**Dressing for Success**

**How to Dress for an Interview**

By [Alison Doyle](http://jobsearch.about.com/bio/Alison-Doyle-2335.htm), About.com Guide

An article in U.S.A. Today spoke about candidates for jobs wearing jeans, purple sweat suits, and spike heels or sneakers. Other applicants weren't afraid to show pierced body parts and spiked hair. Still others chewed gum or showed up in rumpled clothes or with their pants falling down. One recruiter even told a candidate with his trousers down below his hips, to "Pull your pants up." According to the article, the outlandish dress costs some candidates the job.

**Dress Your Best When Interviewing**

Does it really make a difference how you [dress for an interview](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/tp/interviewattire.htm)? In many cases, it does. I'll never forget the gentleman I interviewed for an accounting position. He had been out of work for a few months and wanted to show me why. He took off his jacket, unbuttoned his shirt and started to pull down his pants (this is a true story) to show me the scar from a boat propeller that had injured him. He didn't get the job. Neither did the young lady in a bright red skirt so short and tight that she could hardly sit down!

In the conservative business climate I worked in at the time, appearances did matter. In other environments it isn't as important. However, it does make sense to dress your best for the interview, regardless of the dress code at the organization. If you're in doubt about [how to dress for an interview](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewattire/a/interviewdress.htm), it is best to err on the side of conservatism. It is much better to be overdressed than underdressed (or undressed). If you're not sure, check with the person who scheduled the interview and ask.

According to Kim Zoller at [Image Dynamics](http://www.idimage.com/), 55% of another person's perception of you is based on how you look. Her Dressing for Success information gives some tips on how to look your best, without necessarily spending a lot of money. Here's a quick look at the basics:

**Women's Interview Attire**

* Solid color, conservative suit
* Coordinated blouse
* Moderate shoes
* Limited jewelry
* Neat, professional hairstyle
* Tan or light hosiery
* Sparse make-up & perfume
* Manicured nails
* Portfolio or briefcase

**Men's Interview Attire**

* Solid color, conservative suit
* White long sleeve shirt
* Conservative tie
* Dark socks, professional shoes
* Very limited jewelry
* Neat, professional hairstyle
* Go easy on the aftershave
* Neatly trimmed nails
* Portfolio or briefcase

**What Not to Wear on an Interview**

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When you are dressing for a job interview, image really is everything (or most of it). The image you present to a potential employer is the first thing they are going to notice about you - before you even have a chance to say a word or shake a hand.

In order to make a good [first impression](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/interviewimpres.htm), you need to dress professionally and separate your social image (if it's more casual, and it probably is) from your professional presence.

[**How to Dress for an Interview**](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewattire/a/interviewdress.htm)   
Why it's always important to dress professionally for a job interview and what to wear.

**What Not to Wear on a Job Interview**

* Flip-flops or sneakers.
* Underwear (bras, bra straps, briefs, boxers, etc.) that is visible. Don't wear any underwear that shows - even if your bra straps match your top.
* Shorts.
* Jeans.
* Skirts that are too short.
* Pants that are too low-rise or too tight.
* Blouses that are too low-cut or too short - don't show your cleavage or your belly.
* More on underwear and low-rise pants - make sure the top of your thong, if you wear one, doesn't show above your pants.

**Trendy vs. Classic**

* **A classic interview suit** that will last for years is a better investment than the latest trendy attire that will only last a season.
* **Your idea of trendy** might not match the interviewer's perspective on what's fashionable, so err on the side of dressing conservatively when you interview.
* **Shop Wisely** - Visit outlets, shop sales, shop online, and use coupons to get the most mileage out of your interview budget.
* **Plan Ahead** - If you have that one classic interview suit in your closet, you'll be prepared for an unexpected interview, regardless of when it occurs.

**Your Professional Presence**

* **Your Social vs. Your Professional Presence** - What you wear off-the-job and socially doesn't have to be what you wear interviewing or at work. In fact, your professional presence may be very different from personal presence, and that's fine. They don't have to mesh - you can have a closet full of fun clothes and a wardrobe of work clothes.
* **Perfume and Cologne** - Your scent (even if you smell good) can be an issue. I once worked for some who wouldn't hire anyone he could smell from across the room. Also, scent is one of the strongest senses and your favorite perfume or cologne might be the same scent the interviewer's ex-girlfriend or ex-husband wore. That subliminal negative impact could squash your chances of getting a job offer. With any type of scent, less, or none, is better.
* **Pantyhose** - The question of whether women should wear [pantyhose on a job interview](http://jobsearch.about.com/b/2008/07/23/should-you-wear-panty-hose-to-an-interview.htm) created a lot of discussion on this site and the answer was overwhelmingly yes.
* [**Tattoos and Piercings**](http://jobsearch.about.com/b/a/217541.htm) - Depending on where you are interviewing, you may want to consider covering your tattoos and taking out your rings. There are companies that have policies which limit both.
* **Starting Your New Job** - If you're not sure what to wear on the job, ask the hiring manager before you start. You can also visit the workplace to see what the people coming in and out of the building are wearing. There is no better way to make a bad impression than to show up for your first day because you're underdressed or overdressed.

**Thank You Letters**

**Writing Thank You Letters**

By [Alison Doyle](http://jobsearch.about.com/bio/Alison-Doyle-2335.htm), About.com Guide

Writing a thank you letter, or [thank you email](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankyouemail.htm), after an employment interview is a must. In fact, some employers think less of those interviewees who fail to follow-up promptly. Plan to send out your thank you letters or [thank you notes](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankyounote.htm) as soon as possible (preferably within twenty-four hours) after your interview.

**Customize Your Thank You Letters**

Like any piece of writing, it is best to keep your audience in mind. Address their issues and concerns. In general, typed (paper or email) thank you letters are recommended.

However, some surveys suggest than hiring managers like hand written thank notes, too. So, consider the "personality" of the organization and the rapport you felt during your interviews. If your interview was a fairly informal process and/or you achieved an immediate rapport with your interviewer, a handwritten note is fine. When you're not sure what to write, review [thank you letter samples](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/samplethankyou.htm) and [follow up letter samples](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/morejobletters/a/followup.htm) to get ideas. You can also use a [thank you letter template](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thanktemplate.htm) as a guide when writing your letters.

In addition to thanking the person you talked with, the thank you letter reinforces the fact that you want the job. Note: Even if you do not want the job, write a thank you letter respectfully [withdrawing your application](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/morejobletters/a/rejectajob.htm), because you never know what the future holds so why burn your bridges?

**View Your Thank You Letters as Sales Letters**

You may also view your thank you letters as follow-up "sales" letters. In other words, you can restate why you want the job, what your qualifications are, how you might make significant contributions, and so on. This thank you letter is also the perfect opportunity to discuss anything of importance that your interviewer neglected to ask or that you neglected to answer as thoroughly, or as well, as you would have liked.

**Group Thank You Letters**

What if you spent an entire day being interviewed (and taken to lunch) with several people? Are individual thank you notes appropriate or should you write a "group" letter? Choose your approach based on what you think will be most in keeping with the "personality" of the organization. Also, consider whether the interviews had very much in common with one another. If there was a great deal of similarity (i.e., shared concerns mutually voiced by your interviewers), perhaps a "group" letter will suffice. My preference though, would be to take the extra time and send an individual thank you letter to everyone you met with.

**Lunch or Dinner Interviews**

When [dining and interviewing](http://jobsearch.about.com/library/blthank.htm) be sure to thank everyone you spend time with, both for the meal and for taking the time to discuss the position and the company with you.

**When You're Not Sure What to Write**

Time takes precedence - get a simple, appreciative thank you note in the mail or send a [thank you by email](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankyouemail.htm) without delay; save your creative efforts for another time. If you're not sure what to write, review a few [sample thank you letters](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/samplethankyou.htm) or personalize our [thank you letter template](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thanktemplate.htm).

**Remember to Proofread**

Check spelling, grammar, typos, etc. If in doubt about the correct names, spellings or titles of your interviewers, call the office to double-check. Your efforts will be worth it!