

What to wear to a job interview

Whether it's your first job, you're returning to the workforce or you're [changing industries](#), finding the right interview clothes can be one of the most daunting parts of job seeking. You naturally want to make the best first impression possible, which is why presentation is so important.

Before getting ready for your job interview, read this guide for tips on putting together a perfectly professional look. Find out what type of clothes and shoes are appropriate and how you can use accessories to inject some personality into your outfit. As you [prepare for your interview](#), remember that no matter what you wear, you should aim to feel comfortable and confident.

Importance of dressing right for an interview

Your interview attire is crucial for making that all-important first impression. No matter how well you answer the interview questions, your appearance will be a critical factor in how suitable the hiring manager perceives you to be for their team. So where do you start? With the basics.

Elements of a great job interview outfit

Exactly what *should* you wear to a job interview? For most types of jobs, [smart business attire](#) is appropriate, in which case you will need to carefully consider the different elements of your look and how they work together.

Tops

It's hard to go wrong with a button-down shirt for a job interview. Stick to a neutral colour like white, black, grey or navy, and ensure it's clean and crease-free. If you're interviewing at a more casual workplace, you could also opt for a polo shirt. [Women](#) have the flexibility to wear a neat blouse with a conservative neckline.

In terms of fabrics, cotton tops are highly breathable, but tend to wrinkle, unless they are a polyester or nylon blend. Natural fibres in general allow your skin to breathe more, and may be more comfortable in warmer environments.

Bottoms

The bottoms you choose for an interview depend on the top you're wearing. Suit pants or slacks are more appropriate for a more corporate environment, while dark jeans with no rips or embellishments work for a [casual work environment](#). If you're not sure, err on the side of formality and wear tailored dress pants.

If you're intending on wearing a skirt or dress, ensure it is knee-length or longer and in a dark colour. A skirt suit is a safe option for a more conservative workplace. Wool-blend pants and skirts provide a professional look and resist creases when you sit down.

Jackets/Blazers

A jacket or blazer can instantly make casual interview attire look more professional. It's recommended that you wear a jacket or blazer to an interview at a more corporate workplace, regardless of the rest of your outfit. The blazer or jacket you choose should fit well and complement your outfit. If you're not sure what colour blazer to wear, match it to your bottoms or stick to a black blazer for easy, professional-looking ensembles.

Shoes

What shoes to wear to an interview again depends on the culture of the company you're interviewing at. For men, a polished pair of leather loafers or dress shoes will work with either casual or corporate-style outfits. Women have a few more options, including heels and boots, but overall it's best to opt for enclosed shoes. Only wear heels if you're able to comfortably walk in them, as you can't be certain how much walking is required just getting to the interview location.

Clean and polish shoes before you put them on. If you need to wear socks, match them to your shoes: dark with dark and light with light.

Accessories

If you want to add some flair to your interview outfit, there are some accessorising touches you can include. A watch can be a great addition to any outfit, and helps you keep an eye on the time without having to pull your phone out. Classic gold or silver earrings can also dress up an outfit. Any other accessories, like necklaces, bracelets, scarves and ties should be kept as minimalist as possible so as not to be distracting.

How to dress for a job interview in different types of workplaces

While dressing smart for an interview is important, it's not all you can do to look the part. You can go a step further when preparing for an interview and match your outfit [to the culture](#) of your potential workplace by emulating how its employees dress. [Researching the company](#) online will give you an idea about how people there dress. Check out the company's social media profiles and website to see if staff are dressed more professionally or casually. Remember that even if staff are dressed casually, you'd be expected to show more professionalism and formality in your interview.

Professional

Professional attire is the standard interview dress code for corporate or management jobs. In this case, you should wear a suit, complete with matching button-down shirt, tie and dress shoes. Imagine what a [lawyer](#) or barrister might wear to court, and aim for that level of formality.

Business casual

Business attire for interviews is the go-to for more laid-back office environments, where you want to look smart but not overly formal. It's a more relaxed version of professional attire, where you don't need to wear a blazer or jacket. You can pair chinos or tailored pants with a polo, if it suits the workplace. If you're a [tradesperson](#) going for a new role, business casual is a good choice.

Casual

While [casual attire](#) is not a typical dress code for interview clothes, it can be appropriate for some workplaces. For instance, if you're interviewing at a [retail clothing store](#), it might be preferable to emulate the brand's style, so you already look the part. If you're interviewing for a casual food-service role, you could opt for dark-coloured, rip-free jeans paired with a collared shirt. If you're not sure, it's good to dress slightly more professional, opting for conservative clothing styles and enclosed shoes.

Virtual

So, what's the dress code for interviews that are online? You should make as much effort for a [virtual interview](#) as you would for an in-person interview – and that means wearing tailored bottoms, too. You never know when you may need to stand up during an online video interview.

When picking clothing for a 'virtual' interview, think about your background and choose colours that work with your surroundings. You want to choose clothing that looks neat from the shoulders up when you're sitting down. Test your outfit in your computer's camera so you know what it will look like ahead of time.

What not to wear in an interview

There are some things that you should avoid wearing to an interview. Some are too casual and some might be too distracting. Items not to wear to interviews include:

- Thongs, slides, sandals, clogs, tennis shoes and scruffy trainers
- Statement jewellery that may be noisy or cause distraction
- Sleeveless singlets or tank tops
- Revealing clothing
- Bright colours and patterns (including stripes) on virtual interviews as they can become distorted on camera

- Sweatpants, athleisure and loose, casual clothing
- Novelty ties or socks

When in doubt, it's always better to be overdressed than underdressed.

Dos and don'ts of how to dress for an interview

A good rule of thumb for interview outfits is: keep it simple. If you stick to the general guidelines above, you'll look like a competent, put-together employee. Once you've got your interview attire ready to go, double check it against this list of things you should and shouldn't do.

What to do when dressing for an interview

Some things you should do when dressing for an interview include:

- First research the company to get a feel for how their staff dress
- Iron or steam your interview clothes
- Keep your overall styling subdued (including make-up and hairstyle)
- Wear clothing that doesn't crease or wrinkle easily
- Choose clothes that make you feel confident, comfortable and professional

How you dress for an interview depends on the job, workplace and what you feel is most appropriate to make the best impression. For a casual job this may mean a polo shirt and jeans, while a more formal profession will mean a suit. There's no one-size-fits-all answer.

What not to do when dressing for an interview

Some things you don't want to do when dressing for an interview include:

- Wear stained, ripped or holey clothing
- Choose clothes or accessories that may distract from the interview, like a loud tie, noisy jewellery or bright patterns
- Wear tight or revealing clothing
- Dress too casually
- Wear strong perfume or cologne

You want the focus to be on you and [your skills during the interview](#). Dress how you wish to be perceived by any employer: professional, competent and responsible. If

you're not sure what to wear, dress towards the more conservative end of the scale rather than risk looking too casual. Most importantly, wear something neat, clean and comfortable, so you're not just looking the part, but feeling it too.

FAQs

Is it better to overdress or underdress for an interview?

It is better to be overdressed rather than underdressed for an interview, as being overly formal is seen as more professional than being overly casual on first impressions. If you have follow-up interviews, you can match your interview attire more closely to what the hiring manager wore in the first round.

What kind of shoes should I wear to an interview?

Both women and men should wear a smart, clean, enclosed shoe, like a loafer or dress shoe. You should avoid wearing sandals, thongs/flip flops and uncomfortable heels.

Are there specific colours I should avoid when choosing interview attire?

Neon-bright colours and loud patterns are best avoided when choosing interview attire. There are situations when more expressive types of clothing can be appropriate – especially in more creative industries – it just depends on the role. Neutral colours, like black, navy, white, beige and grey are considered safe for most interviews.

Should I wear jewellery or accessories to an interview? If so, what's appropriate?

Understated jewellery – like simple earrings, a chain and a watch – are considered appropriate for a job interview. Wedding rings and other culturally appropriate items of jewellery are also acceptable. It's best to avoid statement jewellery and loud ties/socks for your interview, as they can be distracting. Always consider the company and their practices, and accessorise accordingly.

What should I do if I'm not sure about the company's dress code for interviews?

If you're not sure about a company's dress code for interviews, do some research into what their staff wear by visiting their website and social media profiles. If you can't find photos of people in the workplace, opt for business attire or business-casual styles.

Is it necessary to consider regional or cultural differences when dressing for an interview?

Yes, it may be necessary to consider regional or cultural differences when dressing for an interview. If you're interviewing at a global business or for an overseas position, it's smart to dress more conservatively. Australian workplaces are generally more relaxed when it comes to work attire than those in Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Can I incorporate personal style into my outfit, or should I stick to traditional business attire?

Traditional business attire is recommended for interviews, but that doesn't mean you can't add some personal style – it might help you stand out and be more memorable. You could add colour to your outfit with a scarf, tie or pocket square, or wear a favourite piece of jewellery. You can also inject some personal style with your bag, watch or shoes. It's important to remember that the overall look remains as professional as possible.