

What to wear to the interview: General "dos" and "don'ts"

- Dress conservatively. Don't wear an outfit that you consider "iffy" such as brightly colored shirt or Regis Philbin type outfits, no matter what the field. Uncouth clothing is never proper business attire.
- Don't wear political or religious emblems, pins, buttons, etc. Your potential employer might not share your particular affiliations and you may be immediately eliminated from the candidate pool before you can even make the case about your suitability for the job.
- Do wear a well-tailored suit (navy or grey for men; black, navy, or grey for women) with a plain light-colored long-sleeved shirt or blouse (white, cream, or light-blue are generally considered appropriate business attire choices as they tend to light up your face). Do not buy polyester suits. They look cheap and scream out that they are made of polyester from a mile away! For men, make sure the pant cuff falls lightly over your shoes - no "high waters" that show off your socks! For women, make sure that the hem of the suit skirt is no more than two inches above the knee. Do not wear mini-skirts - this is not the time nor the place to show off your legs, however shapely they may be!
- (For men), do make sure that your tie is tasteful. Do not wear ties with large prints, cartoon characters, holiday motifs or anything else that is flashy or vulgar. The width of your tie should be between 2 3/4" and 3 1/2" and should extend to your trouser belt. The size of the knot should be small (no ascots) and never ever wear a bow tie unless you want to be thought of as pompous and obnoxious! This is key to understanding appropriate business attire.
- Don't wear excessive or flashy jewelry - it tends to give people the wrong impression. For men, don't wear anything more than a simple watch, cuff links, and wedding band. If you have an earring/nosering, leave it at home unless you are auditioning for a rock band. For women, simple earrings (preferably pearl), a wedding band/engagement ring, simple pin, necklace, or bracelet, and basic watch are appropriate business attire. Don't wear hooped or dangling earrings, multiple rings or bracelets, loudly patterned scarves etc. that distract from your outfit. As in the case for men, if you do have a nose ring, this is a good time to leave it at home.
- Do wear well-polished, non-scuffed, leather shoes in black or brown. For men the shoes should be wing-tipped or lace-up with socks that complement the suit, either navy or gray. For women the shoes should be a simple pair of pumps with a medium-sized (1 1/2"-2") heel. Stay away from extremely high heels, ankle boots, stilletoes, shoes with elaborate bows, buckles etc. Pantyhose should not have any runs or snags and should be a neutral tone. Keep away from snazzy designs and textures. Appropriate business attire is neither hot nor cold.
- Do pay close attention to personal hygiene. Hair should be neatly cut and styled. For men, if you must have long hair make sure that it is neatly pulled back into a ponytail. Beards and mustaches should be neatly trimmed. For women, stay away from elaborate coifs that require tons of mousse/gel etc to keep in place or anything extreme such as buzz cuts, two-tone or wildly-colored hair etc. Hair like this really isn't part of

appropriate business attire. Make sure that you use a good deodorant and NO cologne, aftershave, or perfume. Make sure that nails are well manicured and that hands are well-moisturized and not flaking, peeling, or callused. For women, try not to have long, brightly-colored talons. Stick to neutral shades and medium length nails.

- (for women) Go easy on the makeup. Stay away from bright lipsticks and eye shadows and keep the palette neutral. Be sparing with foundation, blush etc. and strive for a natural and subtle look as possible.
- Take a briefcase or folder that contains your resume/notes etc. For women, if you take a briefcase, don't carry a purse. After all, appropriate business attire doesn't stop at your clothing!

These tips are not only useful in helping you before the interview to get the job that you want but in helping you keep the job and garnering that much-longed for promotion. You should not dress for the job that you have as much as for the job you want. Therefore, even if you join a company at a entry-level clerical position, and want to be promoted to the executive level, dress the way the executives dress -- in appropriate business attire. People will come to see you as executive material rather than as merely a junior clerical worker. Even if your company has a "casual Friday" dress code (and according to one survey about 70% of American employers do), don't go into work as if you have just tumbled out of the laundry hamper, in crumpled jeans and mysteriously-stained sweatshirt. Wear clean pressed khakis and a polo shirt/ blouse and shirt and pay close attention to personal hygiene at all times. It's all part of the secret of appropriate business attire. You will be amazed at how people set you apart from the crowd and this will also work to your advantage when it comes time for promotions, raises, and job evaluations.