Dressing for success

When it comes to interviews and other professional events, dressing too formally is generally better than dressing too casual. Putting together a professional-looking outfit requires planning ahead. Research the organization you are interviewing with as well as the industry to get a feel for appropriate dress. When in doubt, ask a friend or relative if the outfit you have picked out looks professional enough. To help with planning your outfit, we have compiled a list of tips that any candidate can use to help put together an ensemble that will surely make a good first impression.

Tips for looking your best

Make sure what you are wearing is something that is comfortable and makes you feel confident. As a general rule, stick to black, gray or navy suites, pants or skirts that are a solid color or have a very subtle pattern.

Choose a shirt or blouse that coordinates well with your outfit, paying attention to potentially clashing patterns or colors.

If wearing makeup, use neutral colors and minimal amounts of eyeshadow, lipstick, blush and foundation.

Limited jewelry is appropriate. If you’re pursuing employment in a more creative field, it is appropriate for your style to be more self-expressive.

Neatly groom your hair. Keep it clean and styled.

If wearing a tie, select one that is solid, striped or with a small pattern.

Avoid spraying too much cologne or perfume that can distract from your interview.

Make sure you’ve removed the tags from your new clothes and have washed and tried the outfit beforehand.

Be sure your clothes are clean and free of wrinkles or creases.

Make sure your shoes are comfortable, in good condition and that you can stand in them for an extended period if time.

Shower, brush your teeth and make sure your hands and fingernails are clean.

Rather than bring a large backpack, carry a padfolio with you to take notes in and keep business cards.

Looking your best on a budget

Having a professional-looking wardrobe doesn’t have to drain your bank account. Check local consignment, thrift stores and outlet malls for great deals on clothes, accessories and shoes. Subscribe to emails from your favorite clothing stores to get notified of upcoming sales and to receive coupons.
Types of interviews

**Phone**

**Advantage:** The employer cannot see what you see, lay out all of your interview answers in front of you.

- Dress for the interview - Even though they can’t see you, dressing for the interview will help you feel more confident
- Avoid background noises – Be conscious of your surrounds
- Your voice becomes MORE important
- Keep your answers on the shorter side; end strong, don’t trail off
- Keep track of your response times with a clock timer
- Use your notes to help you but do not read from a script
- Set up and prepare at least 10 minutes before the interview starts
- Listen - Make sure you are listening so you can answer the question that was asked
- Try to use a headset to keep your hands free
- Smile, your voice naturally has more enthusiasm when smiling
- Have a writing pad and pen to write down questions

**Disadvantage:** You cannot read their body language to know how they are responding to you.

**In-person**

**Advantage:** You can clearly observe their body language and adjust your answers and tone accordingly.

- Make sure you have the time and location correct
- Get directions – leave early to give yourself extra time
- Arrive 15 minutes early
- Turn off your phone
- Make note of everyone you meet for thank you’s
- Your confidence can be demonstrated with eye contact, body language and your handshake
- Prepare for any temperature by lightly layering your clothing
- Factor weather conditions into your transportation and clothing choices
- Bring water, chap stick, a comb/brush, and other last-minute provisions you might need
- Refer to the Dressing for Success guide

**Disadvantage:** All of your answers need to be in your head. It is difficult to reference notes you took to prepare.

**Virtual**

**Advantage:** It may not be as nerve wrecking over a video then it is in person.

- Set up your account and test your settings ahead of time
- Be conscious of your background - Make sure your background setting is not distracting
- Dress for the interview from head to toe
- Double check to see if the virtual interview is real time or virtual
- Check your internet quality and connection
- Test your technology ahead of time
- Pay attention to lighting, camera angle, internet speed, video quality, and audio quality
- Have a backup plan if your technology fails
- Be ready 15 minutes before the interview begins
- Try not to use your cell phone for video appointments
- Turn off notifications on your devices and be free from distractions

**Disadvantage:** The communication is not as fluid as an in-person interview due to the limitations of screens.

**Career tip:**

After the interview write down questions you weren’t too confident in responding to be able to practice them for future interviews.