

GET THE JOB

Dressing to Impress

There used to be an office axiom: “Dress for the job you want, not the one you’ve got.”

Following that simple advice has gotten a lot more confusing in the age of casual dress. The concept started as a way to ease into the weekends. But soon, “Casual Friday” had turned into a week-long approach. The pandemic solidified things: The days of formal attire at work are over.

But how does that apply to the interview process? You’ve got to walk a very fine line, since arriving with an outfit that’s too casual might indicate a lack of seriousness. It’s easy enough for the self-employed, gig economy workers and freelancers. But you’re going to be expected to fit into their office culture. Here’s how to manage a tricky situation.



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DO YOUR HOMEWORK

As with so many other parts of the application process, the best approach is to learn as much as you can about your prospective employer. Talk to staff members, check social media and their websites for clues on the typical manner of dress at their offices. Mimic their formality, or their casual approach, when you arrive for the interview and you’ve elimi-

nated a possible stumbling block for your candidacy. You’ve also shown the hiring manager that you’re prepared and engaged.

LEVELLING UP

Some companies have posted dress codes, which can provide detailed information about what is allowed – and,

more critically, what is not allowed. Don’t be afraid to slightly exceed those standards, since your interview wardrobe provides its own first impression. If jeans are allowed, make sure yours are new, clean and unwrinkled. If others are wearing dress shirts or dresses, add an appropriate accessory to complete your outfit.

UNDERSTAND THE TERMS

Even if you get your hands on a corporate dress code, you may find that they are filled with confusing jargon. Here are a few rules of thumb: “Casual dress” means casual slacks with collared shirts or dresses, or perhaps nice jeans. Choose casual but not sporty

footwear.

“Business casual” means adding a sportscoat or shifting to a more structured dress. “Business professional” sounds like what it is, a classic, more formal approach. Add a distinctive broad, scarf or tie to bring some of your own personality into the look – or even some offbeat socks.