

## EXECUTIVE GUIDELINES: MEN'S CLOTHING

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Appearance forms perceptions very quickly. We can debate the accuracy of the perceptions but there is little debate that the impact is significant. Clothing expectations vary based on organization, industry, geographic location and position. Each of us must make a choice about how we dress and understand the implications of those choices.

- ◆ Most companies expect suits for key occasions.
  - Preferred suit colors:
    - ⇒ Gray, black, dark blue (tan in summer) generally accepted
    - ⇒ Brown colors accepted in some areas of the country.
    - ⇒ In some organizations: a navy blazer with gray or beige trousers
  - Suits should be made of top quality fabric with muted patterns.
  - Good fit and cut are very important. Select suits that require the minimum tailoring and then be sure the tailoring results in a “custom look.” When your weight changes, change your wardrobe in a timely manner. Avoid having your clothing look too tight for slacks.
  - Expect to pay \$500 or more for a suit. Those that do recognize those that don't.
- ◆ Shirts should be 100% cotton
  - Quality cotton oxford shirts should be professionally laundered with heavy starch and on hangers.
  - Safest colors are white and light blue. Solid colors and stripes are the next safest.
  - Long sleeve shirts with a cotton undershirt are worn year round.
  - Collar style:
    - ⇒ With single breasted suit: button down preferred
    - ⇒ With double breasted suit: button tab preferred
    - ⇒ Loose collars should lay flat or don't wear them.
    - ⇒ Size should be fitted without choking - two fingers in neck (when buttoned) should be comfortable.
  - Expect to spend \$60 or more for a shirt.
- ◆ Ties should be conservative and in natural materials
  - Silk ties are preferred.
  - Colors should blend well with the suit, socks and shirt.
  - The tie length should reach the belt level.
  - Conservative designs are best.

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- Expect to pay \$40 or more for ties.
- ◆ Shoes and socks
  - Wing-tip or cap-toe shoes in conservative organizations are the rule. Loafers are acceptable in more informal organizations.
  - One color shoes in black or cordovan are always appropriate (and brown shoes with brown suits). They should always be polished and in good repair.
  - Sock color should match the shoes or the suit.
  - Socks should reach the mid-calf so that leg does not show when sitting.
- ◆ Accessories are noticed
  - The plain leather belt should match the shoe color. The buckle should be simple and normally gold in color.
  - One simple ring on each hand is the maximum.
  - Cuff links are optional and appropriate.
  - A simple gold watch is preferred. Other wrist bracelets are generally not desirable. Avoid other jewelry or pins (possible exception is company logo pin).
  - Carry a quality pen with you. When not wearing suit coat - one pen in shirt pocket is acceptable. (Do not carry notes in shirt pocket.)
- ◆ Grooming
  - Get a haircut before you need one. Keep hair neat and in place. Don't try to cover-up baldness by long side hairs combed over.
  - Clean shaven is the normal expectation. Evening meetings may require a "touch-up" on the beard.
  - General cleanliness, trimmed nails, etc. are expected.
- ◆ "Business Casual" is not casual
  - Defining casual in the workplace is dynamic today. For the executive it is more restrictive.
  - In many organizations, *business casual* is a nice sport coat, no tie and a nice pair of loafers. Others a very nice sweater and tailored slacks are reasonable.
    - ⇒ Sport coats should be high quality and fit (like suits) - \$300 and up
    - ⇒ Slacks should be tailored (like suits) in conservative colors and plain or no pattern (gray, khaki, dark blue are good colors) - \$125 and up

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- ⇒ Simple, conservative design sweaters of natural materials - \$100 and up
- ⇒ Sport shirts should be high quality, made of natural materials and starched - \$50 and up

### ◆ Special events

- Good business attire is suitable for most dinners and receptions.
  - Conferences
    - ⇒ Normal business attire is assumed for most conferences
    - ⇒ Resort locations typically allow more casual dress
  - Travel days generally are “business casual.”
  - Weekend meetings generally are “business casual.”
  - Golf games and other events require appropriate dress to that event. Top quality and conservative are the rule for such attire.
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