

✔ clothing essentials for everyone

Professional dress matters because it helps you to project an image that lets the employer see you in the professional role you are seeking. The whole working world doesn't revolve around dark, conservative suits. **What you wear for a professional encounter depends on the career field you're pursuing.**

Always follow these general guidelines:

- Hair should be clean, well groomed, and away from the eyes. Simple, classic styles are best.

✔ who wears what?

▶ For **traditional careers**—like banking, accounting, finance, engineering, law, and corporate positions—you'll need a conservative look that conveys competence and authority.

Suits should have a classic cut or style and be dark in color (navy, dark grey, black, etc.). Shirts and blouses should be a neutral color, like white, ivory, light grey, etc. Ties and scarves should be subtle with a little color.

▶ For those pursuing **technical careers**—in areas like engineering, information technology, sciences, etc.—a clean look that conveys knowledge, innovation, and approachability is important.

Suits should be conservative in subtle dark colors. Blouses and shirts should be a subtle color.

▶ **People-focused careers**—counseling, teaching, sales, and social work, for example—require an image that projects

- No visible tattoos or body piercings.
- Remove extraneous earrings. (Women: one pair. Men: none.)
- Avoid strong mints, perfumes, or aftershaves.
- Clothing should work for you, not against you. Fit and comfort are important considerations in projecting yourself at your best.
- Trendy clothing—like short skirts, low necklines, extreme prints or colors—generally do not project an image appropriate for a professional meeting.
- Crisp, clean, well-pressed clothing is a must.

expertise but approachability.

Suits should be conservative in subtle dark colors; coordinate separates can work too. Blouses and shirts should be a subtle color.

▶ The most opportunity for expression of personal style can be found in **creative careers**—like advertising, art, design, and entertainment, to name a few. In these fields you'll need a contemporary image that conveys creativity, innovation, and competence.

Suits can vary in cut, style, and color; two-piece coordinates are acceptable. Blouses and shirts should accent your total look. While you will often see professionals in these careers wearing jeans and other more casual clothing, it is best for prospective professionals to step it up a notch. Show your creative flair, but **remember to look more like a professional than a student.**

✔ what to wear for less formal meetings

So, for more formal interactions like career fairs and interviews, hopefully it's clearer now why suits are usually your best option. But if you're going to a fair as an information seeker instead of a job seeker, or if you're attending an event like a conference, informational interview, job shadow, etc., a suit may make you overdressed.

For these kinds of interactions, you always want to dress professionally—no ripped jeans, flip-flops, or T-shirts with obscenities on them. Save these clothes for your friends, not a potential employer.

Follow the “dress essentials for everyone,” and consider the items below when you're picking out what to wear . . .

- khakis
- blazer
- button-down shirt
- sweater
- dress shoes
- loafers
- dress pants

And remember, when in doubt, **check with an insider (your employer contact or Career Advisor, for example) about what the appropriate dress** in a particular situation might be!