

How To Dress For A Job Interview

Although job-related skills mean a lot, during the initial hiring process they have less power than most of us think. That's because the first thing we notice about someone is their appearance, and more specifically, the way they are dressed. Those who come across as polished and pulled together are more likely to be hired than those who are seen as sloppy or inappropriate. Here are eight tips on acing your interview with the right look.



Don't sex up your outfit.

Even the most adept job applicant can sabotage her chances of getting hired by showing up in a provocative outfit. Revealing cleavage or too much leg is a common mistake among job searchers. You want your interviewer to focus on what you can bring to the company, not your other assets.



Conservative is better.

Men have their suits and ties as go-to interview attire, but women lack a clear uniform in the professional arena, making it easier to make a wrong move. A rule of thumb is that if you're in doubt, err on the side of conservative. That is, wear a matching skirtsuit--which is more professional than a pair of trousers--and closed-toe shoes. Keep the make-up and jewelry to a minimum too.



It's all in the details.

Wardrobe flubs like scuffed shoes, ill-fitted clothes or a stain on a shirt can be as detrimental as not bringing your résumé to an interview. In light of the sour economy, stores are having more sales now in order to boost profits, so there is no reason not to show up looking like a professional, shoes and all.



Colors say a lot.

"I see people giving off the wrong image based on the colors they wear, and you are taken more seriously when you aren't wearing Easter colors," says Kim Zoller, founder of Image Dynamics, who advises wearing "powerful" shades, like navy. Bottom line: Leave the pastel pink for when you get the job. Or, better yet, for weekends.



Keep accessories to a minimum.

Too many--and too big--accessories can come across as gaudy and unprofessional when you're vying for a job. Better to wear a simple piece of jewelry like small stud earrings or a drop necklace during your first meeting with a potential employer. And try swapping an oversize bag for a sleek portfolio to add a hint of professionalism.



Do your homework.

"You want the company to be able to imagine you working there," says Zoller. That means knowing the corporate culture of your potential employer. Many Internet companies or marketing and PR firms, for example, have lax dress codes. Keep in mind, however, while you want to look like you can fit in, you still should maintain a degree of professionalism. So leave the jeans and spaghetti straps at home.



Treat your second interview like your first.

Congratulations, you've scored a second interview. Now, treat meeting No. 2 like it's your first foray into the company. Most businesses have "screening interviews" in which human resources weeds out candidates. The second meeting is usually with the person who will become a direct supervisor, so all the more important to look the part. You can even wear the same outfit, as long as you aren't seeing the person who initially interviewed you.