
S&L Personnel Advice Centre

What to wear for interviews!

First impressions count for a lot. Therefore it is vital that all applicants present themselves in their best possible light when attending an interview. Although this can feel like an impossible task, it is very easy when you know how. As well as the obvious pitfalls, there are many minor alterations which can make a huge difference.

All interviewees should do their research before planning their outfit. The particular variety of job being sought can tell applicants a lot about suitable clothes. City jobs call for a smart suit, whereas jobs caring for small children or animals will demand less formality. Yet, those confused should always err on the side of caution; it is always better to be overdressed than underdressed. A suit is a good choice for any type of interview; even if other applicants do not wear a suit, this item of clothing will help interviewers remember you favourably. A good hint is attempting to find out what employees at the establishment usually wear; a smart version of this wardrobe should be suitable. Women caught between the common trousers or skirt dilemma should be guided by the job and organisation in question; if in doubt, wear what you feel most comfortable in.

Women's Wardrobe

Continuing with the question of women's wardrobe, there are many potential pitfalls which women should avoid at all costs.

- Certain types of clothing are simply inappropriate in an interviewing situation; short skirts, ridiculously high heels and severely low cut tops are never a safe option.
- High fashion is best avoided, although, obviously, those applying for a job in the fashion industry may have to rethink this. Again, the job in question should always guide wardrobe choice.

However, this is not to say that individuality is utterly unacceptable. A slight touch of uniqueness may help interviewers recall you for the right reasons; wearing an eccentric outfit from head to toe will mean that you are remembered for the wrong reasons. A brightly coloured shirt under a plain black or blue suit will show a hint of personality whilst demonstrating acceptance for the company's dress code. The art of finding the perfect balance is simply blending the occupation's style with a flash of your own. A beautiful brooch or a minimal piece of jewellery is another good way to attract admiration and respect. The interview is about convincing the interviewers that you are the perfect person for their company; a completely outrageous outfit will determine your unsuitability and, at worst, seem laughable and slightly disrespectful of the organisation. Instead of attempting to put their needs first, an outlandish outfit screams 'I put my desires before those of my position'. This is obviously not the perfect attitude for any type of occupation. After all, it is not you interviewing them. Each interviewee only has around thirty minutes to convince interviewers that they are perfect in every respect; a badly put together outfit can ruin a person's chances in the first ten seconds.

Men's Wardrobe

Men should steer clear of short sleeved shirts; long sleeved versions are much more flattering, formal and generally accepted. No gimmicky ties or socks will be appreciated; no matter how funny the Simpsons are, they are out of place in the workplace, especially in the interview room. Socks are often an ignored and a fatal pitfall; under NO circumstances should any male wear white socks underneath a suit.

The Smaller Details

- Men should avoid excess jewellery as well as overpowering scents. This applies to women as well; fragrances should be subtle.

- It is also important that all should be extremely attentive to personal hygiene; being properly groomed is an attractive quality.
- All should go over their outfit and appearance with a fine tooth comb. Men should be freshly shaven and women's hair should be in good condition and recently washed.
- Shoes should be polished and any missing buttons replaced.
- Clothes should be fully washed and ironed prior to the interview.
- Women need to prepare for every eventuality; a spare pair of tights should be brought along in case the worst should happen.
- Final checks before entering the interview room are important. Make sure you are smart, tucked in, and ready to make the best possible first impression.
- Women should avoid wearing a lot of obvious make up; slightly applied, neutral colours mean that interviewers will be focusing upon your answers and mind rather than your face.
- Unless you own nothing suitable, women should avoid buying an entirely new outfit prior to interview. Uncomfortable clothes will distract and annoy you, thus affecting your concentration.
- Above all, no one should wear new shoes. Painful feet are an unpleasant experience which no one needs in such a demanding and uncomfortable situation.

Evening Wear

There is always the chance that interviewees will require more than one outfit. Some firms will hold social events the night before the day of interview. This is a way of easing applicants into the situation but also provides the perfect opportunity to observe how each individual copes in such situations. The same rules that apply to the actual interview should be adhered to; it is better to be overdressed than underdressed (although it is doubtful that evening gowns will be necessary).

- Applicants should not be completely covered in current fashion trends and nor should they show too much flesh.
- Men should stick to smart suits and women should think in terms of class and timeless elegance; no one can go wrong with a beautiful black dress.

Above all, it is imperative that interviewees should not attract attention to themselves for the wrong reasons. All should feel completely comfortable in their outfit so that their confidence in their own abilities shines through.