

Appearance forms perceptions very quickly. We can debate the accuracy of the perceptions but, there is little debate that the impact is significant. It is important to discover and cultivate your own personal style. It is also important to make choices that create a perception that fits with the expectations of your profession and workplace environment. There are few rules that fit all situations and geographical areas. The suggestions below are meant to serve as guidelines.

◆ Suits and dresses.

• Suits:

- ⇒ Gray, black, dark blue are most accepted and your wardrobe should contain at least one suit in these colors. These colors are traditionally more formal and conservative. Be current, but classic. Shop at a store such as Nordstrom's which has a complimentary personal shopping service to stay on top of trends.
- ⇒ Neutral colors (tan, cream, pale green or pale yellow) are good choices for videotaped or filmed presentations. If your coloring is light you may need to add color with accessories to avoid looking washed out.
- ⇒ Extremely bright colors - bright reds, electric blues and hot pinks or loud prints are typically poor choices.

- Suits, dresses or slacks and pantsuits should be made of top quality fabric. This is as important as the fit of the garment. Look for natural fibers such as silk, raw silk, cotton, linen, wool or wool blends and gabardines.

- Fit: allow 1" of fabric on either side of the hips to avoid looking too tight for slacks. Jackets and blouses should not pull across the bust line.

- ⇒ Use a solid, single color scheme with color touches added with scarves or accessories is the best choice.
- ⇒ Keep trims and accessories subtle. Go with simple gold or silver jewelry for your safest bet if you're not sure of how formal the setting is.
- ⇒ A solid color scheme will also make you look taller than two different colors.

◆ Daily choices

- Get a haircut before you need one. Keep hair neat and in place.
- Too much makeup is as poorly perceived as none at all.
- Watch the length of the skirt and keep the cleavage covered.

EXECUTIVE GUIDELINES: WOMEN'S CLOTHING

- ◆ “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 jacket or a very nice sweater and tailored slacks are reasonable.
 - ⇒ Casual jackets 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
 - ⇒ Simple, conservative design sweaters of natural materials - \$100 and up
 - ⇒ 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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