

Interview techniques: Dressed to kill

Presenting a professional image through what you wear to your interview is essential.

What you wear to an interview can be very important. Although it's not going to guarantee you the job, that initial impression you give the interviewer as you walk in depends to a fair degree on your visual appearance. It could make the difference between being on that second interview list or being shown the door.

Regardless of the nature of the job, portraying a professional image through what you wear to the interview is essential.

Our appearance says a lot about who we are, our personality and can particularly relate to the pride we take in our work and ourselves. You're bound to be feeling nervous before the interview so looking good and feeling smart as you walk in will help boost your confidence and self-esteem.

The dress code for an interview depends on the job you're going for and of course requires some common sense. Generally, it is advised that you should dress smartly and reasonably conservatively - you are there to hammer home your suitability for the job, not for some kind of fashion shoot.

But it depends on your personal taste and what you feel comfortable in. Obviously if you're going for a job as an accountant or a banker you don't want to roll up in a ripped T-shirt, jeans and trainers. But then again, if you're going for a creative role at an advertising agency, for example, looking too austere could put you at a disadvantage.

Dylan Armbrust, *Computeractive* editor, said: "I feel a person in a suit is more serious about the position they're going for than someone dressed casually. It's expected in this society that if you want something, you are going to make a serious effort to get it.

"Anyone serious about getting a job or making a good impression at an interview should always look smart. If you are going for an office-type job, you want to be dressed in an office-type wardrobe. For a man this means wearing a suit and tie. There is a bit more flexibility for women, but the key is to be comfortable. If you're not comfortable wearing high heels then don't. "

Many people suggest that having a couple of outfits, which you only ever wear to interviews, is a good ploy. That way you can get them dry-cleaned after each interview, and then put them away for the next time rather than letting them become crumpled, creased and generally worn-out and tired-looking through everyday wear.

Andrea Hodgkiss, a recruitment consultant with recruitment agency TFPL, said: "I would recommend people always wear a suit. Turning up to an interview in the wrong clothes does not do the interviewee any favours.

"You need to look clean, smart, but understated. Always remember to polish your shoes. Women should wear understated accessories, nothing too glamorous. A bit of colour is OK, but nothing too over the top. Being smart is the key. If you turn up to an interview looking dishevelled and untidy then you're not going to give a professional impression to the interviewer."

Given the wealth of job roles out there and the range of acceptable forms of dress from industry to industry, it's difficult to suggest any particular standard. Here are a few tips to consider when selecting your outfit.

Women

- A smart suit almost always makes a big impression and wool creases a lot less easily than cotton.
- Don't go for too short a skirt if you'll feel uncomfortable or distracted by it.
- Don't wear very high heels if you feel uncomfortable in them.
- Take a spare pair of tights, just in case.
- Don't arrive at the interview overloaded with different bags; a handbag or briefcase is fine.
- Stay away from chunky jewellery and accessories, they can be distracting.
- Be modest with make-up and perfume.

Men

- Don't wear white or heavily patterned socks with dark trousers.
- Suits are almost always expected at interview.
- Short-sleeved shirts look less professional than long-sleeved ones.
- Cotton shirts hold up to perspiration better than synthetic fibres.
- A briefcase, if necessary adds to a professional image; a rucksack doesn't.
- Have a handkerchief to cope with sweaty palms.

General

- Make sure your hands and nails are clean.
- Remember an umbrella to avoid a soaking.
- Make sure your shoes are polished.
- Try to avoid wearing the same outfit to the second interview.
- Make sure your chosen outfit is comfortable, clean and ironed.
- Deodorant and breath fresheners are useful to have at hand.