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Author's Statement

I chose to write a guide about professionalism to not only help myself but other students, faculty, and staff. Ball State University's Career Center has a lot of resources that cover these topics, but they did not have one document that covered several in detail. I also wanted to include information from other career centers and sources to provide and even more detailed guide. I did not see any information about social network etiquette on the Career Center's links and pages, which has become a hot topic in professionalism. I wanted to include that information to warn students, faculty, and staff how to properly use social network websites in maintain a professional appearance. Included with this thesis is a copy of my thesis presentation, Social Networking Etiquette. This topic was chosen for the presentation because the audience was mostly students, who typically use these sites on a daily basis. I knew this thesis would be helpful to me as a professional, but this document can also be helpful to Ball State University students, faculty, staff and any other person who requests a copy or has access to Bracken Library.

While interviews and resumes are an important part of professionalism and etiquette, I chose briefly mention the topics in my thesis. I covered dress for interviews, but including more information specific to interviews would result in a very large document. Interviews will differ based upon the company and industry standards. Resume creation is based upon personal preferences, personal experience, and industry standards. I did not feel that I could adequately cover the topic in this guide and the Ball State University business class ISOM 249 already covers this topic. For the sake of academic integrity, I did not want to copy the information taught in that class. Anyone can find a wealth of information on the Internet and in libraries about resumes and interview tips and questions if they are interested in the subject.

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Professional Attire

Two professionals from the same field will likely give two related, but different opinions about how to dress professionally. It can be confusing when shopping for suits and professional attire because the fashion industry provides many options. The requirements can be very conservative in some professions and very liberal in others. Some professions provide uniforms while others leave it up to the individual to decide. Look at what other professionals in the field are wearing to get an idea of how to dress. This can be done by observing interviewers, potential coworkers, and supervisors wear at on-site interviews and professional events.

When to Dress Professionally

Professional dress applies to the following people and careers.

Events/Professions

- Interviewers and interviewees
- Lawyers
- Plaintiffs, defendants, and other people in court
- Television professionals:
    - News anchors
    - Television hosts
- Public speakers
- Consultants
- Meeting planners
- Government employees:
    - Federal, state, city, and county officials
    - Law enforcement professionals that are not required to wear uniforms
- Politicians
- Professionals:
    - Accountants
    - Engineers
    - Executive and management level professionals
    - Finance professionals
    - Marketing and sales professionals
    - Public relations professionals
    - Real estate professionals
    - Staffing professionals
- School and college Administrators
- Anyone who needs to project a refined, credible image.

(Yasko-Magnum, 2007, 41-42)

If a particular profession or a related one of interest is not in the list on the previous page, it is always appropriate to ask a professional in the field which professional attire is appropriate.

Remember, professional attire will vary between industries and even between companies in the same industry.

Interviewees

It is imperative to dress professionally for interviews. Wearing a suit shows interviewers from first glance that the interviewee considers it is a professional meeting. Men and women should wear a two-piece matched suit (jacket and pants) with a buttoned shirt to an interview (Virginia, 2011b). The suit should be a solid color or have a subtle weave or plaid pattern. These patterns are safest because they will look solid from across a room (Virginia, 2011b). The most conservative colors for suits are navy and dark gray, but also black for women (Virginia, 2011b). "Wool, wool blends, or other good quality natural and synthetic fibers, are generally the best fabrics in all seasons" and to "avoid lower quality acetate/rayon blends" (Virginia, 2011b, paragraph 2). The rest of the Professional Dress section describes guidelines in greater detail for first men, and then women.

Men

Men have been dressing professionally for centuries. Over this time, a standard dress code has developed globally. By following the guidelines listed in the men's subsections, individuals will be dressed for success in most business environments.

Suits

The most conservative suit is a single-breasted wool or wool-blend suit (Ball, 2007). "Double-breasted [jacket] styles are trendier" (Ball, 2007, 8). The Men's Wearhouse website says that single-breasted jackets have one row of one to four buttons down the front (MW, 2011). Double-breasted jackets have two rows of buttons and the jacket lapels overlap (MW, 2011). The most common style is a single-breasted jacket with two or three buttons (MW, 2011). A tall, slender man may be able to successfully wear a four-button jacket. Never fasten the bottom button on a two or three button jacket. It prevents wrinkles and the bottom button from popping of when sitting down. Conservative suits are usually navy and dark gray and may or may not have pinstripes (Ball, 2007). Black and other colors in neutral muted plaids and tweeds are acceptable alternatives (Ball, 2007). Because black is the typical color for formal tuxedos, black suits can be seen as too flashy for the professional environment (TEKsystems, 2011). The following page has three examples of professional suit jackets styles and colors.

Figure 1 Single-Breasted Plaid

Figure 2 Single-Breasted Solid

Figure 3 Double-Breasted Pinstripe

The look and fit of a suit is also an important detail when dressing for success. All clothing should be free of holes and wrinkles. If the jacket is too big, it wrinkles vertically. If it too small, the jacket will wrinkle horizontally. Suit size is determined by the circumference of the chest and height (MW, 2011). The chest circumference determines the jacket size and height determines the length associated with the suit (MW, 2011). "Short suits are appropriate for men between 5'5" and 5'8" tall, regular for 5'9" to around 6'0", long for 6'0" to 6'2", and extra-long for men between 6'3" and 6'5" (MW, 2011, paragraph 1). Any man over 6'7" may require a specialized suit for tall men (MW, 2011). Besides the length of the full suit, other measurements are taken to determine jacket and pant size.

If a man is considered to be average build, the jacket size is typically six inches larger than the pant waist size (MW, 2011). Of course not every man is average build. Executive-cut suit jackets are only two to four inches larger than the slacks to accommodate men that have a larger belly in proportion to their chest (MW, 2011). The slacks of the suit should fit at the natural waist, which is between the bellybutton and hipbone (MW, 2011). The hem of the slacks should reach the shoe (MW, 2011). "A slight break, where the hem hits midway between the top and sole of the shoe, is the go-to choice for most men" (MW, 2011, paragraph 4). From a side view of the shoe, midway between the top and sole so the shoe is where the hem of the pant leg ends. If the pants reach this point, then the fabric that touches the front of the shoe will crease. A break creates a light crease near the bottom of the slacks due to the length of the pants and the point at which they touch the top of the shoe. A full break, or a deep crease, is suggested for tall men and no break near the hem of the pant leg can make a trendy look as well (MW, 2011). If the pants do not break, make sure they are an appropriate length. When fitted for a suit, men can wear their dress shoes to decide which break they prefer.

The best advice for purchasing a suit would be to ask a sales associate to take measurements. Men's Wearhouse automatically does this when customers come to the store to purchase a suit. The sales associates find the correct fit for a particular customer's build. Slacks tend to wear out faster than jackets, so it is wise to purchase several pairs of matching slacks to

replace worn out slacks (MW, 2011). To prevent different wear patterns in the pieces, only wear suit pants with the suit jacket instead of separately. Also, have both pieces dry cleaned together. It may be advisable to have a suit tailor-made, but then it can be more expensive to replace a piece. It may be cheaper to buy a suit off the rack for professionals with fairly average body proportions. A professional shirt should also be purchased to wear with the suit.

Shirts

The best fabric for professional shirts worn with a suit is a traditional cotton or cotton-blend long sleeve, collared shirt (Ball, 2007). "The sleeves should measure about one inch below [the] wrist bone and show about a quarter-inch beyond [the] suit sleeve" (MW, 2011, paragraph 6). The collar should either be straight or have buttons (Ball, 2007). Two fingers should fit between the neck and collar (MW, 2011). A professional man should have fifteen dress shirts, or three weeks' worth, to have at least a week's worth of clean shirts (MW, 2011). At least half should be solid white or solid blue to make it easier to pair with ties (MW, 2011). After men have the basics, then they can choose different patterns and textures (MW, 2011). The most conservative colors are white and light blue (Ball, 2007). Pinstripe and chalk-stripe shirts are more appropriate for less conservative situations (Ball, 2007). Collared shirts should always be tucked into the waistband of the pants. The collared shirt tails are usually curved so that the shirt will stay tucked in when sitting and moving around (MW, 2011). The employees at a suit store will generally recommend a shirt and tie when selling suits.

Ties

A professional man is expected to know how to tie his own tie. The easiest knot is the half-Windsor. Other acceptable knots are the four-in-hand knot and the full-Windsor knot. The knot should fit the width of the collar on the dress shirt (MW, 2011). The Windsor knots are more symmetrical and look more professional (MW, 2011). The four-in-hand knot is more asymmetrical than the other tie knots, so the collar of the shirt should be used to help cover the asymmetry. Examples of the knots are shown in Figure 4 below. Some knots will be more asymmetrical than others. Adjust the knot or cover the asymmetry with the collar for a more professional appearance. The fabric of the tie might make it hard to make a symmetric knot.

Figure 4 Tie Knots

A full-Windsor knot is a triangular knot that is thicker and wider than other knots. It projects confidence and is a good knot for presentations, interviews, court appearances and other events (MW, 2011). The steps below demonstrate how to tie a full-Windsor knot.

"**1**) Start with the wide end of [the] necktie on the right, extending about 12 inches below the narrow end on the left."
2) Then cross the wide end over the narrow end.
3) Bring the wide end up through the loop between the collar and tie.
4) Then bring the wide end back down.
5) Pull the wide end underneath the narrow end and to the right, back through the loop and to the right again so that the wide end is inside out.
6) Bring the wide end across the front from right to left.
7) Then pull the wide end up through the loop again.
8) Bring the wide end down through the knot in front.
9) And -- using both hands -- tighten the knot carefully and draw it up to the collar."

(Polil, 2011)

Silk is the best fabric for ties, but polyester that looks like silk is an acceptable substitute (Ball, 2007). To prolong the life of ties, untie them after wear and hang them up (MW, 2011). Repetitive patterns like polka-dot and paisley are acceptable patterns for traditional professions, such as law, business, and accounting. Other professions may accept more trendy floral patterns. Avoid novelty ties because they do not compliment a professional look as well as solid and subtle print ties (Ball, 2007). The ties below are examples of acceptable styles, colors, and fabrics.

Figure 5 Striped Silk

Figure 6 Solid Silk

Figure 7 Geometric Silk

A tie usually measures 58 inches in length and 3½ inches at its widest point (MW, 2011). If individuals prefer a skinny tie, they should choose one that is at least 2¼ wide (MW, 2011). When tied, the tie should just reach the belt buckle and the tail should fit in the lapel loop on back (MW, 2011). For men over six feet, a 62-inch, extra-long tie will ensure that the tie reaches the belt buckle (MW, 2011). Again, the sales associate will be able to help in deciding which tie fits best.

Shoes

Shoes should be made of leather or simulated leather and should lace up (Ball, 2007). The laces should not be broken or frayed and the edging of the shoes should not be faded (Ball, 2007). Shoes should also be shined to maintain a professional appearance (Ball, 2007). Dark colors like black, dark brown, and cordovan are most appropriate (Ball, 2007). Shoes should match the belt that is worn with the suit (Ball, 2007). Loafers are more appropriate for business casual attire. Figures 8, 9, and 10 below demonstrate appropriate professional shoes for men.

Figure 8 Cordovan Wingtips

Figure 9 Black Lace-up

Figure 10 Brown Lace-up

Socks

Dress socks should be worn with suits. Socks should match the color of pants or shoes (Virginia, 2011b). The best pattern is a solid, but conservative argyle (diamond-pattern) would also be appropriate (Virginia, 2011b). Socks should be long enough to reach at least mid-calf to cover the leg when sitting (Virginia, 2011b).

Jewelry

Purchase a quality watch, such as a Rolex, to wear with a professional suit. Watches are always an acceptable accessory when dressing for success. Wedding rings and other conservative men's rings are also acceptable (Ball, 2007). Bracelets and earrings are a casual look and should be avoided during interviews and at work (Ball, 2007). For facial piercings, do not wear that jewelry to the interview or job unless it is known to be acceptable or not (North Dakota State University Career Center, 2011c). For most professions, facial jewelry is unacceptable in professional settings. For more about piercings, see the Body Art section for men and women.

Hair and Nails

Of course, personal hygiene is important in any profession. Professional men should have clean hair, nails, and facial hair (Ball, 2007). Short hairstyles are the most conservative (Ball, 2007). Facial hair should be groomed daily and mustaches should be well above the upper lip (Ball, 2007). Hair color should also be conservative (NORTH, 2011c). Nails should be clean, well groomed, and a moderate length (Ball, 2007). Generally men do not wear nail polish and it should not be worn in a professional environment.

Women

Professional attire for women offers many more style choices. Women do not have a strict, classic professional style like men, making it important to exercise good judgment when creating a professional wardrobe. The building blocks of a professional wardrobe should mimic the classic styles of a man's suit. However, there can be many more options for women to choose from when building their professional wardrobe.

Suits

Due to seasonal fashions, women have more flexibility in their dress choices. For interviews and most professions, the best suit choices for women are a skirt suit, pant suit, or tailored dress (Ball, 2007). As with men, two-piece matched suits are the best choice for a woman's suit. When choosing skirt suits and dresses, make sure the hem is very near to the knee (Ball, 2007). Make sure it is not too high above the knee. Longer skirts may be acceptable, but generally skirt suits are knee-length. Any slits should be small in the back of the garment (Virginia, 2011b). For pant suits, the pants should be creased and fit appropriately; they should not be too tight or too loose (Virginia, 2011b). The pant suit is the best choice for getting in and out of vehicles throughout the day (Virginia, 2011b). Conservative, classic styles are good choices because they are more versatile (Ball, 2007). The best fabrics are light wool or wool gabardine (Ball, 2007). The best colors are neutral colors, such as black, brown, gray, and other dark colors. The most professional pattern is solid, followed by houndstooth, tweed, and plaid (Ball, 2007). Again, fit is important. If the jacket wrinkles vertically, it is too large. If it wrinkles horizontally, it is too tight. Women can also have suits tailor-made to ensure proper fit. Figures 11, 12, and 13 below demonstrate acceptable professional attire outfits for women: a skirt suit, a pant suit, and a tailored dress.

Figure 11 Skirt Suit

Figure 12 Pant Suit

Figure 13 Tailored Dress

Shirts

Women also have more versatility in shirts than men. Women can wear a collared shirt, dress shirt, or sweater underneath their suit jacket. Shirts should not be too tight or too loose. The same rules for the fit of a jacket fit apply to shirts. The best color choice for an interview would be a white or light blue conservative collared shirt with buttons (Ball, 2007). If the shirt has a print, it should be small and not noticeable from across the room (Virginia, 2011b). A long sleeve shirt would be best, but women's fashion does not always make it easy to find one. Three-quarters length and short sleeved button up shirts can be professional as long as they meet the other guidelines stated above. Despite style, the shirt should cover all cleavage (Virginia, 2011b). If it does not, wear a coordinating camisole underneath to cover it. Examples of shirts are shown in Figures 14, 15, and 16 below.

Figure 14 White Collared Shirt

Figure 15 Blue Collared Shirt

Figure 16 Long-Sleeve Top

As a general rule, shirts should be tucked into the pants in a professional environment. If the shirt falls below the jacket of the suit, tuck it in. Some shirts are cut high and are not meant to be tucked in. If the shirt will stay tucked in, tuck it in. However, if the bottom is covered by the jacket, it may be acceptable to leave it un-tucked if it does not show. To look the most professional, tuck in all shirts when wearing a business suit.

Shoes

The most professional shoes are leather-closed toe pumps with heels that measure one to two inches (Ball, 2007). Shoes should be a conservative color that compliments the suit (Ball, 2007). Unless in the fashion industry, do not try to make a statement with shoe color during an interview or on the first few days of the job. Avoid stilettos, platform shoes, and shoes that are difficult to comfortably wear all day (Virginia, 2011b). Shoes should be comfortable to wear because individuals may have to stand for extended periods of time throughout the day throughout the day (Virginia, 2011). Examples of professional shoes for women are shown in figures 17, 18, and 19 on the next page.

Figure 17 Black Leather Pump

Figure 18 Brown Microfiber Pumps

Figure 19 Black Patent Leather Pump

Socks/Hosiery

Generally, socks are not worn with high heels, although current fashion trends allow it. For the professional environment, wear socks only with shoes that cover the entire foot. No-show socks are also available that cover just the toes and heel and are a great alternative for women who want to keep their feet dry or warm. Women can also wear nice flats in a professional environment as long as they are a conservative color and style. As with heels, it is best to wear socks with shoes that cover the entire foot or no-show shocks.

It is always safe to wear pantyhose, which is a must when wearing a dress or suit in an interview or on the job (Ball, 2007). Choose a plain sheer in a neutral color that compliments the suit (Virginia, 2011b). Hosiery would be preferred to no-show socks. Avoid patterned hosiery and hosiery that highly contrast with suit color (Virginia, 2011b).

Jewelry

Jewelry can be a nice complement to a professional outfit, as long as it is worn in moderation. Women should not wear dangling earrings, lots of rings, or noisy bracelets (Ball, 2007). If the jewelry moves a lot or makes noise, it can be distracting during interviews or meetings with clients. Instead, choose small earrings and simple necklaces (Ball, 2007). Conservative watches are also appropriate (Virginia, 2011b). The best choices of jewelry are gold, silver, and pearl (Ball, 2007). Wearing jewelry in facial or body piercings is probably not appropriate in any professional environment. Ask a professional in the field about general rules. More information on piercings can be found in the Body Art section for men and women. Also, look to female coworkers or company dress code manuals to gain insight on the best choices for a particular company.

Accessories

Women also have more choices than men when it comes to accessories. Handbags, belts, and scarves should be conservative and compliment the professional outfit (Ball, 2007). Avoid extreme patterns and colors (Ball, 2007). The handbag/purse should be versatile enough to coordinate with many outfits (Ball, 2007). Furthermore, "purse color should coordinate with shoes" (Virginia, 2011b, paragraph 3). Leather briefcases are a great alternative to a purse (Virginia, 2011b). Avoid large purses, party purses, and little girl type purses (Virginia, 2011b). Most importantly, accessories should not stand out more than the person wearing them.

Makeup

Apply makeup to enhance features while creating a natural look. (Ball, 2007). Even for women that don't normally wear makeup, a little can make a women look more polished when dressed professionally (Virginia, 2011b). As with clothing choices, avoid extreme colors and patterns.

Nails

Nails should be clean, well groomed, and a moderate length (Ball, 2007). Choose natural nail polish colors and styles, such as the French tip. Fake nails are acceptable if they are of moderate length and are painted appropriately.

Hair

Short hairstyles are always professional (Ball, 2007). Long hair should be pulled back from the face (Ball, 2007). Professional women should pick hairstyles that fit the face, lifestyle, profession, and personality (Ball, 2007). When dying hair, choose colors close to the natural hair color. Bleached-out hair looks sloppy (Ball, 2007). Hair should always be clean, neat, and groomed (Ball, 2007). The next section has more information about hair color and body art for men and women.

Men and Women: Body Art

Body art is defined as "eyebrow, nose, tongue or lip piercings, visible tattoos and alternative hairstyles/color" (North, 2011c). Although body art does not necessarily make people less professional, it is best to keep body art to a minimum (North, 2011c). Research the company to see if they have a dress code or specific policies regarding body art. North Dakota State University's Career Center website recommends general guidelines listed below.

- Keep jewelry to the least amount possible.
- Wear only one ring per hand.
- Try to limit piercings, by taking them out or wearing clear spacers.
- Wear conservative (small) earrings.
- If tattoos can be covered, do so, especially if they can be seen as offensive.
- Keep hair color looking natural (black, brunette, blonde, auburn, grey, etc.).
- Hair should be well trimmed, clean, and neat no matter the style.
- If nail polish is worn, pick non-extreme colors, like clear or light pinks.

(North, 2011c)

The website also provides some comments from employers. One of the main themes from the comments is to conceal tattoos and piercings for interviews (North, 2011c). Hiring managers are usually from a demographic where tattoos and piercings are unacceptable (North, 2011c). Also, conceal body art if it can be seen as offensive by employers, coworkers, or clients (North,

2011c). If the tattoo or piercing is distracting, cover it. The majority of employers allow one piecing per ear for women and no piercings for men (North, 2011c). Out of all the responses, the majority of employers said tattoos should be covered and jewelry in any piercings other than women's ears should not be worn (North, 2011c). Policies will differ from company to company, but generally these guidelines are the standard.

If a tattoo is visible with a full suit on, it would be best to conceal it with tattoo cover-up cream or a bandage. Facial tattoos are never a good idea. McDonald's won't even hire individuals with tattoos on their faces. Wear a turtleneck or long sleeve shirt to cover neck and arm tattoos. If McDonald's doesn't accept tattoos, most professions will not, as seen by the employer responses in the previous paragraph. As for facial and multiple ear piercings, some companies may allow employees to wear clear spacers, but most will probably ask employees to remove any jewelry at work (North, 2011c). Also, reconsider gauging ears because holes in ears will look odd without jewelry.

Conclusion for Men and Women's Professional Dress

Professional dress varies from industry to industry and company to company. This guide has outlined the most conservative professional dress, which is always acceptable in professional environments. Beginning a professional job provides the opportunity to see what other professionals are wearing and individuals can add pieces to their wardrobe accordingly. However, at the beginning of a career, it is important to wear the conservative basics and then work up to different styles depending on what the company expects and allows.

Business Casual Attire

Business casual offers professionals a lot more freedom in the styles and fabrics they can choose. One of the first rules of business casual dress is that clothes should be neatly ironed (Ball, 2007). Business casual dress should still look professional even though it is not a suit. "Cotton, linen, corduroy, rayon, and even denim can be appropriate" for a business casual wardrobe (Ball, 2007, 10). Imagine sitting on the couch watching television for hours in the outfit. If it is likely, the outfit would not be an appropriate version of business casual (Ball, 2007). While some companies say that nice denim pants or jeans are business casual, this does not mean that anything clothing is appropriate. Save the sweatpants and sportswear for the gym and the couch. As with professional dress, choose outfits that are conservative outfits that are not distracting (Ball, 2007).

Men

While men are allowed more options for business casual attire, it is important to know the boundaries. The following sections define business casual for men in a professional environment.

Ties

Although business casual is more relaxed than professional attire, it is still advisable for a man to wear a tie without a suit jacket or sport coat (Virginia, 2011a). It never hurts to slightly overdress and adds a professional touch (Virginia, 2011a). If a tie is not worn, then a sport coat should be (Virginia, 2011a). Men do not need to wear a matched suit jacket and pants for business casual.

Pants

Men can wear nice dress slacks, khaki, or corduroy slacks (Ball, 2007). Suit pants should only be worn with the suit jacket to prevent excess wear on the pants. Before wearing a nice, hole-free pair of jeans for business casual, ask the event correspondent if dress jeans are appropriate.

Shirts

Men can wear "button-down shirts in stripes, checks, plaids, and denim, polo-style shirts, sweaters, turtlenecks, and vests" (Ball, 2007, 11). Men should wear long-sleeved shirts because they look dressier and are appropriate for any season (Virginia, 2011a). As with professional attire choices, select shirts that are solid white or light blue or have subtle stripes (Ball, 2007). Polo shirts should only be worn if the event is casual, outdoors, or in a very hot location (Virginia, 2011a). Also, all shirts should be tucked-in.

Belts, Socks, and Shoes

Men should always wear belts to maintain a polished appearance (Ball, 2007). Men should also wear leather shoes and a leather belt (Virginia, 2011a). Men have the option of wearing leather loafers and nice leather slip on dress shoes for business casual attire. Wear dark socks that reach mid-calf so that no skin is showing when sitting down (Virginia, 2011a). The belt, shoes, and socks should coordinate with each other for a polished appearance (Virginia, 2011a).

Jewelry

As for any professional event, wear a conservative watch (Virginia, 2011a). This way, a person will not have to constantly pull a cell phone out to check the time, which could look like he or she is texting or making other phone calls (Virginia, 2011a). Also, be discreet when checking a watch for the time to prevent looking bored (Virginia, 2011a). Avoid wearing earrings unless it is common knowledge that men's earring are acceptable in the company or industry (Virginia, 2011a), Even if earrings acceptable in the industry, it may not be for the company's event, so leave the earrings and other questionable jewelry at home.

Hair

The same guidelines for professional Hair apply to business casual. This information can be found under "Hair" in the Men's Professional/Interview Attire section.

Example of Business Casual for Men

Figure 20 below is an example of appropriate business casual attire (North, 2011a).

Figure 20 Business Casual for Men

The website offers comments on the outfit from different colleges within the university as to whether it is appropriate for career fairs and interviews. Many of the comments say that for interviews and professional career fairs, a suit jacket should be worn (North, 2011a). In general, this type of outfit is a good example of business casual, although a tie is optional when wearing a sport coat and colors can be substituted.

Women

Women's professional attire already offers many clothing choices. When it comes to business casual attire, the possibilities seem endless. The following sections provide guidelines for selecting a business casual wardrobe.

Pants/Skirts

Instead of matched suits, suit separates are the best option for business casual (Ball, 2007). The style and pattern of slacks or a skirt is a matter of choice, as long as they fit appropriately and the hem of the skirt does not reach higher than just above the knee (Ball, 2007). Women can choose many pant styles from khaki slacks to wool-blend slacks for a dressier look and many styles in between (Ball, 2007). Appropriate patterns for matched suits are also appropriate for business casual slacks: "solids, pin-stripes, houndstooth, tweeds, or glen plaid" (Ball, 2007, 11). Nice denim jeans may be appropriate, but ask the event correspondent or other attendees before wearing denim as business casual. If denim pants are not appropriate, women may have the option to wear a denim skirt, dress, vest, or shirt (Ball, 2007). When it comes to business casual denim, darker denims look more professional (Ball, 2007). If it could be worn it to a club or social party, do not wear it to a professional event (Virginia, 2011a).

Shirts

Long-sleeved blouses are appropriate for any season (Virginia, 2011a). Tailored knit sweaters or sweater sets are also appropriate for business casual (Virginia, 2011a). "Cotton, silk, and blends are appropriate" (Virginia, 2011a, paragraph 21). Never wear velvets, shimmery fabrics, or tight-fitting shirts (Virginia, 2011a). Again, if it could be worn to a club or social party, then do not wear it to a professional event.

Jewelry and Accessories

Accessories should be simple, such as a scarf (Virginia, 2011a). Wear one ring on each hand and avoid flashy, noisy, and distracting colors and styles of scarves and jewelry (Virginia, 2011a). The same guidelines for professional attire apply for business casual. Creative industries like fashion design may allow more creativity in choices. However, it is best to stay on the conservative side (Virginia, 2011a). Do not risk making a negative first impression.