

# **Workplace Dress & Etiquette**

*This Guide is designed to help you develop successful strategies for dress and etiquette either for the interview or once you have obtained the job.*



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# The Interview Dress



**A Successful interview begins with a successful look. Having the right clothes can make a big difference in how you are viewed as a prospective employee (opinions are made in the first 30 seconds!). Dress like you are ready for business. These guidelines are applicable to ALL industries.**

**When in doubt you want to dress up a notch rather than down. Even if normal on-the-job dress is casual, *for the interview you should dress professionally (preferably you should wear a suit)*. It shows your interest in the job and your respect for the company, the interviewer, and the interview process.**



## Interview Dress Tips for both Men & Women

1. When investing in an interview suit, choose a classic fashion that won't go out of style.
2. If you haven't worn the suit in awhile, make sure it fits properly. If you are uncomfortable during the interview it will show.
3. If you need to wear a coat, make sure it is a trench coat – never wear a casual coat over a suit.
4. Take a leather portfolio and a good quality pen with you.
5. Cover visible tattoos!
6. Leave your cell phone in the car.
7. Some people are overly sensitive to perfume/cologne. It is recommended that none is worn during an interview.

# Attire for Men

## Men's

The two-piece suit in navy, dark gray or black is a basic for men for the first wardrobe.

Men will need a tie. Choose something that matches the color of your suit in a simple pattern or a solid color, preferably silk.



A white long sleeved dress shirt for men. Men should be able to button all the buttons on the shirt, including the very top button.

Have your shoes polished and in good condition. Men should wear black shoes with laces, no loafers.

1. Navy, charcoal gray or black wool suit
2. White or pale blue collared shirt
3. Conservative tie, simple pattern
4. Shined shoes – research shows shoes make a big impression!
5. Over the calf dark socks and dark leather belt
6. Undershirt under dress shirt
7. Avoid flashy cuff links, earrings, rings, or neck chains
8. Clean nails, fresh shave, and neatly trimmed hair
9. Light cologne, if any

# Attire for Women

## Women's

The two-piece suit in Navy, Dark Gray or Black is a basic for women for the first wardrobe.



A leather notebook or a portfolio big enough to hold your résumé and notepad.

A white or light colored long sleeve blouse for women is appropriate. Women should select a blouse that is not too sheer or low cut.

Have your shoes polished and in good condition. Women should wear a dark shoe with a 1 - 1 ½" heel without an open toe.

1. Skirted or pant suit in solid color (navy, black). If suit is skirted it should be no shorter than knee length, no extreme slits
2. White or cream collared blouse
3. Polished and closed toe shoes, conservative dark pumps with low heels
4. Neutral color hosiery
5. Subtle nail color if polished, clean and not chipped
6. Simple and basic jewelry, nothing that dangles – 13 accessory rule (if you count it up – including ornate buttons and each earring – your accessories should not be greater than 13)
7. Minimal make-up
8. If hair is long, pull it back
9. Light perfume, if any
10. Leave your purse in the car

## Dressing on the Job

- After you've been hired take note of what your peers and supervisor wears.
- You never want to be the least casual dresser of your peers.
- **ALWAYS** dress better at the beginning of a new job until you get an idea of the culture.

### 6 Reasons to Pay Attention to What You Wear

1. What you wear determines how others see you – If you dress casually an impression could be made about you that you don't take yourself or the company seriously. Management does take note of the way people dress as well as how they perform.
2. Your clothes help determine how you see yourself – If you are confident and comfortable with yourself, you will be more willing to speak up and take chances. Knowing you have not only the skills and education for the job but the polished appearance to succeed will show in your attitude.
3. Your clothes help determine your career success – Just like in an interview first impressions are hard to overcome. When management is looking to see who to promote, if you have been not only successful but already have the wardrobe and self-presence they want they won't have to look any further.
4. A well-planned wardrobe saves time – A wardrobe that coordinates and interchanges with each other makes for quick decisions in the morning when you choose what to wear.
5. A well-coordinated wardrobe saves money – A shirt or jacket that matches numerous outfits and can be interchanged easily will allow you the benefit of looking professional without spending your whole paycheck on clothes.
6. Think comfort – While you want to look professional, those uncomfortable shoes might have you limping by the end of the day.



***KISS – Keep it Simple and Sophisticated! You want your confidence to come from your professional abilities, not to be manufactured in Italy. Still, your clothes are important – if you dress with your next position in mind, you're more likely to get there.***

(Excerpt from Business Etiquette for Dummies 2001)

## How to Survive the 1<sup>st</sup> Week

1. **Talk it over before you report** – Speak to some people who have held the job or worked for the company before. What advice can they give you? The more you know the more prepared you are.
2. **Brief yourself** – Look over the company literature, website, its products and services. Become familiar with its mission. If your job is technical, spend a few hours reviewing your college textbooks on the subject.
3. **Learn what is important** – Find out what really is critical in your work – what does your boss care about most? Then do them well! Do not waste a lot of time on things which aren't very important. Remember though, even the small details and mundane tasks must be done right!
4. **Listen more than you talk** – Observe the culture of the work and people (supervisors, colleagues, clients, customers) around you. Ask questions, as appropriate, but don't criticize anything, at least until you know more about the environment in which you are working. While you will be bringing experiences and ideas from past jobs, be careful of the belief that your way is better.
5. **Link up with other employees** – Introduce yourself to your peers and identify employees with whom you might become friends – but don't rush into deep, immediate friendships until you are certain about people. If appropriate, move into extracurricular activities as soon as possible but make sure you are socializing appropriately.
6. **Look for role models** – Look around for recent hires that seem to be doing well who might help you navigate the new waters. Are there experienced workers who might provide guidance and/or support? Make a point of introducing yourself to them – they might be flattered you sought them out.
7. **Keep Checking!** – When in doubt check back with your supervisor to make sure you are doing the right things and in the correct manner. Keep the lines of communication open.



**The key to a successful transition into your new job is to take the initiative and do the best you can, regardless of whether it is a temporary position or a professional job in your chosen field.**

# How to Be a Good Employee

1. **Be Reliable** – Always arrive on time, ready and prepared to work. Arrive early for meetings and appointments. Make sure to accept assignments you know you will be able to complete. You are expected on the job EVERY day!
2. **Be Willing to Work** – If you can handle it, accept additional work responsibilities. Be available to work late when needed...overtime/odd hours are often expected to complete some jobs. Make sure you work your full 8 hours for your 8 hours of pay. Always show enthusiasm about your work.
3. **Be Self-Motivated** – Monitor your own progress on the job and periodically visit your supervisor to gain feedback on your progress. If don't have any work, ask for more. Learn to deal with "gofer work" and some down time – entry level jobs are not glamorous. Never believe any work that is asked of you is beneath you.
4. **Be Respectful** – Look and dress neatly...business casual may be ok, but it's still business (see the first part of this guidebook). Be receptive to constructive criticism. Be sensitive to others, never gossip, and avoid internal politics. Never complain about the job, co-workers, etc in public, you never know who is within earshot. Be aware of differences (cultural, work style, management, etc) – you are the new kid on the block, don't act like a know-it-all. Though it's hard, be patient – don't expect too much too soon.
5. **Observe Office Customs** – Office customs do not always match formal rules, ask questions if you are unsure. Be sure to buy into the value and vision of your work place – if you don't what is the point of working there?
6. **Keep your Job and Social Life Separate** – Don't camp out on anyone's desk or workstation and never try to make dates in the office. Don't overburden coworkers with private problems – you can share but don't overwhelm. Always keep personal phone calls to a minimum.
7. **All Assigned Work is Important** – Never give the impression that some work is a waste of time...ask "why" if it is not clear. Perform even routine tasks well and once again, never think that any work assignment is beneath you.
8. **Understand & Observe the Hierarchy** – Make sure not to go over or around your supervisor to get noticed, ahead, or to complain. Learning and following the chain of command is essential. Establish and maintain good business relationships and learn who the "players" are and observe their behavior.

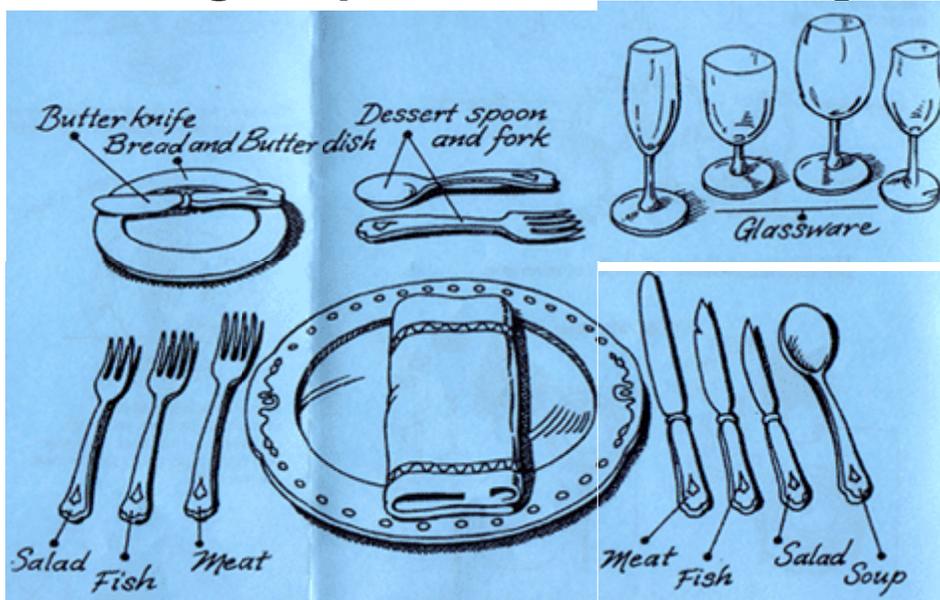
*This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one: being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.*

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.*

*I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no 'brief candle' for me. It is a sort of splendid torch that I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.*

~ George Bernard Shaw

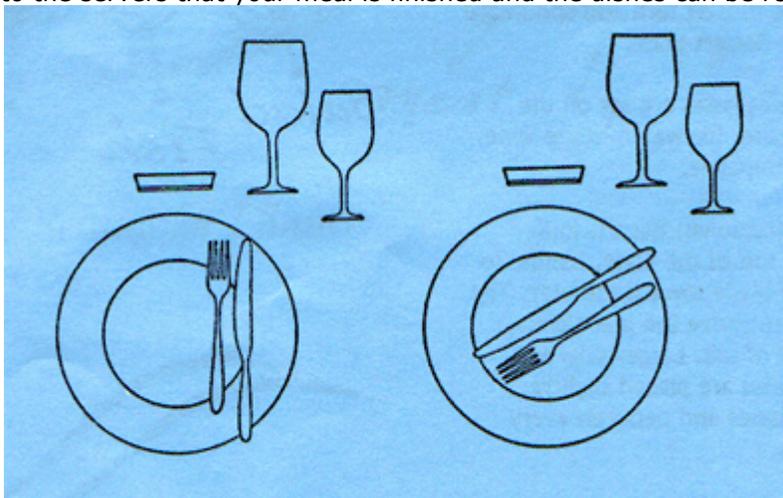
## Dining Etiquette - Place Settings



Not sure when you sit down where your drink glass is and where your bread plate is? Take both hands and make OK signs with your thumb and forefinger. If you look at the right hand, you'll see the OK sign looks like a D – your drinks will be on the right side of the plate. If you look at your left hand, you'll see the OK sign looks like a B – the bread plate will be on your left.



At the end of the meal, you should place your used silverware close together on the plate, with the utensils entirely on the plate (less than an inch of the silverware over the side of the plate). This is a signal to the servers that your meal is finished and the dishes can be removed.



# DINING ETIQUETTE TIP SHEET

*Feel confident, at-ease, and self-assured at any social or business function!*

## Always

- Take etiquette seriously, good manners are associated with competence in your job
- Leave an impression of you, not your poor manners
- Make introductions and help people feel more at ease
- Remember that men and women are treated as peers, no chivalry please
- Extend your hand, stand up, and give eye contact when introducing yourself or others
- Wait to begin eating until everyone is served their food
- Order similarly to your host and keep pace with he/she as you're dining
- Sit up straight and bring the food to you (not yourself to the food)
- Place your napkin on your seat when leaving the table temporarily & on the table when leaving permanently
- Leave your right hand free during cocktail parties/receptions so you are able to shake hands
- Pass the food around the table first and serve yourself last
- Pass to your right, and turn pitcher & gravy boat handles pointing toward the recipient
- Pass the salt & pepper together, even when only one is requested
- Place your purse/briefcase/portfolio well under your seat so no one trips
- Thank your server one or two times throughout the meal – not every time
- Cut up your food 2-3 bites at a time, not all at once
- Taste your food before seasoning it
- Spoon away from you while eating soup

## Never

- Try to make someone else embarrassed by their or your actions – etiquette is about graciousness
- Order an appetizer not dessert if no one else hasn't
- Explain where you are going or what you will be doing when leaving the table – just simply excuse yourself
- Slurp your soup nor drink
- Leave your cell phone or pager on while dining...unless absolutely necessary
- Chew gum at the dining table (or anytime else during an interview or business meeting)
- Take someone else's place setting! Remember "Food on the left, Liquids on the right"
- Break/cut your bread roll in half & butter it entirely...break off bite-size pieces and butter those as you eat them
- Pick at your teeth, chew with your mouth open, nor refill your mouth with food or a drink before swallowing what is already in there
- Place your elbows on the table....unless it is in between courses
- Have so much lipstick on, ladies, that you leave a mark on your glass or cup...blot before dining
- Complain about the food; if it's undercooked then talk with your server
- Push your plate away from you nor stack the dishes when you are done...leave them where they are
- Drink too much alcohol...you are there for the business not the alcohol
- Forget that polishing your professional etiquette doesn't just make you a nicer person, it can make you a real business asset

# Telephone Etiquette

The telephone is a vital source of communication. The use of cell phones and "instant conversation" is commonplace in our life today. However, the way you conduct yourself on the phone directly reflects who you are.

These tips will show you how paying attention to detail may make a big difference in others impressions of you....both personally and professionally.

## Identify Yourself

- When calling someone, identify yourself after they've said hello.

## Respect Others' Time

- When Placing a call, after identifying yourself, ask "Do you have a Minute?" or "Is this a good time to reach you?" before explaining the reason for your call.

## Ask Rather Than Just Place Someone On Hold

- After placing someone on hold and returning to the line, say "Thanks for waiting" rather than "I'm back."
- When screening calls, ask "Who's calling, please?" rather than "Who is this?".

When calling a professional office for any reason, always identify yourself and explain the reason for your call. Example: "Hello, this is Jane Smith and I'm calling in response to the newspaper ad for an accountant".

## Call Waiting

Call waiting is only as good as the person using it. Rule #1: Just because you have call waiting, it is up to you whether to use it...it is a judgment call. Your decision should be based on who you are speaking to, the intensity of the conversation, and your relationship to the person. If you find it necessary to place someone on hold always ask permission!

## Answering/Voice Mail Machines

When reaching an answering machine, if you had sufficient reason for calling...leave a message. Sometimes this helps the other person know how to respond...whether to expect another call from you or if they should attempt to return your call. "Hi, its Julie, Bye!" doesn't say anything, does it? When leaving a message, "what" and "how" you say it is as important as if you were speaking to the person directly. Keep the tone of your voice pleasant and upbeat!

## Use Good Speech Habits

Phrases To use: " One moment please", "Yes", "All right", "She's not available now", "Good-bye" Phrases Not To Use: "Hang on", "Yeah", "Okey-Doke", "Uh, dunno where he is".

Remember: You only get ONE chance to make a first impression!

(University of Missouri - Columbia, College of Business)

# E-mail Etiquette

While a lot of people understand the importance of following certain rules when writing a business letter, they often forget these rules when composing an email message.

- **Mind Your Manners:** Think of the basic rules you learned growing up, like saying please and thank you. Address people you don't know as Mr., Mrs., or Dr. Only address someone by first name if they imply it's okay to do so.
- **Watch Your Tone:** [Merriam-Webster](#) defines tone as an "accent or inflection expressive of a mood or emotion." It is very difficult to express tone in writing. You want to come across as respectful, friendly, and approachable. You don't want to sound curt or demanding.
- **Be Concise:** Get to the point of your email as quickly as possible, but don't leave out important details that will help your recipient answer your query.
- **Be Professional:** This means, stay away from abbreviations and don't use emoticons (those little smiley faces). Don't use a cute or suggestive email address for business communications.
- **Use Correct Spelling and Proper Grammar:** Use a dictionary or a spell checker — whichever works better for you. While you can write in a conversational tone (contractions are okay), pay attention to basic rules of grammar.
- **Ask Before You Send an Attachment:** Because of computer viruses, many people won't open attachments unless they know the sender. Even that can be a mistake because many viruses come disguised in email messages from someone you know. Before sending an attachment, ask the recipient if you may do so.
- **Wait to Fill in the "TO" Email Address:** Career Planning Site visitor Larry Batchelor says, "I never fill in the 'TO' email address until I am completely through proofing my email and I am sure that it is exactly the way that I want it. This will keep you from accidentally sending an email prematurely. In the past, I have accidentally clicked on the send icon, when I really meant to click on the attachment icon."

(Dawn Rosenberg McKay, Your Guide to Career Planning)



# What to keep in mind about MySpace and Facebook



If you have a MySpace or Facebook page beware of the information you are posting, as employers are checking your online presence as a screening tool. Even if you have set your page as private, pictures or comments on friend's pages may be seen by employers. It is a good idea before you start job searching to see what is on the web about yourself. On the other hand, setting your MySpace or Facebook page up as an online portfolio that highlights your qualifications may attract employers that are using these sites as recruiting tools.

- In posting information, consider not only how you want to present yourself to your friends, but also the way you want to be perceived in three or five or ten years. Much of the content posted on MySpace and Facebook never really goes away. If just one visitor to your site saves a quote or photo, even if it's up for a day or two, it will always be out there.
- Your chances of being hired by a company may be affected by your MySpace or Facebook profile.
- Choose carefully when posting photos. If you wouldn't want your grandmother to see it you probably wouldn't want an employer to see the picture.
- Compromising and inappropriate pictures, statements or other information can hurt your chance to gain or be considered for employment. Employers take the images that students are portraying very seriously as a reflection of personal character.
- Do not post private information such as cell phone, address, class schedule, or social plans unless you are prepared for anyone to find you/track you down at any time.
- Be prepared to answer questions about your account in job interviews. It has become common for interviewers to ask applicants "Are you on MySpace/ Facebook?" and "What is on your profile?" Be prepared to answer honestly because employers will most likely look at your account themselves...or already have.
- Realize that there is a difference between what you and a recruiter might think is appropriate
- Be thoughtful about what you post and think about whether you even need to post it.

# Active Listening

**Constantly, employers relate their need for an employee that listens!  
Active, effective listening is a habit, as well as the foundation of effective communication.**

Active listening intentionally focuses on who you are listening to, whether in a group or one-on-one, in order to understand what he or she is saying. As the listener, you should then be able to repeat back in your own words what they have said to their satisfaction. This does not mean you agree with, but rather understand, what they are saying.

## **Prepare with a positive, engaged attitude**

- **Focus your attention on the subject**  
Stop all non-relevant activities beforehand to orient yourself to the speaker or the topic
- **Review mentally what you already know about the subject**  
Organize in advance relevant material in order to develop it further
- **Avoid distractions**  
Seat yourself appropriately close to the speaker. Avoid distractions (a window, a talkative neighbor, noise, etc.)
- **Acknowledge any emotional state**  
Suspend emotions until later, or passively participate unless you can control your emotions
- **Set aside your prejudices, your opinions**  
You are present to learn what the speaker has to say, not the other way around

## **Actively listen**

- **Be other-directed; focus on the person communicating**  
Follow and understand the speaker as if you were walking in their shoes  
Listen with your ears but also with your eyes and other senses
- **Be aware: non-verbally acknowledge points**  
Don't agree or disagree, but encourage the train of thought
- **Be involved:**  
Actively respond to questions and directions  
Use your body position (e.g. lean forward) and attention to encourage the speaker and signal your interest

*A good listener tries to understand thoroughly what the other person is saying.  
In the end he may disagree sharply, but before he disagrees, he wants to know exactly what it is...*  
*Kenneth A. Wells*