that you're a professional who's ready to get to work at a new job. Let common sense guide you, and it should be easy to avoid fashion blunders that could damage your chances of getting to the next level in the process. In this market, it is essential that you look good and your appearance is right for the job.

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