



Each year, our office receives numerous questions from students about required attire for Career Center events, networking receptions, interviews, etc. Some common questions are:

- *What should I wear to a particular event?*
- *What does business attire mean?*
- *What does business casual mean?*

The purpose of this document is to provide you with some basic guidelines on what is appropriate attire for someone who is in the job search process, regardless of the event. Remember, first impressions are exceptionally important, and interviewers will make decisions about you within the first minute of meeting you (whether this is “fair” or not). You don’t want them to make a decision about your candidacy based on what you are wearing, so make the best first impression with a professional appearance.

What should I wear?

This question is asked frequently by students, as employers often do not state what the appropriate attire is for a particular event. It is your responsibility to research the company, their environment, and what is standard in that industry for dress. Dress according to their standard or based on what you have been told in discussions with the HR professionals.

But if you don’t have prior information about dress, or you haven’t been told explicitly not to wear a suit, “**When in doubt – wear business attire!**” It may not be fun to wear a suit to campus, but if you are trying to exude a positive professional image to a recruiter, alum, or company representative (i.e. make a good impression) – you should look your best! Remember, it is better to be overdressed than underdressed.

Casual clothing (jeans, shorts, t-shirts, etc) is **only** acceptable attire at an appointment with a CDC advisor. At all other events, business casual or business attire will be expected.

What is business attire?

There is some confusion around this as the words *business attire*, *business professional attire*, *business formal attire*, and *formal attire* are often used interchangeably. The first three mean the same thing. Formal attire is different and means a tuxedo. You will most likely not encounter “formal attire” requests in a job search or interview situation.

Whether the terms business, business professional, or business formal are used, you should be thinking about one thing and one thing only – a suit. Specific guidelines for business formal are on the next pages, but the essential component is the business suit for both men and women.

Next to the investment you are making in your education, the investment in at least one suit for interviews, office visits, receptions, etc. is imperative. For both men and women, a suit has two components: 1) pants (for men), pants or skirt (for women); 2) a jacket (both men and women). There are no exceptions to this – without both pieces, you are not wearing a suit, thus not adhering to the dress standard. There are several additional items that are required for business attire; a long sleeved dress shirt (for men), a dress shirt or blouse for women, a tie (for men) and dress shoes (both men and women), belts, etc.. Please refer to the following guidelines for business attire.

	Men	Women
Suit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dark Colored Single Breasted Tailored to fit your body <input type="checkbox"/> Pants with cuffs are considered more formal but are optional <input type="checkbox"/> Trousers should break at the top of your shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Skirted Suit or pant suit <input type="checkbox"/> Dark colors like Navy or Charcoal are acceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Skirt length should be at the knee or below (always practice sitting in the skirt to see how it looks when seated) <input type="checkbox"/> Stay away from leather, satin, velvet materials
Shirts/Blouses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> For the most conservative look, go for a white, cream, or pale-blue dress shirt with a collar with stays. <input type="checkbox"/> Buy fitted shirts and be sure that you can comfortably place your index finger between your neck and shirt collar. Sleeves should be ½ inch longer than your jacket sleeve <input type="checkbox"/> Long sleeved shirts <input type="checkbox"/> Cuff links are optional <input type="checkbox"/> Natural fabrics (cotton or cotton blend) – they look better and hold up under perspiration better than synthetics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid blouses that are too low or sheer <input type="checkbox"/> Choose fabrics that are compatible to the rest of the outfit <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid checks, lacy collars and flowery prints <input type="checkbox"/> Long sleeved shirts, NO sleeveless. <input type="checkbox"/> Natural fabrics (cotton or silk) – they look better and hold up under perspiration better than synthetics
Ties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in silk <input type="checkbox"/> Once the tie is tied it should touch the tip of the belt buckle <input type="checkbox"/> The width of tie should be between 2 ¾- 3 ¾ inches <input type="checkbox"/> When eating it is not acceptable to tuck tie in shirt or flip over shoulder. <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket scarves are generally reserved for evening wear <input type="checkbox"/> It should complement the suit, but not match it 	
Belts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Either wear belts OR suspenders but never both <input type="checkbox"/> Belts should match the color of your shoes <input type="checkbox"/> Suspenders can match either your tie or your trousers <input type="checkbox"/> Select a simple belt buckle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Belts should match the color of your shoes <input type="checkbox"/> No decorative belts.
Shoes, Socks and Hosiery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wing tip or oxford-style shoes <input type="checkbox"/> When wearing black, charcoal or navy trousers, wear black shoes <input type="checkbox"/> When wearing tan suits or khakis, cordovan or brown shoes work well <input type="checkbox"/> Buy the best shoes you can afford <input type="checkbox"/> Sock color should match either your trousers or your shoes <input type="checkbox"/> Socks should be light material with no patterns <input type="checkbox"/> Socks should be long enough so that you can cross your leg without showing skin <input type="checkbox"/> Polish your shoes! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Closed toe leather shoes most appropriate for any work situation <input type="checkbox"/> No stilettos or chunky heels <input type="checkbox"/> Only wear suede in the fall and winter <input type="checkbox"/> Shoes should be low-heeled <input type="checkbox"/> If you are tall, still wear heels to project confidence <input type="checkbox"/> Stockings or pantyhose - neutral skin-tones are the best bet <input type="checkbox"/> Keep an extra pair of stockings and/or pantyhose in your purse in case of runs

Hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Neatly trimmed facial hair may be appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Clean simple haircut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shoulder length or short is most professional <input type="checkbox"/> Ponytails are not appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> If hair is longer than shoulder length, put in chignon <input type="checkbox"/> Do not play with your hair or comb it in public
Cologne / Makeup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> It's better to avoid cologne completely since many interview rooms are small spaces and many people have allergies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Apply make up sparingly and make sure you apply in natural light to see if you have applied it correctly <input type="checkbox"/> It's better to avoid perfume completely since many interview rooms are small spaces and many people have allergies.
Nails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider manicures (nails are the second thing the interviewer notices other than your face) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Short manicured nails are most appropriate for the interview <input type="checkbox"/> Wear clear or neutral color nail polishes <input type="checkbox"/> Do not wear long acrylic nails
Briefcases / Purses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A leather portfolio in which to put your resume will suffice. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not carry a book bag into the interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't bring both your purse and portfolio into the interview as it can look awkward if you have to juggle them around <input type="checkbox"/> Do not carry a book bag into the interview <input type="checkbox"/> A leather portfolio is also acceptable
Outerwear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in a trench coat with a zip-out lining to get through the rainy or cold days. Tan is most versatile, but black and navy are also acceptable. Top coats are also professional in the winter <input type="checkbox"/> Do not wear jackets, parkas or slickers <input type="checkbox"/> A small black umbrella that can fit in your briefcase is most appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Leather lined gloves are most professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in a trench coat with a zip-out lining to get through the rainy or cold days. Tan is most versatile, but black and navy are also acceptable. Top coats are also professional in the winter <input type="checkbox"/> Do not wear jackets, parkas or slickers <input type="checkbox"/> A small black umbrella that can fit in your briefcase is most appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Leather lined gloves are most professional
Jewelry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A dependable watch with leather or metal band is appropriate (make sure all alarms on watch are turned off) <input type="checkbox"/> Only other jewelry should be a class or wedding ring – no earrings or facial piercings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Limit the amount of jewelry you wear to a few pieces <input type="checkbox"/> Do not wear ankle bracelets or earrings that dangle <input type="checkbox"/> If you have double pierced ears, only wear one pair of earrings to the interview
Undergarments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Always wear a white undershirt under your dress shirt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Slips should be worn with any unlined skirt <input type="checkbox"/> Wear a camisole if you are wearing a sheer blouse
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Do not bring a phone, mp3 player, or PDA into an interview. <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate any possibility of being interrupted during the interview. <input type="checkbox"/> Devices set to vibrate will still make a lot noise in a quiet room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Do not bring a phone, mp3 player, or PDA into an interview, even if you are sure it is turned off. <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate any possibility of being interrupted during the interview. <input type="checkbox"/> Devices set to vibrate will still make a lot noise in a quiet room

What is business casual attire?

Business casual does not mean *everything else*. There are certain guidelines to business casual that one is expected to adhere to. Just because you see the word business casual, does not mean casual clothes are acceptable. In some corporate environments, business casual means a suit or pants/sport coat without a tie – not jeans and a short-sleeved shirt.

Business casual means clothing that is tailored, well pressed and professional at all times. A good philosophy is to dress to the next level or for the job you want to have.

Business casual attire comes down to three concepts:

1. Show good professional judgment
2. Exercise leadership and lead by example
3. Always adhere to the norms of the company you are visiting, the presenter/speaker, the professional organization, etc.

Examples of appropriate attire for men include pressed and tailored slacks, khakis, and corduroys. Collared shirts – including golf shirts, long-sleeved dress shirts, sweaters worn over a collared shirt, or turtlenecks, particularly when worn with a jacket or sports coat is a polished look for men. Similarly, an appropriate look for women might include pressed and tailored slacks, khakis, corduroys, skirts, and complimentary blouses or sweaters. A jacket, blazer, or outer sweater is always a nice touch and leans the look more to business casual than casual. For both men and women, socks or hosiery of some type are recommended. Dresses, suits, and ties are optional.

On the other hand, examples of clothing NOT consistent with business casual attire would be:

- Denim clothing of any color or type (jeans, dresses, skirts)
- Tight-fitting or low-cut clothing
- Athletic attire, including sweat suits, spandex and leggings
- Shorts
- Inappropriately short skirts, skorts, Capri pants, or palazzo pants
- Sun dresses without a jacket
- T-shirts
- Tank tops
- Running/tennis shoes
- Flip-flops, casual clogs, mules or sandals

Additional tips for interviewing etiquette and style:

- Empty your pockets – no bulges, no noisy keys, coins, or phones.
- No gum, candy or cigarettes.
- Use a professional-looking portfolio and pen to take notes
- Have extra copies of your resume with you in case there are extra interviewers

As always, if you have specific questions about attire for an interview or career fair situation, please feel free to contact the CDC staff at 773-508-7716 or careercenter@luc.edu.