



## Dressing for an interview

Right or wrong, the initial judgement an interviewer makes is based on how you present yourself. First impressions really do count!

You may have heard the saying 'dress for the job you want, not the one you have'. This is particularly applicable when dressing for a job interview. Regardless of what you wear in your current job or what you think you might get away with wearing, you should always aim to look the cream of the crop!

### Top tips for a winning interview outfit

#### Women

You have the choice of trousers, a dress or a skirt. Your dress or skirt should be knee length or sit just above the knee. Black is a safe colour to go for but navy blue, brown and lighter colours in the summer can also look very smart.

Patterns should generally be avoided but there is no harm in adding some colour with a pretty scarf. Interviews are not the place to try out eccentric new fashions so don't get too adventurous.



Keep heels at a sensible height and if you struggle to walk in a heel, it is also fine to wear a smart pair of flat shoes. Whichever shoes you choose, make sure they are clean and well polished.

Your blouse should be plain or have a simple pattern—a garish design could distract the interviewer.

## Men



Unfortunately men tend to have less flexibility than women when it comes to dressing for an interview. Dark colours are a great start and, if possible, you should avoid fabrics that crease easily such as linen.

Shoes should be brown or black to complement your suit/trousers and well polished. Ideally your shoes will be leather or leather look, rather than suede.

Avoid loud patterns on ties; you don't want to distract the interviewer. The tie should complement your whole outfit, so it should match your shirt as well as your suit. It's always safest to go for a plain, white shirt and a smart, plain tie.

## Things to avoid

### 1. The obvious

Never attend an interview in stained or stale clothing. If your clothes smell like sweat, smoke or pets the interviewer will be immediately put off. If you have pets, a lint roller will become your best friend—remove all traces of animal hair ahead of the interview.

If you look at your outfit and think it's something you might wear on your next night out, it's probably not right for an interview.

## 2. Ill-fitting clothes

If you haven't worn your interview outfit recently, you might find it doesn't fit the way it used to. Don't just wear it anyway because you won't look your best and you won't feel comfortable—and it will show.

If your budget allows, it will always be worth spending a small amount on a new outfit that fits you well. It will give the impression that you understand how to dress appropriately and it will prevent you from feeling awkward in your clothes.

## 3. Overly casual clothes

Sometimes the employer will tell you that the interview will be a more casual meeting—this is common for the second stage of the selection process. However, don't take the 'casual' concept too far. You still need to impress the interviewer so, if in doubt, it's best to overdress!



## 4. Anything distracting

There is a fine line between standing out and wearing something that's distracting. YOU should be the focus of the interview so if you're trying to stand out, wow your employer with your skills, knowledge or experience, not your garish clothing.

Women—keep accessories to a minimum, especially jewellery that clangs together because the noise can be very off-putting for an interviewer. Also ensure that clothing is not too revealing.

Men—don't wear anything that features slogans, brand names, Superman or Homer Simpson. The same applies to your socks and yes, the interviewer will notice.

## Finishing touches

### 1. Nails

Nails should be clean and tidy and, if you wish, carefully polished.

### 2. Perfume and cologne

Experts have advised against wearing perfume and cologne as it can be overpowering or your interviewer may have an allergic reaction to it. However you may feel that a spray of perfume will 'complete' your outfit. If so, go easy with it!

### **3. Start preparations early**

If you get the chance, try on your outfit a couple of days in advance of the interview. You will then be able to see if it creates the right impression, whether it fits well and whether it needs a final wash or iron.

### **4. Spare outfit**

You should always have a backup outfit in case you discover a rip, hole or have an accident or spillage at the last minute.

### **5. Hair and makeup**

Decide on your hair and makeup in advance. Women should avoid extravagant hairstyles or overly heavy makeup. A trial run ahead of the day can help to keep stress levels at bay.

If in doubt, always overdress for your interview but ensure that you are completely happy with your outfit choice and how you look and feel in it. There will be exceptions to the rules. For example if it's a hot day it's quite acceptable to ask the interviewer if they're happy for you to remove your jacket. You need to feel relaxed in the interview and this can be difficult if you are hot and uncomfortable.

Ultimately if you look great, you'll feel great and that in turn will boost your confidence and—hopefully—lead to interview success!

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