



# RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE

## *The Edge* Career Center Presents



### Dress for Success

Including:

Types of Business Attire

Choices for Business Professional Dress

Choices for Business Casual Dress

Items to Avoid

Shop Smart



## Types of Business Attire

### **Business Professional:**

When attending professional events such as career fairs or interviews, making the most positive first impression is vital. For these events, wearing business professional dress is the most appropriate form of attire. Professional dress, for men, simply means a dark business suit, conservative dress shirt worn with a tie, and shined dress shoes. For women, professional dress means a dark skirted or pant suit, conservative dress shirt, hosiery and pumps (closed toe with a heel).

*Note:* No matter what the recruiter wears for your interview or what the attire is in the work environment for the job you are interviewing for, the appropriate attire for you as a student and interviewee (unless otherwise indicated) is business professional. Remember, the recruiter already works for the company -- YOU are the one being evaluated. Wearing business professional attire shows that you take the interview or event seriously.

### **Business Casual:**

For less formal events, like employer information sessions, students may choose to wear business casual dress. Business casual means neat and appropriate dress that is classic rather than trendy. For men, business casual means suit pants or khaki type pants, typically a button-down collared or polo shirt (tie is optional and a jacket can also be appropriate), and traditional black or brown shoes. Business casual for women means classic dress pants, a well-pressed dress shirt or blouse (traditional button-down, collared is often appropriate), and a coordinating dress shoe. Also acceptable is a skirt and blouse or dress.

### **Student Attire:**

For events such as our workshops, students may wear their normal everyday attire (unless otherwise indicated). However, this still means looking neat and put-together. Wearing jeans is acceptable, but leave your sweatpants at home.

*Note:* Asking the recruiter about appropriate attire for an event is always a good safeguard against dressing too formally or too casually.

Important at Any Level: Your clothes must always be clean, pressed and in good condition. Proper fit is the key to any look you choose.

<b>Business Professional</b>	<b>Business Casual</b>	<b>Student Attire</b>
Interviews	Employer Information Sessions	Workshops
Site Visits	Etiquette Dinners	
Career Fairs	Mock Interviews	
Boot Camp	Boot Camp	

Examples of Common Business Attire for Specific Situations  
(unless otherwise stated)  
**Choices in Women's Attire**

Item	Business Professional	Item	Business Casual
Suit	Conservative well-pressed – black, navy, gray, brown – suit is best. Choose either a skirted or pant suit, whichever you are more comfortable in.*	Pants	Conservative pressed dress pants in a dark color.
Blouse	Neat, pressed, and clean traditional button-down, collared or simple round neckline shirt in conservative and basic colors such as white or light pastel.	Blouse	Well-pressed button-down, collared dress shirt or blouse. Avoid anything revealing and stick to conservative colors.
Shoes	Clean and presentable dress shoe in an appropriate color matching your suit. Heels are not required but a classic pump is recommended for a professional look. Avoid flashy shoes such as stilettos or platforms.	Shoes	Clean and presentable dress shoe in an appropriate color matching your pants.
Hosiery	Hosiery must be worn with skirted suits and is highly encouraged with pants suit as well. Choose a basic color in a sheer style (no patterns) that is appropriate with your suit color. Keep an extra pair handy as they snag easily.	Hosiery	Wearing hosiery is not required with pants; however, wearing a color coordinating sock is appropriate with your dress shoe.
Accessories & Grooming	If carrying a purse, keep it small and in a color that matches your attire. Avoid distracting jewelry and keep it simple. Stay away from flashy make-up and fingernail polish. Make sure to be well-groomed and have your clothes freshly pressed. Carry a basic black or burgundy portfolio for resumes. Fresh breath is always appreciated; however, choose a mint versus gum.	Accessories & Grooming	Keep things simple and tasteful. No flashy jewelry, makeup, strong perfume, etc. Avoid wearing facial/body piercings, which can be distracting. Carry a basic black or burgundy portfolio for resumes. Fresh breath is always appreciated; however, choose a mint versus gum.

\* NOTE: Make sure that the skirt length is to the knee when standing. Also, make sure the suit is not too tight and you can sit and move comfortably. Many popular trends feature fashionable suits that are tightly fitted, short in length, low cut tops, and stiletto heels. However, keep in mind that what is fashionable isn't always appropriate for business. Being conservative is the best way to dress.

## Choices in Men's Attire

Item	Business Professional	Item	Business Casual
Suit	Conservative well-dressed – black, navy, gray– suit is best. Sleeves of the jacket should extend to the hand. Suit pants should typically match the jacket. Make sure to remove all exterior tags.	Pants	Conservative pressed suit pants, Dockers, or khakis are typical.
Shirt	Neat, pressed, and clean traditional long sleeved button-down collared shirt in conservative and solid colors; avoid bright colors and patterns.	Shirt	Well-pressed button-down collared dress shirt or polo shirt; stick to conservative colors. A sports coat is optional.
Tie	Choose a good quality (often silk) tie in a conservative color and/or pattern that is properly tied*. Avoid wearing flashy and bold patterns or character prints that are distracting.	Sports Coat	Wearing a sports coat (suit jacket) is sometimes appropriate for business casual; if wearing a jacket, no tie is needed.
Shoes	Clean and shined dress shoe, in a traditional black or brown, coordinating with your suit. Wear dress socks in a coordinated color with your suit.	Tie	A tie is typically not necessary.
Shoes		Shoes	Traditional black or brown leather, clean and shined dress shoe that coordinates with your shirt and pants. Wear dress socks in a coordinated color with your pants and shoes.
Accessories & Grooming	Belts should always be worn and also match your suit and shoes. If wearing a watch, make sure it is conservative. Avoid wearing facial/body piercings, which can be distracting. Carry a basic black or burgundy portfolio for resumes. Wear minimal cologne and have a neat and polished appearance. The focus should be on your answers, not your appearance. Fresh breath is always appreciated; however, choose a mint versus gum.	Accessories & Grooming	Keep things simple and tasteful. Have hair controlled and wear minimal cologne. Avoid wearing facial/body piercings, which can be distracting. Belts should always be worn and match your shoes. Carry a basic black or burgundy portfolio for resumes, etc. The focus should be on your answers, not your appearance. Fresh breath is always appreciated; however, choose a mint versus gum.

**\*NOTE:** Don't know how to tie a tie? Please visit <http://www.tie-a-tie.net/> or <http://www.totieatie.com/> which provides easy-to-follow diagrams as well as simple step-by-step instructions to make sure your tie looks great.

**The Button Rule** – When wearing a two or three button suit jacket or sports coat, remember the Button Rule. When standing, depending on the number of buttons, button either the top or top two buttons – leaving the bottom button undone. When seated, all buttons can be undone.

### Items to Avoid for Women

Tops	Pants	Color	Shoes	Accessories
Tank Tops	Jeans	Bright Colors	Sandals / Flip-flops	Strong Perfume
Cropped Tops	Leggings	Loud Prints	Sneakers	Bright Nail Polish
T-Shirts with Slogans	Shorts / Short Skirts	Faded Colors	Hiking Boots / Uggs	Holes in Hosiery
Low-Cut Necklines	Jogging Pants / Workout Clothes		Stiletto Heels	Body/Facial Piercings

### Items to Avoid for Men

Tops	Pants	Color	Shoes	Accessories
Tank Tops / Muscle Shirts	Jeans	Bright Colors	Sandals / Flip-Flops	Strong Cologne
Untucked Shirts	Sweatpants/ Workout Clothes	Loud Prints	Tennis Shoes	Messy Hair
T-shirts with Logos	Shorts	Faded Colors	Hiking Boots	Dirty Hands and Fingers
Un-Pressed Shirts	Oversized Clothes		Workout Boots	Visible Tattoos

You only have one chance to make a great first impression.

A first impression can make or break an interview; therefore, do not treat these professional opportunities like fashion shows but rather a place to “dress to impress.”

## Shop Smart!

- **Buy clothing that can be used in multiple settings;** classic and well-made items can be used for business professional and business casual situations.
- **Choose neutral and classic items,** such as a pair of black pants which can be worn with a variety of shirts, ties, and jackets.
- **Select clothing items that are made of quality and easy to maintain fabrics,** which can also travel well; avoid items made of linen, for example.
- For **women,** choosing to **purchase a three-piece suit** is always a good option because you can alternate between a skirt or pants look.
- For **men,** having only one or two suits is fine; you can **vary your look by wearing different shirts and ties.**
- **Avoid purchasing trendy items** that will go out of style easily and quickly; choose classic styles that are professional and timeless.
- **You don't need to shop for your business attire at name brand, expensive stores;** quality and professional items can easily be found at Target, JC Penney, Kohl's, Sears, Macy's, Men's Warehouse, and other common retail locations, discount stores, and department stores. Don't forget Goodwill!
- **Plan ahead;** don't wait until the last minute to purchase your professional business attire. Stores have great sales on attire throughout the year.
- Even the most expensive clothing needs **altering or tailoring** to look good, and a great bargain can be made absolutely fabulous when it is tailored to the wearer's body type. Tailoring can be expensive, but is how you get your clothing to look best.



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