

Making Decisions – Dressing for an Interview

Getting Off to a Good Start

The way you look during an interview *may* decide if you get the job. How you look is very important! Persons who talk with you about the job will form ideas about you. These ideas are made within a few seconds after you walk into the room. This is called a “first impression.”

Right or wrong, first impressions may become lasting impressions! Impressions are made based on how you look and how you act. Your appearance is made up of your clothing, your personal grooming and your body language. All three of these areas are important. They provide hints to the employer about your self-confidence and ability to fit in with the other employees. From your appearance a lot of ideas are formed about your interest in the job and if you can do the work. Make sure your look tells the right story.

Your Clothing

The job you are applying for will help determine the clothes to wear to the interview. Whatever the job, think *basic* and keep it *simple*. Clothing does not have to be new or expensive. It should, however, *always* be clean, pressed, and fit the body properly. If possible before your interview, plan a visit to the place of business. Arrive in time to watch workers coming to work or leaving. Look at the type and style of clothing employees are wearing. Entry level or blue-collar jobs may require a uniform. For the

interview, dress neatly in a dress-casual outfit. If your job is at a sales level position, dress neatly and in keeping with fashion. Other jobs at this level include many secretarial, receptionist, and host/hostess positions. Manager level jobs require a basic suit for both men and women. A basic necktie for men, and simple attractive jewelry or a scarf for women is appropriate.

Think *basic* and *keep it simple* also apply to selecting garment styles and colors. Above all clothing must be neat and well-fitted to the body. Colors and textures should look good on the individual. Traditional, classic styles are always appropriate. Select a garment with sleeves; never go sleeveless. Garments (dresses, shirts/blouses) with buttons should be buttoned. Men may leave the collar button open if a tie is not worn.

Solid colors are always appropriate. Stripes, checks and simple patterns may be all right for women. Women should not wear floral, very sheer, or lacy fabrics. Conservative necklines are best for an interview session. Socks for men and hosiery for women are a requirement for all levels of interviews. Shoes should always be polished and in good condition. Women should never wear heels higher than two-inches. Sandals or overly trendy styles (platforms, very chunky heels, etc.) are not recommended for an interview. Men should wear dark shoes and matching socks. Neutral hosiery or hosiery that blends hemline and shoe color is best for women.

Accessories and jewelry should blend with the outfit. For men, try to match the belt with shoes and socks. If a tie is worn, keep it basic and simple. This is not the time for red, or ties with cartoon characters. The only jewelry for men might be a watch and a wedding or a class ring if appropriate. Leave your necklace and earrings at home.

Women should choose accessories that go with their outfit and body shape. Earrings should be simple. Jewelry should not dangle or make a noise. One ring on each hand is enough. Handbags should be easy to handle and large enough to hold necessary items. Leave the large ones with lots of straps at home.

Your Grooming

Good personal grooming habits say a lot about how you value yourself as a person. This is one of the visual clues interviewers notice very quickly. Make a point to bathe your body, wash and style your hair the evening before or morning of your interview. Brush your teeth, and use a mouthwash or breath mint before you arrive at the interview.

Hair style should be neat and attractive. If your hair needs to be trimmed, get it cut the week before your interview. Hair color should appear natural. Don't experiment with color the evening before. Control long or unruly hair with combs, pins or bands that blend with hair color. Hair spray can also help control hair. Use only enough to gently hold hair in place. Hair should never look artificial or plastered to the head.

Inspect and groom fingernails. For men, the nails should be clean, smooth and no longer than the edges of the finger tips. Women should adjust their nail length to correspond to the job requirements. Long nails are

viewed as getting in the way of many activities. Long, bright fingernails or chipped nail polish are never appropriate.

The use of makeup is a matter of choice. If used, it should flatter and improve the appearance. Makeup should never draw attention. A lot of makeup is not appropriate for an interview. Women should use eye shadow sparingly. Lipstick should go with the outfit. Avoid dark, bright or flashy lipstick.

The use of too much perfume or aftershave may be offensive to some individuals. If you wear them, never apply them just before the interview. Men should wash their hands after using cologne or aftershave. This will prevent the transfer of the odor when shaking hands. Women should use only very small amounts on the inside of the arm at the elbow.

Your Body Language

It is normal and natural to be somewhat nervous about the interview. Do a "dress rehearsal" in front of a large mirror the day before. This may help you feel better about the situation. Notice your posture while you sit, walk and stand. Women especially should practice walking in the shoes they plan to wear. Be sure to always stand and sit tall. Shoulders should be back and somewhat square. Head should be up and looking forward. You do not need to watch your feet. They know how to walk.

Look individuals in the eyes as they are talking with you. Speak loud enough to be heard, but soft enough to be pleasant. If the interviewer extends a hand, shake it firmly. A limp handshake does not give a good impression. Remain standing until the interviewer offers you a seat. When seated, the feet should be firmly on the floor in front

of you. It is best if women cross their feet at the ankles rather than the knees.

During the interview find a comfortable location for your hands. Hands may be clasped together in your lap. They may also be placed one on top of the other. Don't let

yourself "play" with your clothing, drum with your fingers, or shake a foot or leg nervously.

Last, but not least, put a smile on your face! Share that smile with everyone you meet. This could be your lucky day!

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