

## How to Prepare and What to Wear

The success of an interview often depends upon the amount of preparation done. So how do you go about getting prepared for the first interview?

- **Confirm** where the interview is being held and when. A botched appointment may keep you from your dream job.
- Read the **job description** or find out the skills needed for the job. (Most job ads list specific skills that are needed.)
- Decide exactly what you **liked** and **disliked** about your past jobs so you can determine if this job will be a fit for you.
- Determine your personal **key achievements** (how you made a difference) and be ready to describe them.
- Know your **resumé** and letters of recommendation inside and out.
- Use the Internet to **research** the company, the industry sector and the company's competitors.
- Conduct **mock interviews** prior to your appointment. Enlist the help of a trusted friend to act out the part of the interviewer. Give your friend a list of possible interview questions, and go through the whole interview—from the first smile and handshake to the last thank you.
- Choose your interview **clothes** in advance.

### What to Wear

Many job searchers have the impression that the “rules” of what to wear to an interview have greatly relaxed through recent years, but actually, the rules remain fairly **conventional**. The classics still apply if you want to make a good first impression. The more conservative the position and the organization, the more conservatively you will want to dress.

If the company is a more relaxed or small business, you may want to consider “lightening up” your clothing—gray or navy separates may be the right choice in this case. However, even in the seemingly relaxed atmosphere of event planning, always err on the side of **formality**. There will be many days to wear more casual dress after you land the job. Marcia Bradley General Manager of PGI, San Diego puts it this way:

**“Having just gone through a round of interviews for sales account executive positions, I would tell you ‘safe’ is better than sorry in terms of what to wear. Wear a suit. Unless the company clearly states that you can come in casual attire, I would not. Why? Even though I might not notice or care that you are wearing flip flops and a jean skirt, someone else in my office may notice. This happened just this week and my team came to me to say not to hire that person. Even if you are told casual is okay, I’d overdress!”**

Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule. If you are applying for work in a totally laid-back environment (a small Hawaiian island company that works off a beachfront for example), the best advice is to either drop by the company and see what all the employees are wearing—or call and ask!

**TIP:** An important tip if you are traveling to an interview: **Pack your interview clothes and accessories in your carry-on luggage. Don't let a delay in getting your baggage ruin your chances for your new career.**

### Tips For Women

- Choose a dark two-piece suit or a tailored dress with a jacket.
- Hose should be a neutral color, not chosen to match your suit.
- Limit jewelry and wear conservative makeup and hairstyle.
- Rather than carrying a purse, slip your essentials into your briefcase.



### Tips For Men

- Choose a dark two-piece suit (lightweight wool preferred) or a sports jacket and coordinating dress slacks.
- White long-sleeved shirts are the accepted first choice — pastel-colored shirts are suitable in a more relaxed business setting.
- Be clean-shaven or well-trimmed if you have facial hair.



### Tips For Both

- Appear neat and clean.
- Buy the best quality clothing you can afford.
- Highly polished shoes still make a strong impression.
- Apply just a hint of fragrance, if any.
- Wear your interview clothes a few times in advance until you are comfortable in them. Your focus should be on the interview and interviewer, not adjusting your new clothing.

