

Dressing right for the interview

Let's say you are going for an interview tomorrow. You have prepared yourself well for the occasion - anticipating the questions and getting ready the answers - but have you given a thought to what you will wear?

If you have not peeked into your wardrobe yet, it's time to take a real hard look now. Your application's fate depends not just on how well you answer the interview questions, but also on how well you project yourself physically.

The first impression your interviewer makes about you is based on the way you look, and you know what they say about first impressions. According to Joe Hodowanes, J.M. Wanes and Associates career strategy advisor, "The way a person dresses is the single biggest non-verbal communication you make about yourself."

The right dressing is a measure of the seriousness that you place on the position, as a person normally spends time on his looks if he considers an event important enough.

"Although proper dressing by itself will not get you the job, a poor dress sense may exclude you from further consideration," warns Gerry Ditching, managing partner of Filgifts.com. Besides, given two equally good applicants, the company may choose to hire the person who is dressed more professionally.

Here are some tips to give you a headstart.

Men

Long-sleeved shirt and dark slacks. White is still the safest and the best color for shirts. The colour is also appropriate for our tropical weather. Also acceptable: pale shades such as beige, blue, and other pastels. Tuck in the shirt and do not roll up the sleeves. Never wear a short-sleeved shirt to an interview or any business purpose. Wearing a short-sleeved shirt will destroy your executive image.

Ties. Optional. But if you do wear one, choose a conservative pattern. Solids, small polka dots, diagonal stripes, small repeating shapes, subtle plaids and paisleys are all acceptable.

Belts. Belts should match your shoes. Those with smaller buckles with squared lines look more professional.

Socks. Black socks are the best, followed by blue or gray, depending on your attire. Never wear white socks! Check your sock length, too--no skin should show when you sit down or cross your legs.

Shoes. Black or burgundy leather shoes with laces on them, because tassel loafers are very casual. Other suitable colors are brown, cordovan and navy.

Hair. Keep neat, short and preferably parted on the side. And shave off all those facial hair.

Jewellery. Wear no or little jewellery. The watch and wedding ring are the only acceptable pieces of jewellery to go with the male attire. Thin gold or leather-strapped watches look professional but not digital watches. Also, avoid political or religious insignias, necklaces or bracelets. Definitely no pierced body parts, and cover up your tattoos!

Accessories. As much as possible, use leather briefcases or folders to hold copies of your resume. Use narrow briefcases and avoid plastic folders and plastic ball pens as they are out of place.

Women

Three-piece business suits, blouse and skirt or slacks, and cardigan twin-sets. Sleeveless shirts should be rejected. Short-sleeved blouses are okay when they are tailor-cut or have features such as a sports collar or double breast design to create a business-like look. Skirts can either be long provided it does not create a Cinderella or barn-dance look or short where it falls no shorter than two inches from the knee. Nothing too revealing, please!

Panty-hose or stockings. A must for professional grooming, but nothing with overly fussy patterns. Bring an extra pair, just in case the ones you are wearing run.

Shoes. Closed shoes or pumps with at least 1½-inch heels suggest a more professional look. Dark colors are best.

Hair. Hair longer than shoulder length should be worn up or pulled back. Don' t let it fall in front of your face and don' t keep trying to fix it during the interview. Avoid large hair ornaments and trendy hairstyles.

Make-up. Be subtle; natural is the key word. Light shades of lip coloring and nail polish are recommended."

Jewellery. Be conservative. Studs of gold, silver or pearls are best. Do away with gaudy fashionjewellery, and those that clank and make noise when one moves.

Accessories. Folders and bags should blend well with the total professional look. Women should match their purse with their shoecolour.

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