



PROFESSIONAL COURTESY

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BUILDING A BASIC BUSINESS WARDROBE

The visual information that we communicate is very powerful. It is absorbed more readily than aural, has a greater impact, and is retained for a longer period of time. How we weave our prejudices and stereotypes into this mix is the foundation of “impression.”

The Language of Dress

- What you wear speaks a language all its own. Be mindful of the message you send with your attire. You should look and dress like the job you do and where you want to go in your company. Being consistent with your “corporate culture” and dress code is very important to one’s job success.
- Be as physically attractive as you can without bringing sex appeal to the workplace. Dressing in a sexy manner can sabotage.
- Dress appropriately for all occasions when representing your company.
- Be age appropriate and avoid being too trendy.
- Wear subtle make-up, maintain a well-groomed hairstyle and always be neat and clean from top to bottom. Keep fingernails clean and well groomed. Avoid nail art and loud colored polish.

Wardrobe Basics

- “Building” a wardrobe starts with a good foundation. Having basic pieces can stretch your wardrobe and your budget. Traditional styles have longevity and can be worn for years.
- Women can start with a jacket, skirt and pant that match or co-ordinate such as; navy, black, grey or neutral. Change the look with multi colored blouses, sweater sets, scarves, etc.
- Men can start with a navy blazer, neutral or grey trousers and build on that. If a suit is a requirement, it is best to stay traditional in style and color. Change the look with shirts and ties.
- If possible, invest in a full length mirror.

Accessories

- “Less is more.”
- Keep jewelry simple. Avoid noisy bracelets, large rings, dangly and large earrings.
- Shoes and purses and briefcases should be in good repair and polished. Basic colors and styles are the most professional. Try not to over load purses.
- If you carry business cards, keep them in a business card case where they will stay clean.
- Visible tattoos and body piercings (other than earrings) are unprofessional.

Fabrics, Fit, Care

- Fabrics with wool, micro fiber, and a little stretch are more wrinkles resistant than all cotton and linen fabrics.
- Give the fabric the “wad test” with your hand and see if it comes back easily without wrinkles.
- Avoid clothes that crease easily while sitting.
- Most clothing items require a light pressing. Be sure to look in your mirror before leaving for work.
- Avoid clothes that are too tight or too big. Many clothes need a little alteration. Be sure to look at sleeve length, hems and jacket fit. Tailoring is not a usual offering in women’s stores. Many cleaners offer simple tailoring.
- Pay attention to what looks good on your body type. Do not over expose.
- Be attentive to undergarments. Slips and camisoles may be needed to maintain modesty. The style and color of undergarments should not be determined through your clothes.
- Most jackets and blazers require dry cleaning however; a darker color can increase the time between cleaning and keep cleaning to a minimum.
- Pay attention to care labels when purchasing clothing items. Clothes that absorb smells can be tumbled in the dryer with a fabric softener sheet or hung outside to air.

Shopping Wisely

- Before you shop, take an inventory of your closet. Look at what you have and what you might need to add to your wardrobe.
- Don’t impulse buy.
- Shop sales, off season, and at close out stores.
- Avoid items that are too trendy.
- Buying clothes for multiple seasons will stretch your wardrobe.

Classics, Trends and Personal Style

- Classic, traditional styles are always in fashion.
- Trends come and go, and should be added minimally to your wardrobe.
- Something trendy added to something traditional or classic can give “style” to your clothing. For instance, pins and brooches are in style again.
- Establishing something that is unique to you, without setting you apart too much is the definition of personal style. For instance, Barbara Bush is known for her pearls.
- What is on television and in movies is often done for the stage effect. It does not always translate to the workplace.

Corporate Guidelines

- You are an extension of your company while you are working.
- Know the guidelines and help maintain the image that your company is projecting.
- When members and clients walk in the door you are an important part of the whole picture.
- When in doubt, dress up over dressing down.
- If you find yourself apologizing for what you have on, it is wrong.
- You want to stand out for the job you do.

FYI

- A suit is a matching jacket and skirt or slacks of the same fabric
- For women, a pump and a 1 to 2 inch heel is the most professional.
- The jacket is the one piece for both men and women that adds the most authority to your appearance.
- Sleeveless is not as professional as sleeves.
- A sweater set can give an impression of a jacket for women.
- Corporate casual or relaxed business can be damaging to women.
- Colors are powerful; pastels are soothing, red is a color that makes you stand out and can give the impression of anger and passion.
- Dark colors are perceived to give the aura of competency, although less approachable.
- Earth tones work well for counselors and attorneys addressing jurors.

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