



Reprinted from the June/July 2013 issue of BIC

Office-appropriate summer attire

It's that time of year again. The summer temperatures are sizzling and determining what to wear in order to stay cool while also conveying professionalism can be quite a challenge. Surely you want to avoid the distractions and the lack of visual credibility that can occur when you wear clothing and shoes that are too revealing, too casual or in poor taste.

While every workplace has its own guidelines or dress codes, appropriate attire can vary depending on the industry, company, geographic locale and even the level of client involvement and exposure. The following basic tips will allow you to present your best professional self while surviving the long, hot summer.

1. Avoid an "immodest or bare" look. Halter and strapless tops, spaghetti strap dresses, low-cut blouses, "midriff-baring" outfits and anything too sheer or showing too much shoulder and cleavage are "no-nos" for a professional office setting. Though a cardigan or jacket may offset some items, it's best to make sure your office attire consistently projects a professional image for you, the company and your clients.

In addition, avoid mini skirts, skirts or dresses that are below the ankle, leggings and — for both men and women — anything too tight, too loose and sagging. Also, shorts are generally inappropriate in a business office environment. Keep in mind, the more "flesh" you expose, the more distracting you could potentially become.

2. Give heed to your footwear. Flip flops, slippers, sneakers or any type of beach sandals do not send a professional message. For a top-notch look, wear slip-ons or lace-up shoes (with socks for men). Leave the "no-socks" look for strictly casual wear. For women, pumps and slingbacks with a "closed, open or peep toe," and conservative sandals will work, but toes should be neatly pedicured. Hose are optional but I strongly recommend they be worn when attending special meetings or making presentations in order to project a polished, professional appearance.

3. Consider lightweight fabrics. Choose natural fibers such as cotton and linen/cotton/silk mixes. In addition, there are many synthetics that, when blended with natural fibers, greatly reduce wrinkling. These fabrics are great for suits/jackets for both men and women. When combined with lighter colors such as tan, taupe and beige, these garments often feel cooler, especially in the hot, humid summers in the South.

4. Pay attention to your undergarments. Gentlemen, I suggest you wear an undershirt with your dress or polo shirts. Why, you ask? Because an undershirt helps control perspiration. Make sure you purchase a properly fitting one so it presents as few wrinkles as possible and your outer shirt drapes nicely. Choose a style of briefs/boxers that is comfortable and allow your slacks to fit properly.

Ladies — bras, panties and slips are mandatory, and they should not show through your garments (nude

or skin tone-colored fabrics work just great). Remember, we're talking perception and credibility! It's all about projecting professionalism, so dress the part — even underneath.

As Bobbie Thomas of Style Network's "Fashion Police" says about office dressing in the summertime, "It's a tough time of year. You are trying to balance comfort with being professional." Even if your employer has an informal dress code during the summer, they still

The following basic tips will allow you to present your best professional self while surviving the long, hot summer.

want you to look professional for the workplace environment and the duties you are performing. Make sure your clothing is neat, clean and pressed, coupled with shoes that are polished and in good repair.

One of the most important points to keep in mind, as you may have seen me write before, is 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 should dress accordingly. So, no matter how sizzling the summer heat, make sure your dress is "office appropriate."

For more information on Dr. White's programs and publications, visit www.successimages.com or call (225) 769-2307. ●