

What to wear to a job interview

Think about this—when you meet someone new, you size him or her up. In about a minute, you can decide whether or not you like the person. Well, hiring managers are good at sizing people up too. They see lots of job applicants and they can tell in a flash who will fit in and who will not. In a job interview, the goal is to show that you fit in—and the first thing a hiring manager will notice is how you look. Here's how to make a good, first impression:

Start with a good night's sleep

Employers expect to meet someone who is enthusiastic, energetic, and excited to be there.

Shower

It will help you look sharp, alert, and healthy.

Shampoo your hair

One of the first things the manager will look at is your hair. It makes a huge statement about your overall hygiene and cleanliness.

Brush your teeth

Get the manager to remember your ideas, your skills, your personality—not what you had for breakfast. Brush, floss, and use a mouthwash.

Use deodorant and an antiperspirant

The manager will think that you're as cool as a cucumber. Rub a little on your hands and you'll have a smooth dry handshake too.

Use eye drops

Get the red out and let your eyes twinkle.

Trim your nails

Guys, long fingernails are a turn off. Most hiring managers will notice when they reach to shake your hand. Ladies, hiring managers won't be impressed if long nails prevent you from doing the work.

Hair styles

Choose a simple style that makes you look good. Get the manager to focus on your face, your expressions, your eyes—not your hair style.

Right or wrong, people do make assumptions based on the way we dress. In 3 to 5 seconds, they make judgements about our confidence, character, income and sociability.

—Psychology Today

Avoid strong perfumes or colognes

Some people may find it unpleasant.

Makeup

In business, less is more. The idea is to look professional so you'll be taken seriously.

Shave

Guys, a two-day stubble looks great on the weekend, but not in a job interview. Showing up with stubble means you didn't shave.

Body piercings

One or two piercings are fine. A half dozen or more becomes a distraction. Tongue jewelry can also be a distraction.

Avoid trendy fashions

It's been said that fashion gets attention—but it doesn't convey power. Classic clothing conveys power. Conduct your job interview from a point of strength, not novelty.

Dress in the clothes that you would wear on the job

Executives should wear business suits. Office people should wear dress clothes. Workers should wear work clothes. If you're not sure what to wear to your interview, call the company and ask someone in their human resources office. They'll be glad to tell you.

You can't go wrong with the classic white-collar outfits

For men—navy-blue blazer, gray slacks, white shirt, striped tie, black lace-up shoes, black socks, and a black dress belt. For women—a charcoal gray or navy skirt or pantsuit, white blouse, scarf or necklace, with black pumps, black hose, black belt, and a simple black bag.

Check your clothes

Make sure they fit properly and feel comfortable. Check for holes, tears, splits, stains, missing buttons, runs, frayed hems, worn cuffs, puckers, pulls, or wrinkles.

Wear clean, freshly pressed clothes

Send your jacket and pants off to be dry-cleaned and pressed. Have your shirt or blouse laundered, starched, and pressed. Looking sharp tells the manager that you take pride in your appearance and your work.

Avoid excessive jewelry

For men, a wristwatch and a ring are plenty. For women, a watch, a ring, a necklace, and a pair of earrings are ideal.

Avoid bright colors, loud fashions, and patterns that clash

Again, it's a sign that you need lots of attention.

Empty your pockets

No bulges to ruin your profile and no jingling change to fall out of your pocket when you sit down for your interview.

Smile—smile big

You're beautiful. Take a picture!

BEFORE YOU HEAD OUT THE DOOR...

Never bring anyone with you to a job interview. Go alone. If someone gives you a ride, ask him or her to wait in the car.

Bring several copies of your resume and carry them in a simple manila folder.

Bring a typed list with three personal references, including names, addresses, telephone numbers, how you know them, and best times to call.

Bring two forms of identification.

Bring your Social Security Number.

Bring your work permits and visas.

Bring work samples or your portfolio if needed.

Bring money for gas, tolls, parking or public transportation.

Bring a new note pad and a pen that works.

Write the manager's name, department, address, and telephone number in the note pad—just in case.

Plan to arrive 10 minutes before the interview begins. When you arrive check in with the receptionist. Visit the rest room to check your appearance.

If something happens and you are going to be late, call the manager and explain what happened.

