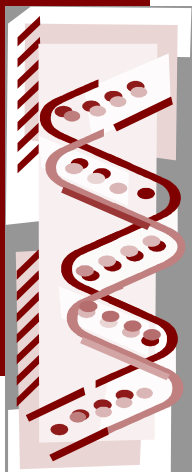


Business Dress Codes: What To Wear??



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Industry visits are an important aspect of collaborating with industry. Whether the visit is to give a seminar, discuss a collaborative research effort, work on a technical problem, or just take a tour, you want to make a good impression. That impression starts with being dressed 'appropriately'. The following guidelines will help you determine how to interpret the various business dress codes.

Business Formal

For men, Business Formal means wearing a suit (matching jacket and trousers) with a button-down shirt and a tie. For women, this also means wearing a suit, but it is acceptable to wear either slacks or a skirt; a button down shirt is also the 'most formal', but not required.

However, the lines can get blurry. Depending on the situation, acceptable business formal dress can also include coordinating trousers/slacks and jacket — but always with a tie for the men. Generally, if the dress code is Business Formal, it is best to err on the side of 'more formal'.

Business Casual

Business Casual started with 'casual Friday' and has been on a roller coaster ride ever since. It includes a wide range of options, but if the dress code is truly Business Casual, all options are equally acceptable. Here is how most businesses define it:

Men: Khaki trousers (the style, not the color — Dockers, Lees, Chinos or whatever *you* call them). The shirt can be a sweater, polo style or button-down, short-sleeved or long-sleeved — but *no* tie. A jacket (without a tie) is also acceptable.

Women: Khaki-style slacks and/or skirt. The top can be a sweater, short or long sleeved, with or without a jacket. Depending on the situation, sleeveless tops may be acceptable, but are not recommended.

What is not acceptable: Jeans or shorts, micro-skirts, t-shirts, muscle shirts, sweatshirts, sweat suits, casual sandals, and other similar items.

Business Appropriate

Business Appropriate is the latest trend in industry dressing. It means that you should dress appropriately for the day that is ahead of you. If you will be going out to the field or crawling under equipment, jeans are appropriate; if you are going to a high-level executive meeting, a suit is appropriate.

An important consideration in Business Appropriate dressing is shoes. If you will be going out to a field site, a laboratory setting, or a factory floor, closed-toe, closed-heel shoes will be required by the industry. Casual sandals are never appropriate.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line is that appearance does matter. Being over- or under-dressed can make you feel uncomfortable and/or set the wrong tone for the interaction. The best advice is to call your industry contact and *ask* what the dress code is. This is common practice in industry and is an appropriate question.

If you have any questions about this tip sheet or working with industry, please contact: Lisa Lorenzen, Director of Industry Relations & Biotechnology Liaison, (515) 294-0926, llorenze@iastate.edu