



## [DR. SHIRLEY'S CAREER CORNER]

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# Interviewing 101: Dress to win

An old saying in human resource circles is that the hiring decision is often made within the first 30 seconds of the interview, and the balance of the time is used to justify that decision. Dr. Joyce Brothers refers to this as the “30 second hurdle.” In other words, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

One of the most common mistakes candidates make in the job search is dressing inappropriately for the interview. In today's economic climate, to achieve a competitive edge, your goal should be to present yourself in the best possible light, ergo, dress to win.

Beginning with the obvious, pay

*Individually, your overall appearance can be your best friend or your worst enemy.*

strict attention to your appearance. It is, indeed, a factor you control. Good grooming and appropriate business attire, which is clean and well pressed, go a long way toward making a good first impression.

In dressing for the interview, your goal is to create a strong, positive impression. Remember that simplicity, good taste and paying attention to details are desirable. Also, keep in mind that what is appropriate is usually determined by the profession/industry, corporate culture and dress code in which you are seeking job opportunities.

### Guidelines for men and women

- Avoid extreme hairstyles, choos-

ing instead, a cut and style that are both flattering and businesslike. Gentlemen, mustache and/or beard should be well groomed.

- Nails should be trimmed and clean. For women, if you choose a colored polish, select a subtle shade.

- Limit your rings to one per hand, or none at all. Keep your watch simple and understated.

- No visible tattoos or body piercing beyond conservative ear piercings for women. Gentlemen, if you wear earrings, I recommend you remove them for the interview.

- Keep the cologne, perfume or aftershave to a minimum. Remember — your own nose is not the best judge of how much is too much. You want to avoid overpowering the interviewer or possibly triggering an allergy.

- All areas of personal hygiene should be in top-notch shape. Consider carrying mints to ensure fresh breath.

- Try on your entire interview outfit well in advance of your appointment. Check for fit, cleanliness and any needed improvements. Shoes should be polished and in good repair.

- A nice portfolio is ideal for carrying extra copies of your résumé, reference page and other relevant documents. A classic gold, silver or black pen will also add a professional touch to your interviewing “tools.”

### Guidelines for women

- Conservative knee-length skirted suit, pantsuit or business dress (preferably with a jacket). Shades of navy, gray, taupe or tan are still prevalent colors; though, royal blue, teal and burgundy, textured tweeds, and subdued checks are becoming more acceptable. A small

handbag will complement your outfit.

- A conservative pump or sling-back with a medium heel in a color that matches your garment or is darker will be appropriate. Hose should be worn and should be sheer in a natural shade or a shade that blends with skirt or pant and shoe.

- Makeup should be worn, be subtle and natural looking.

### Guidelines for men

- Conservative single-breasted suit in solid navy, gray or muted pinstripe. If you are in a profession where men generally do not wear suits to work, it is recommended that you still wear a sport coat with dress slacks to the interview — credibility is the key.

- Properly fitting straight collared white long sleeve shirt with conservative, coordinating silk tie. Wearing an undershirt is highly recommended.

- Polished lace-up or slip-on (no penny loafers) shoes in black with dark, calf high socks.

- Belt color should coordinate with shoe color.

Certainly, your interview “presence” will not secure you a job, but failure to manage your overall dress and grooming can definitely hurt your chances. By considering the guidelines provided here, you increase the probability that a hiring manager will focus on your skill set, experience and value you bring to the position as well as send a powerful message about your overall professionalism.

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