

MAINE BUSINESS SCHOOL

PROFESSIONAL DRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Disclaimer:

This guide is intended to serve as a resource to help individuals navigate expectations for various professional environments. Professional dress standards vary based on industry, company culture, geographical location, and the nature of specific events. We encourage individuals to research and adapt their attire to suit their intended audience's particular context and expectations.

The suggestions are not exhaustive and should not be interpreted as rigid requirements. Personal expression, comfort, and accessibility considerations are also important factors in professional settings. References to specific companies or vendors for professional attire are included for informational purposes only and do not constitute an endorsement by the Maine Business School. The Maine Business School is not responsible for outcomes related to the use of this guide.

Interviews:

When interviewing for a job or internship, use your resources to determine the most appropriate style of dress. Expectations vary within industries, and when in doubt, it is better to be overdressed than under-dressed. You should always dress professionally for an interview unless you are specifically instructed not to.

When looking for guidance, check the company's "About Us" page and social media profiles for insights into their culture. If you're still unsure, reach out to your recruiter or HR contact to ask for their recommended interview attire.

In the workplace:

In the workplace, observe how others dress, especially those in leadership positions or other aspirational roles. You may choose to dress similarly to the people who hold the positions you would like to reach.

When attending a meeting, conference, or other event, ask your colleagues who may know or have met with this organization/person about how their team operates and how you can appear both respectful and professional.

Different styles of business attire are applicable to different settings or occasions. Your dress may adjust within a role to fit different audiences. When attending events, pay attention to the dress code, if applicable. If not, look to other people's styles of dress or ask around if needed. Dressing appropriately can help you be seen as a professional employee who cares about your success in the role.

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PROFESSIONAL DRESS RESOURCES

Shopping Resources

FREE/LOW COST - LOCAL:

FREE: Bodwell Center UMaine

LOW COST: Orono Thrift Shop,
Goodwill, Polish, Salvation Army Thrift
Store

OTHER LOCAL OPTIONS:

Cool Girl Collective, JCPenney,
Marshalls, Old Navy, Talbots, Target,
TJ Maxx, Walmart

ONLINE OPTIONS:

Abercrombie, American Eagle, Aritzia,
ASOS, ASTR the Label, Banana
Republic Factory, Everlane, Express,
H&M, JCrew Factory, Loft, Macy's,
Madewell, Mango, Men's Warehouse,
Nordstrom Rack, UNIQLO, Top Shop,
Quince, Zara

TOP ANDROGYNOUS OPTIONS:

Kirrin Finch, One DNA, Peau De Loup,
Wildfang

Start simple

With overconsumption at an all-time high, it is best for the planet - and your budget - to start simple. There is no need to buy a huge quantity of clothes. Get one or two suits in a timeless color, such as black, navy, or dark grey, and build around that.

If you're buying single pieces, go for high-quality and classic cuts, colors, and styles. If you're looking for a trendy piece or bright color, shop sales.

Choose styles that flatter your colors and body type

Every person has a unique body type and palette that flatters their colors. The key to looking your best and elevating any look is to focus on fit. Once you know your body type, you can choose the right silhouettes/cuts to accentuate features accordingly.

Tip: By tailoring your clothes to fit your body type, even the most inexpensive pieces can look elevated.

Gender-neutral dress:

Workplace attire offers a range of options and levels of formality that don't conform to a gender binary. Depending on the occasion, you can adjust gender-neutral styles to be more casual or formal.

For a casual look, consider jeans, sweaters, or shirts. Footwear options might include trendy sneakers, loafers, or sandals. For a more formal setting, slacks, trousers, or neat chinos work well paired with a button-down, sweater, or shirt with a cardigan. Loafers, oxfords, or stylish lace-up shoes add a polished touch.

Pantsuits are versatile for any formal environment, and they can be paired with flat or low-heeled oxfords or loafers for a sleek finish.

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Smart Casual

When to Wear It: Ideal for networking events and informal work socials.

What It Is: A mix of professional wardrobe staples (e.g., blazers, dress pants, button-up shirts) paired with more casual pieces like clean sneakers, non-distressed jeans, or a plain t-shirt. Smart casual is all about balance — juxtaposing polished items with relaxed basics.

Things to Consider: Smart casual allows you the flexibility to showcase your personal style. Neutral pieces are a great foundation as they are versatile and timeless staples when building a wardrobe. Don't shy away from incorporating funky pieces or bright colors that you love — smart casual is a great way to highlight them. Always consider your audience and the occasion to ensure your outfit is appropriate.



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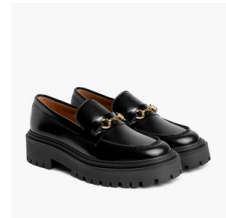
Business Casual

When: Business casual is one of the most common dress codes in American offices today, but, what is considered business casual can vary greatly by industry.

What: Business casual bottoms could be slacks, skirts, or khakis. Tops have a wide range of what is considered accepted, which includes, but is not limited to, sweaters, button-ups, polos, blouses, blazers, etc. Shoes should be dressier than smart casual, aiming for dress shoes, ballerina or d'Orsay flats, loafers, heels, boots, etc. When opting for heels, try a low or wedge heel for a more comfortable fit.

Things to Consider: Business casual means different things to different organizations. It is important you check in with your HR representative and avoid making assumptions.

Tip: While linen and cotton can be most comfortable in a warmer climate, be mindful of wrinkles. To stay more polished throughout the day, opt for a linen or cotton blend.



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Business Professional

When: Business professional is a traditional form of attire used in more conservative settings or companies with a more strict dress code.

What: Pantsuits, skirt sets, conservative dresses, or suits are perfect for business professionals. Skirts and dresses should fall at or below the knee. Black, grey, navy, or pinstripe colors are expected. Collared or button-down shirts or blouses are expected.

Tips: Accessories should be kept simple. Solid ties are a great starting point, but conservative patterns are also appropriate. For jewelry, opt for simple and timeless pieces such as a classic watch, simple earrings, or a simple cuff.

