When it comes to getting a job, we would all like to think that our qualifications speak for themselves. However, it is your first impression that will likely determine your professional fate. In part, you project professionalism through your appearance and manner of dress and when it comes to getting your first job, you can and should be your best professional self.

Most employers agree that overall appearance contributes to their opinion of candidates, so you should present an overall professional appearance that extends beyond the clothes that you wear. Presenting yourself professionally allows potential future employers to focus on the information you present in your interview. They will not be distracted by the way you look, your clothing, or your accessories.

**Interview Attire**

First and foremost, consider your audience. Research the nature of the companies and organizations where you will be interviewing; your goal should be to understand both the field in general and the particular employer(s). Not all jobs require a formal level of professional dress, while others require that one wear a suit each and every day. Some companies even have strict dress codes.

Once you have done your homework; plan to dress in such a way that will improve the chances of getting the job that you want. Understand that you should dress more formally for your interview than you will to come to work each day. Also, it is always advisable to err on the conservative side when it comes to interview attire.

**Men**

- Tailored suit in traditional colors: navy blue, charcoal gray, black, solid or subtle stripe patterns
- Long sleeved button-down shirt in white or light blue, with a plain white undershirt
- Conservative tie in a solid color, tasteful stripe or small pattern
- Dark socks that match your suit in a solid color or small pattern, long enough that no skin is exposed while seated
- Dress shoes, clean and polished

**Examples**

**Women**

- Tailored suit in traditional colors: navy blue, charcoal gray, black, solid or subtle stripe patterns – while women have somewhat more flexibility in color, avoid non-traditional color choices
- Skirts or dresses should come to the knee or just below
- Always wear pantyhose with a dress or skirt suit
- Shirts should be tucked in, and in a conservative color to match the suit
- Low to medium heeled leather shoes with closed toes and backs

**Examples**

**Hair/Makeup/Nails**

- Hair should be neat and well groomed
- Hair should always be kept out of your face; you don’t have to tie it back, but it should not be a distraction
- Makeup should be natural and not distract from your overall appearance
- Facial hair should be short and neatly trimmed
- Be aware that some industries prefer men have short hair and no facial hair
- Clean and neat nails are best
- You do not need to wear polish, if you do it should be a neutral color and not chipped
Hygiene
- Use soap and wear only deodorant
- Do not wear any perfume, cologne or scented lotions
- Brush your teeth or have a breath mint before the interview
- Do not chew gum, candy or mints during the interview

Jewelry
- Wear simple, flattering jewelry in conservative amounts
- Wear no more than one ring on each hand
- Wear no more than one earring in each ear and consider wearing stud earrings or small hoops

Tattoos/Piercings
Think primarily about first impressions when considering visible tattoos and piercings. This may be an automatic disqualifier in some fields and completely acceptable in others. In most cases, opinions and preferences of interviewers will fall somewhere in between and it is advisable to present a conservative appearance by covering all tattoos and removing all visible, non-traditional piercings. Note that you should remove your tongue ring if you have one as it can be very distracting during your interview.

Some employers may have body art policies incorporated into their dress code. It is legal to require employees to cover tattoos and remove piercings as long as doing so does not discriminate against the employee on a religious or cultural basis. Before applying to a company with such a policy, you must be prepared that you may have to take these measures daily.

Briefcase/ Purse
Never bring a backpack or casual bag to your interview, but it is appropriate, if not advisable, to bring a briefcase or similarly professional bag to carry a portfolio, pen or pencil, copies of your resume/references and application materials, and work or writing samples. You will also likely need a place to put your wallet and car keys (and possibly tissues and breath mints). If you bring a cell phone, you should turn it off as you enter the building, well before your interview begins. Women are advised to bring either a purse or a briefcase, but not both. Also, your purse should be conservative rather than trendy and should complement your suit (avoid bold colors and designs).

Business Casual
Business casual, also known as dressy casual when referring to social events, is a vague term that sometimes challenges seasoned professionals. The first thing to note is that business casual is NOT casual. Consider business casual as a step down from interview dress. You should look neat and your clothing should not be wrinkled or worn.

For men, business casual could be khaki colored dress pants (not cotton khaki pants!) with a button down shirt (but no tie). If you choose to wear a nice polo shirt, it should be tucked in. A sweater or blazer is also appropriate. While you do not have to wear a formal lace up dress shoe, you should not wear sneakers or other casual shoes. Loafers are suitable footwear for men.

For women, rather than pairing your suit pants/skirt with your suit jacket, you can wear a sweater or blouse in a bolder color or pattern. It is still inappropriate to wear sandals, and in many cases, open toed shoes. A flat shoe or loafer is also appropriate for women.

The same guidelines apply for accessories, hair and makeup. You must still make a good impression and avoid an appearance that distracts from your skills and abilities. Make sure you look professional and put together.