

# Interviews: Dress and Presentation Guidelines

## In-Person Interviews

Employers will expect candidates to wear business attire, often referred to as “business formal,” even if the firm is known for a casual culture. The goal of an interview outfit is to look polished, professional, and “client-ready” - not trendy or fashionable - and to be remembered for your personality and answers to the interview questions, not your outfit. If you have any questions about your attire or accessories, please reach out to a CDO counselor. We are happy to help you!

### ***Suit***

For all students, this means a two-piece **suit** where both pieces match in fabric and color. Classically, suits are in a dark, neutral color - navy, black, or charcoal - and in a solid material, without a noticeable pattern.

The pieces that make up your suit can vary but should always include a jacket, which should be single-breasted (one line of buttons). Suit combinations can include: jacket and pants, jacket and skirt, or jacket and sheath dress. If you elect to wear a skirt or a sheath dress, such pieces should be knee-length - nothing shorter.

Be sure to try on the suit and test it in motion - each piece should fit comfortably and lie well when standing, sitting, crossing and uncrossing legs, bending, and the hem should not ride up too far when walking or sitting. Tailors can bring pieces in or shorten the length, but cannot add length or let out seams easily. Give yourself time to have the suit tailored to fit; many stores will have in-house tailors that can assist.

### ***Shirts***

If you are wearing suit separates, your shirt should (1) either be a button-up, collared shirt (no polo shirts) or a shell shape and (2) be in a solid, light color - either light blue or white is traditional.

Your shirt should be tucked into your pants or skirt, as applicable.

### ***Accessories***

Ties are still a part of the formal business suit. Ties should extend to the top of your pants’ waistline and should be in a classic color or simple print - think simple stripes, blue, red, or small patterns like herringbone.

Shoes should be neutral in color - most typically black or brown, coordinating with your suit color, or nude if pairing with a skirt or dress. Your shoes should have a closed toe and low heel - loafers, oxfords, low-heeled pumps or slingbacks are classic styles. Traditionally, shoes should have a non-rubber sole, but we are seeing oxfords with more casual soles becoming more acceptable in the workplace.

Socks should match, as close as possible, or coordinate with your suit color. Socks with a small pattern (polka dots, stripes, etc.) are becoming more widely accepted.

Belts should be worn if your suit includes pants. Your belt should match your shoe color and have a leather appearance.

Pantyhose in a solid nude or dark color used to be expected with skirts and dresses, particularly in judicial chambers and East Coast and Southern law firms, and may be added to your outfit for the most formal settings. Pantyhose are not mandatory for any employer and are not expected in the Bay Area.

If you elect to wear jewelry and/or a pocket square, keep it simple. Classic choices for jewelry include pearls, diamond or other gemstone stud earrings, minimal necklaces, or a small watch - if you have a digital watch (e.g. an Apple Watch or FitBit) remember to turn off notifications during the interview!

A purse or briefcase is not required, but if you do elect to carry one, it should be solid in color (coordinating with your shoes and belt), structured, and in good condition (no scuffs, etc.). Keep brand names and patterns discrete.

## Virtual Interviews

Many of your interviews will be conducted virtually. Follow the in-person dress code above and remember that there may be a situation where you have to stand up in front of the camera (to fix a cord or a light, for example) so your bottom half should be interview-ready as well.

Part of your interview outfit is the background of your Zoom screen - set up for your interview in a clean, distraction-free, private and quiet place. Check the lighting of your space prior to the interview and make adjustments as necessary to ensure that you are properly lit and visible. Your chair should be comfortable and it should appear that you are seated at a desk or a table - not your couch, the bed, or the floor - and the camera should be at or near eye level.

## On the Job

Your employer may offer a guide for what to wear in the office and you should follow that guidance. Our advice is to err on the side of formality, at least for the first few days until you get a feel for what others are wearing in the office, and to always be prepared to join or attend a hearing in court or a business meeting at a restaurant or in a client's office in a moment's notice. This may mean storing a suit jacket and formal shoes in your office or in your car for easy access.

## Web Resources and Visual Guide

The links below provide practical workplace attire advice, while the images further below illustrate the component pieces of an interview outfit in traditional styles and color palettes.

[Defining Nonbinary Work Wear](#), The New York Times (January 2023)

[Gender Neutral Interview Attire and Business Clothing](#), Liveabout dotcom (February 2020)

[Top Tips for a Successful Video Interview](#), Above the Law (November 2020)

