Your appearance and attire are an important part of making a positive first impression with employers at career fairs, job interviews and networking events. Often employers complain that students are under-dressed when attending these events. This handout will help you make the best impression with employers.

Dress codes within organizations vary greatly. It is important to research the organizations you are targeting to ensure you know what is acceptable dress within that organization. If you are uncertain, simply call the receptionist to ask about the company dress code. For job interviews, we recommend always dressing slightly nicer than what is typical on a daily basis within the organization. When starting a new job, ask for clear information on the organization dress code and err on the conservative side of that policy.

Types of Dress

Business Professional
This is the most conservative type of business clothing commonly expected as daily dress in conservative businesses such as financial firms. Business professional dress is also typical for job interviews in organizations that dress in business casual style on a daily basis such as corporations and architecture firms.

Expectations for Women
- Business suit (pant or skirt) in black, dark grey or navy; fabric of both top and bottom should match.
- Skirts length should be no more than 2 inches above your knee.
- Shirt in a solid color; shirt necklines should be near your collarbone to ensure they are not too revealing.
- Tights or nylons are worn with closed toe, closed heel, and low-heel dress shoes.
- Hair and nails should be neat, clean and not distracting.
- Jewelry and make-up should be subtle.

Expectations for Men
- Business suit in black, dark grey or navy with the jacket and pant fabric matching.
- Button-down dress shirt and a tie both in subdued colors. (If you don’t know how to tie a necktie, simply look online for tutorials.)
- Always wear an undershirt under your dress shirt.
- Always wear a belt and knee-high socks. Belt, socks and shoes should all match (black or brown).
- Hair and facial hair should be clean, and neat. Shorter styles are common.
**Business Casual**

Business casual dress is slightly less conservative type of dress commonly expected as daily dress in businesses such as retail companies and architecture firms. It is also the recommended dress when interviewing with companies that dress casually on a day-to-day basis.

**Expectations for Women**
- Dress pants or skirts in brown, black, grey or other conservative colors. (Skirts should be at or just above your knee. Longer is also acceptable.)
- Tops can include button down shirts, blouses, sweaters and/or jackets; jacket fabric does not need to match the fabric of the pants. As with business professional, shirt necklines should be near your collarbone to ensure they are not too revealing.

**Expectations for Men**
- Dress pants in brown, black, grey or other neutral colors.
- Button-down dress shirt with or without a tie, sweaters with a collared shirt beneath, and/or blazers. Jackets are optional and the fabric does not need to match the fabric of the pants.
- Shirts are always tucked in and wrinkle-free.
- Always wear a belt and knee-high socks. Belt, socks and shoes should all match (black or brown).

**Casual**

Casual dress is less conservative type of business wear and is common as daily dress in businesses such as design firms, schools, some environmental organizations and non-profit organizations. We typically don’t recommend casual dress for career fairs or job interviews.

**Expectations for Women & Men**
- Nice jeans, corduroy and khaki pants are common.
- High quality tops, sweaters and polo shirts are typical.
- Avoid jeans with holes/tears and also avoid wearing sweatpants or wind pants unless you are in a field which requires athletic apparel.
- Avoid “beach wear” type items such as shorts & casual flip flops.
Rugged Casual

Rugged casual dress is common as daily dress in industries where you are outdoors or in settings where your clothes might become dirty such as environmental field work or large animal veterinary careers. In these settings you need to be practical in your dress, but also look appropriately professional. We typically don’t recommend rugged casual dress for career fairs or job interviews.

Expectations for Women & Men

- High quality jeans and heavy khaki or work pants are common with long sleeve tops or polo shirts.
- Work boots or hiking boots are common footwear for these environments.
- Even if the environment is rugged, avoid worn out clothing or shoes with holes or in disrepair.

Additional Tips

Smells

- Do not wear perfume or cologne to a job interview or career fair.
- Never smoke before an interview and if you or someone that you live with smokes, store your interview clothes in another location. Many employers have a negative bias against smokers.
- Be sure to wear deodorant to an interview as you will likely be nervous and perspire more than usual.

Accessories

- Be certain your phone is turned completely off once you arrive to a job fair or interview.
- Make sure any watches or jewelry are not distracting or noisy.
- Bring a professional looking folder or portfolio to interviews for your resumes, a note pad and pen.
- If you carry a purse or laptop bag, set it on the floor under the table during an interview. Choose a conservative style that will compliment your professional look.
- Make sure your shoes are comfortable and that you can easily walk in them.

Other Considerations

- Ensure all clothing fits well and is neither too tight nor too baggy.
- Some employers may have a negative reaction to tattoos or piercings. Consider covering tattoos or removing piercings prior to interviews until you know more about the organizational culture.
- Women wearing hijab should simply select fabrics in dark colors for career fairs and job interviews.

Shopping Smart

- Choose neutral and classic items instead of trendy items, such as a pair of black pants which can be worn with a variety of shirts, ties, and jackets.
- You don’t need to shop for your business attire at name brand, expensive stores! Quality and professional items can easily be found at consignment shops, outlet malls, and discount stores such as Target, JC Penney, or Kohl’s (check online for the widest selection).
What *Not* to Wear to Career Fairs/Interviews: *Women*

- Skin should not be showing above pants/skirts. You should be able to bend over to pick up a pen without skin showing.
- No low cut shirts!
- No tight fitting garments.
- No short skirts. This is too short for a professional setting.

What *Not* to Wear to Career Fairs/Interviews: *Men*

- No jeans, tees or sweatshirts.
- Avoid a disheveled appearance
- No wrinkled shirts.
- No tennis shoes.