

Dressing for success at interviews

93% of first impressions are based on appearance and non-verbal communication. It takes just 30 seconds for someone to form an opinion of you – and a further 21 meetings to even begin to change that opinion.

In an interview situation, you are marketing yourself as a product, and so you need to make the best personal impact possible.

Pitman Training Group asked professional image consultant, **Claire Bunton**, for her advice on how to dress for success.

Presenting a professional image is more about doing your homework than spending money. So as you prepare for your interview, keep these wardrobe tips in mind.

Dress appropriately for the work environment

In many professional work environments, traditional business dress will be appropriate. In other industries, such as advertising, public relations, graphic design and information technology, what-to-wear might be less clear, as employees may adopt a less formal look. Find out as much as you can about the company and ask about the company's general dress code when you are first offered an interview. If in doubt, err on the conservative side. It is better to be overdressed than underdressed (or in the case of some females with too much flesh on show – not dressed at all!).

The 'smart-casual' conundrum

'Smart Casual' is a confusing, and often terrifying, term. What exactly does it mean? Smart-casual traditionally means a less formal suit, women do not have to wear a shirt with a collar and more colour can be introduced into the outfit. However in some organisations smart-casual is far more casual than smart. If you are unsure, always go for the smarter option. You can always dress down once you have the job.

Interview faux-pas

Nasty fingernails: This tip is for women or men. Extremely long, uncut or badly chewed nails are a real turnoff. Your nails should be groomed and neat. Avoid vivid nail polish too.

Jewellery that jangles: Don't wear more than two rings per hand or one earring per ear. And strictly no face jewellery or ankle bracelets allowed!

Printed or trendy handbags: Handbags should be conservative and inconspicuous.

Polo necks for men: A tie is preferable, at least in the first go-round. At the very least, wear a collared shirt.

Open-toed or backless shoes, are not appropriate for an interview. And mules are a definite no-no. Keep your toes and heels hidden.

Leather jackets for men or women: Even leather blazers are not good for interviewing purposes. They look like outerwear.

Bare legs: Wear stockings or tights, even in humid summer weather. Stockings can be in neutral colours or a fashion colour to match your shoes.

Out-of-date suits: These have lapels that are too wide (three inches or more) or too narrow (one inch or less). A good tailor can alter lapels.

Short skirts: Hemlines should not be more than one inch above the knee at the shortest – to the knee or just below the knee is far more appropriate. Don't wear Capri pants or leggings to an interview.

Coloured briefcases: Briefcases, purses and shoes should all be conservative in colour and in good condition.

An interview is not the place to make a fashion statement, though those in the creative and fashion industries can afford to be slightly more adventurous. Everyone else should opt for a conservative look. More and more companies are returning to traditional professional dress.

Whatever you wear should accent the fact that you are a skilled and experienced professional who is ready to get to work at a new job. Let common sense guide you and it should be easy to avoid fashion blunders that could damage your chances of getting a second interview.

In this market, it is essential that you look good and your appearance is right for the job.

Notes on Claire Bunton

Claire Bunton is a leading image consultant with a dedicated studio in Norwich. She also works in partnership with House of Fraser.

She is professionally trained by the UK's leading image training provider, is an affiliate of the Federation of Image Consultants (TFIC) and is an expert in Personal Impact in the Corporate Market - looking at the importance of making that right first impression. Claire offers one to one consultations to help you get the "right look" as well as workshops to companies who understand the value of their staff making the right first impression.

Claire Bunton can be contacted on 0044 1603 446265, by email at enquiries@clairebunton.co.uk or for more information visit www.clairebunton.co.uk



www.pitman-training.ie

pitman training | freedom to progress

CALL FREE ON 1800 532632