## Dress for Success: What to Wear to an Interview

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*In these days of more relaxed corporate dress codes, should you still ‘dress up’ for an interview?*

Accounting giant PwC came under media fire for all the wrong reasons in May after a receptionist was sent home for refusing to wear high heels. Since then, the Australian arm of PwC has officially abolished its traditional employee dress code.

Previously, men at the firm were expected to wear fine knitwear, smart shirts with collars, tailored trousers, traditional suits and dress shoes or boots.

Women had to wear similar attire, with additional options of tailored dresses, shirts, smart shirts or blouses and business-style shoes or boots.

The move was cited as a sign of the times: in a war for talent, PwC has to remain within reasonable sight of what employees want to wear – and the days of everyone dressing formally like extras from television show Mad Men are long gone.

But for those looking for a job, this latest development of the ‘casualisation’ of dress codes poses a dilemma. How should you dress for a job interview? If it seems like a minor detail, think again. Whether we like it or not, our appearance is the first thing people notice – first impressions are usually formed within 30 seconds of meeting someone new. Appearance impacts on hiring decisions because hiring managers are trying to visualize you in the role. If you look like you’re off to your kids’ weekend soccer match, they may struggle to see you meeting an important client face to face.

An interviewer is expecting you to dress appropriately for the interview. If not, you are showing them that you don’t understand the basics of what it takes to be successful in the workplace. That’s possibly one strike against you before you’ve even opened your mouth.

Yes, some industries and company cultures are definitely more collegiate in atmosphere and it’s not unusual to find employees wearing shorts, T-shirts and flip-flops to work.

But as demonstrated by the PwC example, other industries and companies remain conservative and have certain dress expectations.

To be safe, professional business attire is recommended. If you’re not sure, do some research – make time to visit the office before the interview to see how people dress. Remember, showing up in a three-piece suit and tie if everyone else is dressed in smart casual attire will perhaps demonstrate you won’t fit the culture.

**For women, common mistakes are:**

Skirts that are too short or tight

Too much cleavage

Scuffed shoes or holes in stockings

Excessive perfume or makeup

**Some tips to keep in mind:**

You want to feel confident: what you wear and how you wear it can help convey confidence. If you aren’t comfortable in your outfit that will likely be conveyed in the interview.

Have a ‘power outfit’, a favourite skirt that always makes you feel great when you wear it. Pair it with a blazer to give that more formal edge. Showing off your personality through your clothes is totally fine – just be wary of doing that with a flouro orange mini skirt. And for guys – consider holding off on wearing that Playboy tie.

If you’re going for a job with a more casual culture, dress as you would to attend a Saturday night dinner party with friends – and if in doubt, bring a jacket: carry it with you so you can wear it if you need to formalize yourself in an instant, or hold it if not.

Still not convinced your dress is worth thinking about when you’re going for an interview? Consider this: half the battle in interviewing is proving that you belong and can be part of the team. Your dress can be your greatest help; or it can be your biggest hindrance if you get it wrong.