

Specifics for Men

TIES: Ties are generally not necessary for business casual, but if in doubt, you can wear a tie. It never hurts to slightly overdress; by dressing nicely, you pay a compliment to your host. You can always wear the tie and discreetly walk by the room where the function is held, and if no one else is wearing one, you can remove yours.

SHIRTS: Long-sleeved shirts are considered dressier than short-sleeved and are appropriate even in summer. Choosing white or light blue solid or conservative stripes is your safest bet. Polo shirts (tucked in, of course) are acceptable in more casual settings.

SOCKS: Wear dark socks, mid-calf length so no skin is visible when you sit down.

SHOES: Leather shoes should be worn. No sandals, athletic shoes, or hiking boots.

FACIAL HAIR: Just as with interviews, facial hair, if worn, should be well-groomed. Know your industry and how conservative it is; observe men in your industry if you are unsure what's appropriate.

JEWELRY: Wear a conservative watch. If you choose to wear other jewelry, be conservative. Removing earrings is safest.



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Business Casual Attire: Guidelines for Men and Women





What is Business Casual Attire?



Business casual is above all crisp and neat. It should not look like party or picnic attire. Tight or baggy clothing should be avoided; business casual is classic rather than trendy.

A neat, clean appearance is key.

Basics for Men and Women

Khaki pants, neatly pressed, and a pressed long-sleeved, buttoned solid shirt are safe for both men and women. Polo/golf shirts, unwrinkled, are an appropriate choice if you know the environment will be quite casual, outdoors, or in a very hot location. This may not seem like terribly exciting attire, but you are not trying to stand out for a cutting edge look, but rather for your good judgment in a business environment.

HAIR: Should be clean and neat.

SHOES: Should be in polished condition. Make sure heels are not worn.

DETAILS: No missing buttons, no lint; and don't forget to remove external tags and tacking stitches from new clothes.

HANDS: Clean fingernails.

FIT: Clothes should be clean, neatly pressed, and fit properly, neither tight nor baggy.

SMELL: Perfume or cologne should be used sparingly or not at all. Clothes should be odor-free and should never smell like smoke.

Specifics for Women

PANTS/SKIRTS: Women can wear casual pants or skirts. Neither should be tight. Fabrics should be crisp; colors should generally be solid—navy, black, gray, brown, or khaki are always safe bets. For the most businesslike appearance, pants should be creased and tailored without being either too tight or flowing. If you are pursuing a conservative industry and are in doubt, observe well-dressed women in your field on the job, at career fair sessions, etc.

SKIRT LENGTH AND SLITS: Your skirt should come at least to your knees while you are standing. While seated, your thighs should be covered. If your skirt comes to just below the knee, a slit to just above the knee might be acceptable. A very long skirt should not be slit to above the knee. Generally slits in the center back of a skirt—to facilitate walking or stair climbing—are acceptable. Slits to facilitate a view of your legs are not appropriate for business purposes. Slips should not be visible.

SHIRT/SWEATERS: In addition to tailored shirts or blouses, tailored knit sweaters and sweater sets are appropriate business casual choices. Cotton, silk, and blends are appropriate. Velvets and shimmery fabrics suitable for parties or clubs are not appropriate. Fit should not be tight. Cleavage is not appropriate for business and job search occasions.

JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES: Wear a conservative watch. Jewelry and scarf styles come and go. Keep your choices simple and conservative.

COSMETICS: Keep makeup conservative and natural looking. A little is usually better than none for a polished look. Nails should be clean and well groomed. Avoid extremes of nail length and polish color.

SHOES: Should be leather or fabric/microfiber. Appropriate colors are black, navy, and brown; white and pastels are not appropriate. For the most conservative look, toes should be covered. Sandals which are neither extremely casual or extremely dressy might be appropriate. Thin straps and excessively high heels are inappropriate. Chunky heels and platforms are not appropriate. Make sure you can walk comfortably in your shoes; hobbling around in shoes that pinch your feet does not convey a professional image.

HOSE: Not essential for business casual, but recommended if your skirt is knee length (rather than calf length) as well as in more formal environments such as hotels.

PURSE/BAG: If you carry a purse, keep it small and simple, or carry a small briefcase or business-like tote instead. A structured bag tends to look more professional than something soft and floppy. Purse or bag color should coordinate with your shoes. A briefcase is not necessary for most business casual events. Leather, microfiber, and fine woven fabrics are appropriate. Canvas and straw are not.

