



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Summer office attire: Dos and don'ts

When the temperature soars, employees tend to prefer to dress more casually and comfortably to help keep them cool. Though, as pointed out on NBC's "Today Show," during a segment on April 30, wearing inappropriate attire can hurt your image and cast doubt on your credibility and sense of judgment. You want to avoid the embarrassment and distractions that occur when you wear clothing that is too revealing, or send the message that comfort is more important than the clients' business. If you think a piece of

flops, slippers and tennis shoes. Unless your company's dress code specifies otherwise, jeans are also inappropriate for the office.

Ladies, here are a few things you want to avoid: halter and strapless tops, spaghetti-strap tops or dresses, low-cut blouses, skirts shorter than two to three inches above the knee, Capri pants, and anything see-through or too revealing. It's a good idea to hold up garments to the light indoors, or outdoors to look at them in the sun. Tip: If you can "read" through the garment, don't wear it to work.

➤ Pay attention to footwear.

For a top-notch polished look, shoes/socks for men; closed-toe, closed-heel shoes or closed-toe, sling-back shoes and hose for women are a must. Now I know you might fuss at me about this, and I also know that some compa-

nies are allowing a little flexibility in this area. If your company allows open-toe, strappy or backless shoes, please make sure your feet are well manicured. Poorly cared for legs, feet and toenails certainly will destroy your professional image. Remember, you are in most situations in a cool, air-conditioned office. So, gentlemen, socks with your shoes are a must. And even with sandals, ladies, sandal-foot hose create a more polished look. For both men and women, socks and hose with shoes automatically set a business tone. Think about it!

➤ Consider your undergarments. Gentlemen, I suggest that you wear a white undershirt with your dress or polo shirts. Why, you ask? Because they help control perspiration. Make sure you purchase a properly fitting

undershirt, so it has as few wrinkles as possible, and your outer shirt drapes nicely. And, of course, undershirts are mandatory. Choose a style that is comfortable, and allows your slacks to fit properly.

Ladies, bras, slips and panties are also mandatory; and they shouldn't show through (nude or skin tone-colored fabrics work great). We're talking perception here! If you saw the movie, "Bridget Jones' Diary," you may remember when Bridget descended the office stairs in a sheer top that revealed a sexy bra. Her boss, Hugh Grant, had anything but professional regard for her at that moment. Remember, we're about projecting professionalism, so dress the part — even underneath.

Since acceptable forms of summer office attire will vary from industry to industry, office to office, geographic location to geographic location, and situation to situation, it's important to know your particular workplace. If there's a dress code, be familiar with it; and if you're in doubt, consult your human resources person.

A few final words: One of the most important points to remember is that the organization's image comes before your image. What you wear to the office should work for the greater good, not against it. In the end, business is still business, and you need to dress accordingly. So, no matter how hot the weather, don't push it. As the adage goes, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

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While every workplace has its own guidelines, here are some basic tips to keep in mind when trying to dress professionally and still beat the heat:

➤ Remain professional. Even if your employer has an informal dress code, they still want you to look professional for the work environment and your duties. Make sure that your clothes are clean and pressed, that your shoes are polished and in good repair. Another thought to consider: keep a lightweight, neutral jacket/blazer at work so you can slip it on, and give your outfit that extra "professional" lift.

➤ Avoid the "bare" look. No-nos for both men and women: tank tops, t-shirts, anything sheer or form-fitting, midriff-baring outfits, shorts, flip-