

# DRESSING FOR THE OFFICE

## INTERVIEW ATTIRE

Have you noticed that the way you are treated is directly correlated to the way you are dressed? Whether you like it or not, it is true. Your total look can either open doors for you or slam them in your face!

Many people fail to realize this fact, and more importantly in an interview situation, your manner of dress creates your first impression. Therefore, your total look is of utmost importance. The purpose of this section is to get you dressed properly for an **interview situation** with a look in line with your career aspirations. So increase your chances for success by heeding the following advice.

### Interview Dressing for Men

#### THE SUIT

Because most students can afford only one good suit, you need to pay close attention to the color and fabric of the suit you select. The colors that are permissible and/or acceptable are **navy blue, grey and coffee beige**. These colors are listed according to most desirable first. Brown and forest green are not acceptable, and black should NEVER be worn in an interview situation. The fabric should be a gabardine, a firm hard-finish durable fabric (as of lightweight wool or rayon), twilled with diagonal ribs sloping to the right, or something similar to that kind of fabric. Heavy wools are excellent for winter months, but during the spring and summer they will be out of place. A gabardine fabric will be durable all year and will withstand the punishment of packing and constant wearing, resisting most wrinkles. Avoid wearing your suit jacket and pants as separates. Uneven wearing and cleaning leads to a color differentiation.

Your suit may be pin-striped however the stripe should be small enough so it may not be detected. Never wear a gangster stripe! If you are not sure about the design in the material, do this simple test. Hang your suit on something, walk away from it, about ten feet or so, and if you can still detect a pattern in it, then it is not correct. Double breasted suits or jackets are not acceptable for job interviews.

If you are wearing a vest, do not button the last button of the vest, and do not button your jacket at all. If you are wearing a two or three-button suit (no vest), un-button the last button. The pockets should be made in the jacket, and not sewn onto the jacket like a patch. The two side pockets should be flapped, and the flaps remain outside. The pants should be straight-leg and always belted. Cuffs are acceptable, if they are not too large or too small ( 1.25 inch).

It should be noted here that a suit is and should always be your first choice to wear to an interview. But if you don't have one, a navy blue jacket or blazer and a pair of grey or beige pants are acceptable. If you choose to wear a blazer, be sure the buttons are either navy or black, not metal. When using this alternative look, go from dark color on top, to light color on the bottom.

There are also fit considerations to take into account when buying a suit. The shoulders should not be padded, or at least appear not to be. The very stylish suit with built up shoulders and tapered at the waist suit jackets are not acceptable for interview situations. The lapels should be around three and a half inches at the widest point, and notched. The notch should be plain, without tabs, and not peaked. There should be no top-stitching on the jacket. The jacket may have two or three buttons, but be sure the buttons are not metallic in color. Current trends show the no-vent jacket as the style of choice.

### **SHIRT AND TIE**

Your shirt should be white, long sleeved (no french cuffs), and 100% cotton. Light blues, tans and yellows are second choices. However, if chosen, they should be very pale, and never bright. Always wear a plain white t-shirt underneath your shirt.

Your tie should be 100% silk, solid or patterned. When shopping for a tie, go to a traditional store such as Brooks Brothers and ask for a Club tie or a Regimental tie. This will give you an idea of what kind of ties are acceptable. If you would like to choose something else, like a stripe or a polka dot, be sure to keep them small. Polka dots should really be pin dots.

### **SOCKS AND SHOES**

Your shoes may be black, brown, or Cordovan (burgundy), but must be **SHINED**. Loafers, lace-ups, penny loafers, wing tips, and brogans are all acceptable. The main rule to follow is to make sure they don't draw attention. They should have no metal ornaments on them. Your socks should be dark and plain; **NEVER** anything in the red family, i.e. Cordovan, burgundy, or maroon.

### **ACCESSORIES**

A watch, pen and writing pad are a must. Pocket handkerchiefs, earrings, lapel pins, fraternity pins, shiny or large rings (i.e. diamonds, super bowl rings, etc.), are not appropriate for the interview. Any jewelry that might make noise should be removed before the interview. If you wear cologne, wear very little, and always remember to wash your hands after it is applied. Nails must be short, neat and clean.

## **Interview Dressing for Women**

The good news for women is they have more variety in their choice of colors and outfit. You may wear suits or dresses, the length of which should not be so short that when you sit or cross your legs, most of your thigh shows. Also, be mindful of the length of a split, which preferably should be in the back. Normally if you wear a dress, you should also wear a jacket. Coats and dresses are the dress of choice for interviews. Pantsuits should not be worn to the interview. Keep the patterns in the fabric simple, and the colors subdued.

Always remember that you want to look business-like, not **SEXY**. If your hair is long, it should be pulled away from the face and secured at the back of your head (but, only if you look and feel comfortable this way). Your makeup should be for daytime wear only, nails neat, short, and manicured.

The most appropriate jewelry set would be a 16" or 18" strand of white pearls and white pearl stud earrings. Any earrings worn should be studs, or a small clip-on, never anything dangling. **If** you have more than one hole in your ear, adorn only one hole per ear. Bracelets should not make noise when moving your arms around in normal conversation. Neck chains should remain simple and few.

Stockings should be the color of your legs or slightly darker, nothing too light- **NO RUNS**. Your shoes should be leather pumps (not suede or pattern), with a heel height of 2"-3". Black leather for dark clothes and taupe for light clothes.

The purse you carry should be of good quality leather, medium size, and extremely neat in case it is opened. Have pen and pad in hand so as not to "go fishing" in your purse.

### **THE FINAL LOOK**

Once you are dressed, ask someone how you look. If they compliment you on any one item you are wearing, take it off. Your total look should blend together and compliment your personality. Also remember to be as comfortable in your clothes as possible. Don't wear new clothes or shoes without a trial run first.

***The reason for having such strict rules for dressing for the interview is to almost give everyone a uniform.*** If everyone is wearing a uniform, then the interviewer won't pay attention to what the student is wearing, but rather to what the student has to say. Dressing appropriately will indicate you are a team player.

These rules are strict and should be adhered to. Since your appearance is one of the few things in an interview situation you can control, why not do so? The importance of demonstrating that you are a team player cannot be overstated. Even Michael Jordan wears an uniform to the game!

### **BUSINESS ATTIRE**

Everyday business attire differs only slightly from interview attire. Please note the following suggestions for men and women:

#### **BUSINESS DRESSING FOR MEN**

The choice of colors and patterns for your shirts, ties and socks are slightly broader. You may wear two-toned shirts, french cuffs, spread collars, and bold stripes, but never short-sleeved shirts. If you choose, you may wear pocket squares, collar bars, an additional ring and/or bracelet on the right hand. Earrings are still inappropriate.

The well dressed junior executive wardrobe consists of 3-4 good suits: 2 navy blue, one grey and one coffee beige. Suits may be two or three button, single or double-breasted.

#### **BUSINESS DRESSING FOR WOMEN**

Women's standard for business attire varies and depends greatly on whether you work in a large metropolitan area or a small town, and in which region of the country you live. Corporate attire in large cities, such as New York, Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles, tend to be less conservative

than in the South or smaller towns. For instance, in New York, more vibrant colors, such as reds, golds, purples and greens are acceptable.

It also must be noted that women in certain professions, such as finance and law, as well as female executives in major corporations, are expected to dress more conservatively than those in creative fields, such as the media, advertising and public relations.

However, the standard for professional attire is changing- Pants suits are now defined as professional attire and feminine dresses and suits are acceptable, along with the traditional dark suits. But the extremely casual is still taboo. Short skirts are fine but micro-mini is a definite NO!

Note the following dress-for-success tips for working women:

1. If you want to get ahead, look around Emulate and imitate those women who are moving up in the company.
2. Dress appropriately and blend in, yet maintain your personal style. If you are in a traditional corporate setting, wear the navy suit and white pearls, but accessorize with a colorful scarf or suit pin. The Black cameo line is quite appropriate.
3. Dress classically—suits, dresses, sensible heels or flats. Stick to the basics. And never wear tennis shoes and socks with your business attire This is not a power look!
4. Save dressy shorts sets, tight skirts, leggings, jogging suits, stretch pants and other casual attire for leisure activities
5. Stay away from clothes that wrinkle easily such as 100% linen
6. If you are in a conservative environment, choose suits and dresses with jackets.

***Avoid a situation in which you have to be told what not to wear to work.***

Women who have found a niche in corporate America agree that in dressing for success, not only must you dress for the position you hold, both also for the position to which you aspire. Good taste is the key. If an outfit is questionable, then don't wear it.

### **ACCESSORIES FOR BOTH**

Your professional image is made up of your total look. Therefore, invest in good quality accouterments - Cross pen & pencil set; leather briefcase, portfolio and dayplanner; watch and eyewear, billfold/checkbook; umbrella and raincoat. And for cold weather climates, good quality overcoat, hat and boots will be necessary.

## **THE OFFICE GYM**

Many companies have included on-site gyms for their employees. Although wonderful for convenience, it can be detrimental to your upward mobility. Remember, **every** contact with your workplace, is a contact that can make or break your career. Keep in mind you are still on the playing field of the game, so adhere to the rules of the game—business etiquette and appropriate attire.

## BUSINESS CASUAL

The trend towards relaxed dressing started almost 10 years ago, and today roughly half of the U.S. workforce practices some form of it. Companies do it to boost the comfort and the morale of employees.

But relaxed dress should not lead to a less professional attitude. The line between "casual" and "inappropriate" is very distinguishable and employees should be aware of the parameters. "Dress down" day is not the time to bring play and leisure clothes to the workplace. You must create a separate wardrobe.

How casually you dress on Fridays depends on how you dress the other four days of the week. Here's a guide:

\* If your office is **formal**—a bank, a law office, a brokerage firm—**MEN** will dress down in blue denim button-down-collar shirts, plaid ties, sportcoats and blazers, subtle tweed or checked trousers, gray flannels. Vests make great layering pieces. Combine textures for an interesting fabric mix. Colors are generally browns, olives, navy, gray, off-white. Shoe choices include suede tie-ons or soft leather loafers. **WOMEN** will dress in midcalf-length rayon print skirts, crisp shirts and tailored vests; also knit separates, including long tunics and matching skirts. Jackets can be belted or zipped for variety and worn with short skirts or trousers. Instead of pumps, wear loafers and slip-ons with pants; high-heeled loafers with short skirts and ankle-high boots and matching leggings with longer skirts.

\* If your office is **semiformal**—you have occasional dealings with clients but the atmosphere is more relaxed—**MEN** will sport cardigan sweaters or pullovers, jackets without linings, interesting vests, corduroy trousers or khakis, open shirt collars, no ties. Think lug-sole shoes. **WOMEN** can sport twin sets and knit trousers, T-shirts with plaid jackets and gray flannels, nubby cardigans with long or short skirts. Footwear includes boots, lug-sole loafers and suede slip-ons.

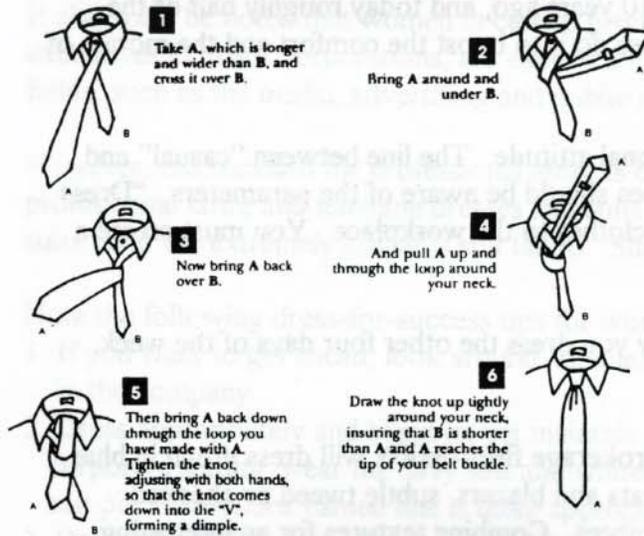
\* If your office is **informal**—full of writers, designers, or advertising people who have little or no client contact—denim is the choice for both sexes. **MEN** can wear band-collar shirts, long-sleeve polos, plaid flannel shirts, neat jeans and khakis. Boots and loafers are acceptable. For **WOMEN**, think jeans, denim dresses and shirts, khakis, plaid shirts, quilted vests and jackets. Shoes are thick-soled loafers, ankle boots and suede and leather slip-ons.

Both sexes should steer clear of jogging suits, sweatshirts, shorts, jeans, T-shirts, sleeveless shirts and sandals. Avoid bold patterns or garish colors.

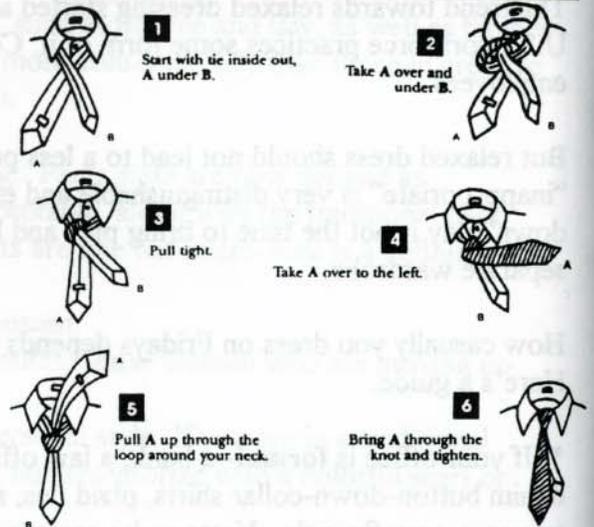
Remember, the emphasis in business casual dressing is on **BUSINESS**.

# THE ART OF TYING A TIE

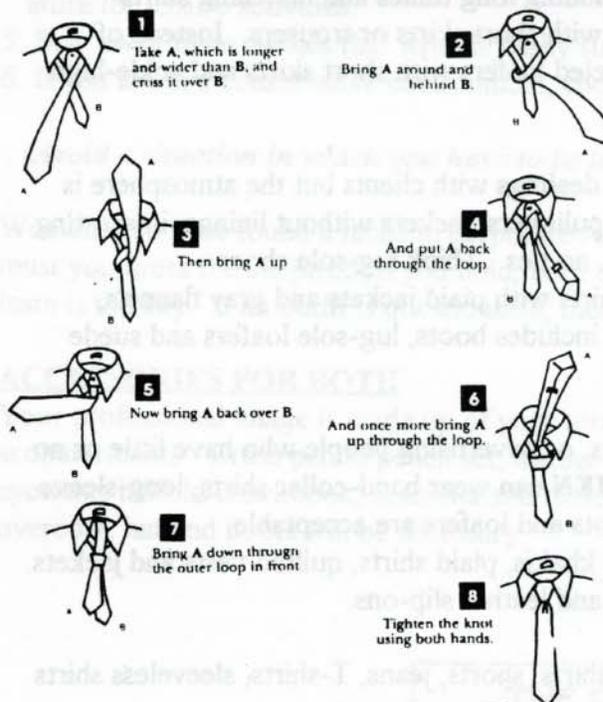
## THE PERFECT KNOT - THE FOUR IN HAND



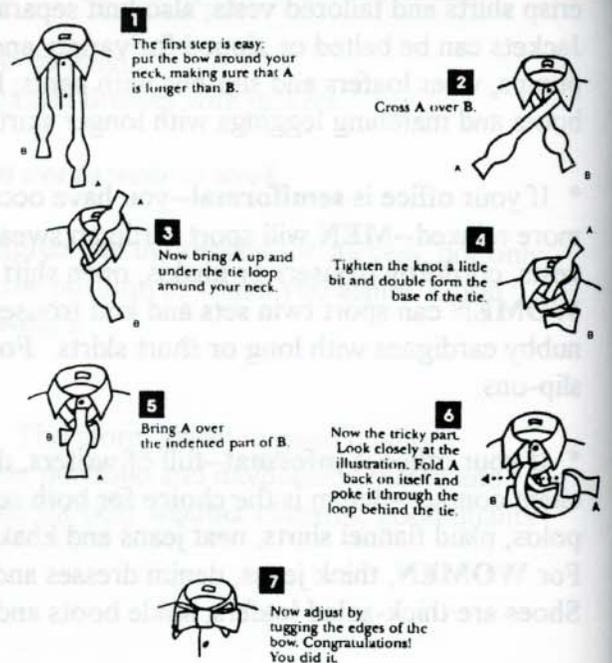
## THE NEW KNOT - THE SHELVY



## THE HALF WINDSOR



## THE PERFECT BOW



### Tie Care Tips

The life of your new tie depends largely on how you take care of it. Here are a few suggestions to help keep your ties looking like new.

#### To Eliminate Wrinkling:

- Allow two to three days between wearings.
- Never leave your tie knotted after you take it off. This could cause permanent wrinkling.
- Hang your ties after each wearing and most wrinkles will disappear.

#### To Reduce Staining:

Blot spills with a damp cloth and let dry. Unless the tie is wash and wear (Wemlon), it may require dry cleaning.

### Travel Tips For Your Ties

The best way to pack your ties is to use a case made specifically for the job. If a tie case is not available:

- Pack ties quarter-folded, one or two between each layer of shirts or trousers. Never put ties in the bottom of the suitcase.
- In a hanging case, hang ties over slacks on hanger. To reduce wrinkling of all clothing, use plastic bags.