

HOW TO DRESS FOR SUCCESS

We've all heard the expression 'you never get a second chance to make a first impression' and when it comes to job interviews this saying is particularly pertinent. Some studies have now suggested that we form judgements within the first 100 milliseconds of meeting someone. This isn't enough time to convince someone of your competence through conversation, so the way you dress is key to making a positive impression.

Emma Samengo-Turner, head stylist at Quest Professional, formerly the 'Lucie Clayton Charm Academy' finishing school now turned top business college, knows that whether you are a model or work in a top financial role, fashion and image will always be central to success.

Based in the heart of Westminster, Emma is used to advising Quest Professional students on how to dress for roles with top employers in the City of London and elsewhere. With 87% of students at Quest securing a role within just eight weeks of graduating their course, appropriate attire is one essential element of Quest's highly successful track record.

Here, Emma offers her top tips to readers on how to dress to impress for the corporate world.

1. Research the dress code of the company

There is no one outfit that will be suitable for all interviews so it's important to find out the company's dress code. You can do this by looking at their website, as well as speaking to their HR department and if applicable, your own recruitment agency. Some creative industries may be less formal than a corporate employer but still dress up and not down. Avoid denim and trainers even if you would wear these to work normally. Similarly, tops with slogans can be very distracting so avoid anything with a brand name or writing printed across it. **Remember: if in doubt, it's better to be overly-formal than too casual.**

2. Be well groomed

Ladies, make sure your hair is clean and drawn off your face. Nails should be well-manicured and if painted choose subtle shades. Similarly, keep makeup toned down: a job interview isn't the best time to experiment with neon eyeshadows – why not try out that classy nude palette instead? For men, many of the same rules apply: nails should be neat and hair freshly washed. Opt to be clean shaven or have a neat beard rather than a five o'clock shadow which gives an unprofessional vibe! Be sparing with your application of perfume and aftershave, as no one wants to be in a stuffy room for 45 minutes with an overpowering scent of Chanel No. 19 or Old Spice! And speaking of unwanted scents... if you smoke, don't have a cigarette before the interview, as the smell will linger.

3. Be appropriately professional

It's always advisable to err on the conservative side of clothing. Don't forget to keep it simple - if you're fiddling with tassels or buttons, it will distract both you and the interviewer. For women in the working world, dress codes can be difficult to navigate since we have such a range of clothing options available. To make sure you always look office-appropriate, you can pair tights with dresses and skirts during the colder months. Once temperatures rise, nude tights add a polished look to your ensemble. Don't forget that you're in the office for eight or more hours, so make sure you wear shoes you can walk in and steer away from overly high heels! If you opt for flats, wear smart shoes such as loafers or brogues rather than a more casual choice. All shoes should be cleaned and polished prior to interviews. For men in corporate roles, your working 'uniform' is much more clear-cut. Stick to dark suits (top tip: navy is always a classic) and black leather shoes which once again must be clean and polished, paired with dark socks – let's not have any polka dots peeping out from below your trouser leg! It's great to have an individual edge to your look, but if you have multiple piercings or visible tattoos, an interview may not be the best time to display them!

4. Be yourself

In both your interview and in any job, it's important to feel comfortable in the clothes you wear; both in fit and style. Not everyone has to dress like they're in the cast of Suits, so if pencil skirts and high heels aren't your scene, don't worry about it! You can wear a dress or trouser suit with smart flats or mid-heel shoes.

For individuality, you can balance the dress code with your own personal taste. Wearing a colourful shirt, blouse or sporting a signature handbag or scarf adds a splash of brightness to your outfit.

For men, there's no need to feel left out as you can add your own personal touch with your choice of tie - just make sure that the colour and pattern isn't too overpowering!

Fashion and style is all about expressing an identity. If you're ambitious and looking to climb the career ladder at speed, how you dress is central to proving your drive and professionalism to employees and colleagues. If you follow these top tips, you are already halfway to achieving the career of your dreams!

For more information on how Quest Professional can secure you a top job and their range of courses for A-level and university leavers, please visit our website www.questprofessional.co.uk