APPEARANCE

Business formal or business casual? Can you keep your hair long or should you cut it short? Your clothes, accessories, and cologne/perfume communicate much about you and your “STORY.” Different situations, industries, companies, etc. will require employees to dress differently depending upon the culture of the individual office and that of the greater industry. After all, people working at startups don’t often dress the same as those going into banking, right?

So what does your appearance say about you?

With a highly competitive business industry it’s always better to look the part. To better explain what situation calls for what attire, we have identified three different categories of dress most commonly found in the workplace:

- Professional Attire
- Formal Business Attire
- Mid-Range Business Casual

Below is more detail on some basic standards for each category. Although these are suggested standards, you will always want to consider the culture, the organization, and how an event is advertised when deciding what to wear. Each industry and function has its own standards, so when you’re in doubt, ask your host. If you’re unsure, dress professionally. You can always remove a tie or blazer to dress down, but if you aren’t prepared for more formal wear, you won’t be able to pull it off.

Professional Attire - Formal

MEN

- Business suit: navy, black, or grey in color
- Shirt: long-sleeved, button-down, cotton, light-colored
- Trousers: long enough to cover your socks with slight break over your shoes
- Ties: should reach your belt line, preferably silk or high quality blend; the best choices are solid, stripes, or small pattern ties limited to three colors
- Shoes: leather, black, or brown classic lace-ups, shined, and in good repair
- Socks: dark color, match your suit; long enough to not show skin when crossing legs
- Belt: leather with small buckle; or suspenders, but not both
- Facial Hair: if worn, should be trimmed and well groomed
WOMEN

• Suit: dark in color, matching coat or jacket, knee-length skirt or slacks; employers tend to be biased more toward skirts
• Colors: must match exactly or be complimentary (mix and match)
• Shirts/Blouses: long- or short-sleeved (no spaghetti straps); cotton or synthetic; be modest in regards to cleavage
• Hosiery: strongly suggested, in colors of nude or light natural colors
• Shoes: closed-toe, closed-heel shoes that you can walk in without wobbling
• Heels: up to 1 to 2 inches
• Jewelry: one or two pieces and only one earring per ear
• Purse: tailored with shoulder strap (to keep your hands free for greeting)
• Conservative business make-up and nail polish

Business Attire - Mid-Range

MEN

• Blazer with dockers; dress slacks, khakis, or corduroys, with casual jacket and leather belt.
• Pressed long- or short-sleeved, button-down shirt (tucked in); no tie required
• Collared polo-type shirts, crew-neck sweaters, cardigan sweaters, or vests are appropriate
• Socks: dark in color, should be mid-calf length so that no skin is visible when you sit down
• Shoes: leather loafers, oxfords, or boots
• Facial Hair: if worn, should be trimmed and well groomed

WOMEN

• Jacket or sweater set with slacks, dress, skirt no shorter than three inches above your knees
• Accessorize in lieu of jacket (scarf)
• Hosiery may not be required
• Dress straps should be at least one inch wide
• Shoes: loafers, pumps, slides, mules, and conservative sandals

Business Casual – “Dress Down” Fridays

MEN

• Dockers or khaki pants
• Short- or long-sleeved shirt/button-up or pullover/polo shirts
• Shoes: penny loafers or lace up (no sneakers)
WOMEN
• Skirts with casual cut or slacks
• Common to wear cotton shirts, but no t-shirts

General Tips on a Conservative Look

DEFINITE DO’S
• Laundered shirts with light to medium starch, hung (not folded to avoid creases)
• Clean clothes that do not show wear
• Tucked in shirt
• Pants breaking just above the shoe
• Shirts: if long-sleeved, reaches the base of the hand and shows slightly when wearing a jacket
• Polished leather shoes in good repair
• Conservative watch
• Neatly groomed hair that is clean and out of your eyes
• Clean and neat nails of appropriate length
• Trench coats should be worn if outerwear is needed
• Umbrellas should be a solid dark color (no logos)
• Haircut and combed/clean-shaven/trimmed facial hair
• Cover tattoos
• Minimal jewelry and make-up

DEFINITE DON’TS
• White or ankle socks
• Jeans, casual pants, or shorts
• Tight and revealing clothes
• Athletic wear, t-shirts, fleece, or wind suits
• Athletic shoes, bare feet or open-toed sandals, and hiking boots
• No caps or hats
• Sleeveless, strapless or spaghetti strap clothing
• Cropped tops, or any other top that shows your stomach
• Shoes that expose your toes (dressy, open-toed shoes only)
• Bangles or dangly earrings; no visible body piercings (exception - women’s pierced ears)
• Heavy cologne/perfume
• Gum chewing
• Shorts of any kind or length

Adapted from Louisiana State University, UC Davis, and Yale University career websites.