

Dress for Success

It is cliché, but important. Before you say a single word to someone new, you have already made an impression based on how you're dressed. Are you expressing what you want them to know about you? Research shows 55% of a person's perception is based upon appearance.

During the interview, make sure you are telling an employer you respect them, understand the interview process, are professional, and represent yourself well to others (and *hopefully* their company brand, too). Interviews still follow the conservative standard.

Employers are looking for the best candidate, including skills, education, experience, and how you will fit with the organization and the existing team. There are several factors that go into what each person is looking for in the candidates they want to hire. What is acceptable to one recruiter, may not be with another one. Remember, how you dress sets the tone of the interview.

Employers who hire Montana Tech students often share feedback with Career Services. Over the years, our office has received several comments, usually not as many positive ones as we would like to hear. Here is some advice: dress in clothes that make you feel good, that energy and positive feelings will come through. Dressing conservatively is the safest, often times dress tips include staying away from trendy styles, bright colors, or patterns that clash. Do a little investigation to find out what the dress code or culture of the company is like; wear something that will look like you fit the organization. Remember, you want to show them that you care enough about the job to make a good first impression. Even if the company has a casual corporate culture, you still want to impress them, so dress a little better than you would if you were to be working there.

Dressing on a Tight Budget

Don't have a lot of money to spend on interview attire? Make sure you have a couple different outfits. Invest in impressive, classic, well-made separates that you can mix and match with your professional wardrobe and business-casual. Buy clothes made of fabric that hold their shape and wash well. Find pieces to mix and match to vary the look of your clothes. Depending on your financial resources, shop the sales rack, ask family for money or gift cards for upcoming holidays or birthday presents, and consider shopping at second-hand or thrift stores. You may be surprised at what you find!

Dress for Success Hints for Men and Women

Attention to detail is crucial. Avoid anything that may distract the employer from hearing how you answer the interview questions. You want them to stay focused on what you say and your qualifications. Make sure you pay attention to the following:

- Classic style pants/skirt, clean and ironed
- Clothes should fit well and stay in place when you sit, stand, or walk
- Clean and polished conservative dress shoes
- Well-groomed hairstyle
- Cleaned and neat fingernails
- Minimal (if any) after shave, cologne, or perfume
- Well-brushed teeth and fresh breath
- No body odor
- No gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth
- Empty pockets to avoid bulges, noisy change, or items that may be distracting
- No visible body piercings or tattoos
- Avoid casual coats worn over interview clothes

Specific Tips for Women

- Coordinated blouse/shirt, avoid transparent, low necklines, or revealing waistlines
- Closed-toe shoes with a conservative heel
- Wear hosiery, plain style, not patterned, bring an extra in case of runs
- Minimal jewelry
- Sparse make-up, keep it simple and more subtle (including fingernail length and polish color)
- Do not carry a purse with a briefcase

Specific Tips for Men

- Conservative necktie, silk or silk-like
- Dark socks, professional shoes, lace up not slip-on
- Select a leather belt that blends with or matches the shoes
- Neat professional hair style, short and a recent haircut
- Facial hair? Make sure it is neat and trimmed to not risk appearing unprofessional. Clean shaven still rules, however research the company and check employee pictures to confirm

Still not sure?

Review any correspondence received for any indications of appropriate attire. Follow the suggestions of the company or call and ask! Do not call the person you are interviewing with, but call the Human Resources main office.

"I have an interview with _____ in the _____ department for a positions as an _____. Could you please tell me what would be appropriate dress for an interview with your company?"

Simple Rules for Casual Dress at Work

- Casual doesn't mean sloppy. Your clothes should be neat and clean.
- Maintain professionalism. Pajamas, short shorts/skirts, sweat pants, or ripped/torn jeans are not acceptable.
- If you are going to a meeting or may have someone drop in, make sure you can dress-up your casual attire in a pinch.

These may sound like a lot of rules, but are generally acceptable guidelines you should follow when deciding what to wear to an interview. Dressing professionally shows respect for yourself, the interviewer, and the company. You may not have to dress like this every day, but you are more likely to be taken seriously when you present yourself in a professional manner and take the time to attend to details.