Put Your Best Foot Forward:  
A Guide to Dressing for Interviews, Information Sessions, and More

Anyone who says image isn’t everything never went on a job interview. USA Today reports that job candidates today are showing up at prospective employers’ offices in everything from baggy pants to purple sweat suits, creating a negative image before the interview even begins. Choosing appropriate attire for the job search process can be stressful, but with a little know-how you can impress interviewers, career fair representatives, and information session coordinators alike with your style and panache. Leave the velour sweats at home – it’s game time, and self-presentation is one of the best weapons in your arsenal.

First things first. What’s business casual, anyway? How does it differ from business formal – and do you need to buy a suit? Students and Career Center staff members at Boston College took time out of their busy days to model the latest fashions in career wear.

DU Note Don’t Trust Us, Trust Them: Here are some great Web sites for additional information:

Dress to Achieve  http://www.symsdress.com/index.htm
Dressing for the Interview, by Industry
How to Ace a Meal Interview
  http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/interview/How_to_Ace_a_Meal_Interview__2003428-1403.html?subtopic=Types+of+Interviews

BUSINESS FORMAL

Joe Jobseeker

Nidia Needajob
BUSINESS CASUAL

Jennifer Justhired

DU Comments:
We think the sleeves rolled up might be a too casual, but overall very nice!

John Justa-Boutright models two acceptable forms of business casual attire for men

Note
Suits are the proper attire for any business formal event, which includes interviews and pre-interview nights (unless otherwise noted), and to a lesser extent, career fairs. Business casual is the preferred dress for information sessions and other networking events on campus.
Additional Tips for Interview Dress and Grooming ~

**For Both Genders**

- Try on your interview outfit ahead of time to ensure comfort and a good fit.
- Hair should be neatly trimmed, styled, and in a color that occurs naturally. For colored hair, avoid roots showing. If your hair falls below the shoulders, pull it back.
- Shoes should be polished – and comfortable! Wearing sneakers to your interview and changing into dress shoes when you arrive is a good way to avoid pain (and scuff marks). You would be surprised at how many people judge you by your shoes.
- Lint is never in style. Invest in a mini lint roller (available at any drugstore) and carry it with you.
- Don’t wear heavy perfume, cologne, or aftershave. Scent is one of the most powerful senses, and you don’t want to make your interviewer nauseous.
- Avoid eating foods made with garlic or onions before your interview.
- Be especially vigilant about your self-presentation at meal interviews – the Holy Grail of image-making.
- NO cell phones in the interview building, too risky. You could forget and leave it on!
- Be sure to cover all tattoos and take out any piercings not in your ears, most likely it is in the dress code policy.
- An all-weather (i.e. trench) coat and a well-maintained briefcase / tote / portfolio are essential finishing pieces for most business outfits. Select a good quality trench coat with a zip-out liner so you can wear it year ‘round. You are often wearing a coat when you meet someone for the first time. Make sure this is one of the best items in your wardrobe.

**For Women**

- Jacket does not wrinkle across the back or under the collar, buttons easily and does not pull across the back with sleeves at wrist bone
- Blouses should be conservative, and all buttons should be buttoned, easily – not strained. Low-cut tops may work on TV, but not in a real interview. Longer than the hip bone with neckline (2" above the cleavage). Sleeveless blouses or tops underneath a jacket only.
- Skirt / pants pleats should not pull open and not crease or pull across break of leg.
- Skirt should easily turn around your body and straight skirts and pants should hang from buttocks in a straight line and not curve under. Avoid high split in skirt and no slip showing between split in skirt.
- Skirt cannot be shorter than "around the knee" and should be loose enough for two fingers to be inserted in waistband so there are no visible lines under skirt.
- If wearing a dress, make it a coat dress, shirt dress or two piece with a conservative neckline (2" above cleavage), medium to long sleeve, medium to small print, not floral.
- Shoes need to be neutral shades, no sandals or "strappy" shoes, avoid too high or narrow heels.
- Hose are natural color that blend with hemline or are the same shade as shoes, or lighter. Avoid patterned or textured hose and an extra pair to avoid a run-in-the-hose debacle.
- Jewelry should be small, minimal and muted – one set of earrings per ear, one ring per hand. Avoid noisy, dangling or large hooped earrings. Also no tinted glasses.
- Makeup and nail polish should be in natural hues. Keep fingernails short to medium length, with no chips.
- Avoid dark lingerie with light clothing, none showing through or outside of clothing.
- Carry a briefcase or portfolio instead of a purse.
Additional Tips for Interview Dress and Grooming, cont.

For Men

- Beards and mustaches should be well-groomed and neatly trimmed.
- No earrings or visible body piercings, please.
- The shirt sleeve cuff should be loose, buttoned and extend to the end of your wrist.
- A classic "Straight" collar is appropriate for all suits. It is traditional and conservative.
- The "Tab" or "Pin" collars are other traditional shirts. They are both neat and formal.
- The smaller the pattern and the darker the tie, the more authoritative the look. Preferably, the point of your tie would be higher than your belt buckle.
- Suits should be dark blue, grey, or charcoal/black. When buttoning the jacket of a three button suit, fasten the top two buttons. A double breasted suit should always be buttoned when standing. The cuff of your shirt should extend about a half inch beyond a jacket sleeve.
- Pant fit is everything. Too big or too tight throws off the balance of your overall image. Pant hems should clear the shoe heel, but rest on the front of the shoe, creating a slight break.
- Dark socks such as navy, black or brown are best. Over-the-calf socks are much better than shorter styles. Going without socks is never appropriate in a business setting.
- Best shoes are oxfords, dress shoes that tie or at a minimum, dress loafers. For many men, shoes are an afterthought, but cheap or uncared for shoes can ruin an otherwise polished appearance.

More Information:

Images / examples of dress codes for different work environments:
http://humanresources.about.com/od/workrelationships/tp/dress_code_collect.htm

Customer interaction / job fair dress code:
http://humanresources.about.com/od/workrelationships/a/dress_travel.htm?p=1

Interview dress and video on your body image at an interview:
http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/dressforsuccess.htm