

## FIRST STEPS

- ✓ Determine what the appropriate dress code is for your Career Fair, Interview, or new job. If it is not specified in the information provided, call the contact person and ask.
- ✓ Get an idea of your wardrobe a few days prior to the event in order to purchase new appropriate items, if necessary.

## **BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL**

### What is it?

Business professional clothing is formal attire that is appropriate for an interview, a presentation, or a formal meeting (such as with a new client or with a top executive or administrator). If “business attire” is requested, this means business professional, and this typically means a suit.

### Basic Rules

**If you wear a suit, make sure it is a matching set.** A suit is more formal than a jacket with contrasting pants or a skirt (which would be a business casual look). Darker colors are more traditional, especially for interviews. The most formal colors are plain navy, charcoal, and black.

**Keep your look simple.** Have fewer details and colors in your outfit, and keep prints or patterns on shirts and ties to a minimum. If you want add color to your ensemble, contrast dark and light colors. For example, wear a white or cream-colored shirt with a dark suit. Also, find solid-colored fabrics that are smooth and plain. Bulky and textured patterns make your look less formal.

### What to Wear for Business Professional

- For both men and women, a dark business suit with a simple dress shirt are appropriate.
- For men, traditional business professional includes a white shirt (French cuff styles), cuff links, silk tie, and pocket square (silk or linen). Shoes should be dark and shined, and socks should match.
- For women, traditional business professional includes a skirt suit, with the skirt hitting slightly below the knee, with pantyhose and a light-colored shirt. Shoes should be clean and low-heeled.
- For gender-neutral styles, a dark-colored matching pantsuit with a light-colored shirt is appropriate.

## **GENERAL GROOMING TIPS**

- Hair. Your hair should be simple and well kept.
- Facial Hair. If you have facial hair, make sure it is well groomed.
- Hands. Keep fingernails clean and an appropriate length. If wearing nail polish, a neutral color is best.
- Scent. As for cologne/perfume, it is best to go without, as some people could be allergic. If you chose to wear a cologne or perfume, you can use a light body spray or anything with natural ingredients.
- Tattoos: Typically, tattoos should not be visible in business attire.

### **MU CAREER CENTER**

Lower Level,  
Student Success Center

 (573) 882-6801

 [career.missouri.edu](http://career.missouri.edu)

 [career@missouri.edu](mailto:career@missouri.edu)



## ***BUSINESS CASUAL***

### **What is it?**

There is no general agreement on this term, and it can depend on the industry, size of company, the event, geography, climate, and many other factors. In general, it is a neat, pulled-together look that maintains professionalism that's slightly more casual and relaxed than typical business attire (a suit). For most, day-to-day workwear may be more casual than what you might wear to an interview.

### **Basic Rules**

**No jeans or t-shirts.** Denim is not considered business casual, even if they are really nice jeans. It is a good idea to invest in a pair or two of high quality black pants. T-shirts are not okay; instead you will want to wear a slightly more formal shirt such as a sweater, turtleneck, polo, or neatly ironed button down. Athletic wear is not considered business or business casual.

**Shoes matter.** No flip-flops, sandals, slippers, athletic sneakers or hiking boots. A nice pair of closed-toed shoes will always be a safe bet.

### **What to Wear for Business Casual**

- For men, women, and gender-neutral styles, slacks and a dress shirt with or without a jacket are acceptable.
- For men, an ironed shirt with a collar and dress pants, along with socks, belt, and shoes are appropriate. Both belt and socks should match pants (no athletic socks), and shirts should be tucked in. Ties are typically optional.
- For women, dress pants and skirts with dress shirts or sweaters as well as dresses are appropriate. Skirts and dresses should hit at or below the knee, and shoes should be closed toed. Pantyhose or dress socks with pants (no athletic socks) should be worn. A nice scarf or cardigan are optional.
- Essentially, business casual = with one article substituted (e.g. a suit with no jacket).

## ***GENERAL TIPS***

### **Clothing**

- Both business professional and business casual are based on classics, not trends. You are trying to stand out for your professionalism, not your sense of fashion.
- Your clothes should fit well, be in good condition and wrinkle free. Pants should be ironed and tailored to fit you. Keep an eye out for details like dangling threads or tags, missing buttons and lint.
- Avoid clothing that is too tight or too baggy. Less is more—keep your look simple and safe.
- If you are wearing socks they should match the color of your pants and cover your ankles.
- Be sure you can walk comfortably. Avoid chunky heels or platforms and choose neutral colors.
- While you are not expected to spend the same amount of money on your attire as a CEO, try to invest in a few pieces of high quality clothing that will last you a long time.

### **Accessories**

- If wearing a belt, it should match your outfit or your shoes.
- If you choose to wear jewelry, think simple. You don't want to wear anything too flashy or bulky.
- If you choose to bring a bag, a business-like tote, padfolio or small briefcase of a solid color is best.
- Any visible tattoos should be covered.
- Regarding piercings, ear piercings are fine, but all other facial piercings should be removed.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Dress for Success Infographic** (<http://career.missouri.edu/dress-for-success>): Learn all about the do's and don'ts of business casual and interview attire.

**MU Career Center Pinterest Board** (<https://www.pinterest.com/mucareercenter1/>): View advice about and pictures of business professional and business casual attire for women, men and gender neutral styles.

**SYMS Dress** (<http://www.symsdress.com>): A site specifically for college students that features dress basics for interviews and occupational wardrobes. The site includes some interviewing tips and FAQs.

## **RESOURCES FOR OBTAINING BUSINESS ATTIRE**

### **Resources at MU.**

Truman's Closet is a student-run organization that provides attire for students, and can help you choose and plan. You can borrow attire FREE with your student ID. They are located at 1498 S Rock Quarry Road Columbia, MO 65201. Check their website <http://msa.missouri.edu/trumans-closet/> for more information and for their business hours as they do vary from semester to semester.

### **Other Resources in Columbia.**

Many department stores sell business attire. Visit <http://discoverthedistrict.com> to explore the downtown shopping options in Columbia. The Columbia Mall also has many stores that sell business attire. <https://visitcolumbiamall.com>

### **Online.**

There are many online resources for ordering business professional and business casual clothing. Some sites, such as Amazon Prime (<https://www.amazon.com>), will provide expedited shipping and others, such as Zappos ([www.zappos.com](http://www.zappos.com)), offer free returns (if you're not sure of your size, order two sizes and return the one that doesn't fit). Additionally, some websites sell gently used clothing (<https://www.thredup.com>) or provide professional clothing for rent (<https://www.renttherunway.com>).

## **QUESTIONS?**

Still not sure what the appropriate attire is for an upcoming event you'll be attending? Feel free to stop by the MU Career Center to speak with one of our Career Specialists who can help you prepare. Also check out the pictures at the end of this handout for images and ideas about both business professional and business casual clothing!

## EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

Men's Style



Women's Style



Gender Neutral Styles



## EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS CASUAL ATTIRE

Men's Style



Women's Style



Gender Neutral Style



### NEXT STEPS

- ✓ When attending your interview, career fair, tour, or first day on the job, observe what other employees are wearing to provide you with guidelines for the future.
- ✓ Visit <https://career.missouri.edu> and click on the "Resources" Tab to visit [Mizzou Career Tools](#), where you can search our site for career guides, videos, links, infographics, and more!