



Interview Tips: What to Wear

A guide for students and
graduates



Most employers expect you to dress smartly for an interview, unless the role calls for you to show your personality or fashion sense, or the employer has told you otherwise. If you are unsure what is expected, research the company and the specific team, or contact the recruiter or HR department directly. When in doubt, dress smartly. It is always better to be slightly overdressed than underdressed.

Related Step Guides

This guide covers what to wear specifically. For the rest of the interview process and other formats, see our other Step guides:

- Interview Hints and Tips, for essential advice to help you perform your best on the day
- Interview Tips: The STAR Technique, for compelling answers using Situation, Task, Action, Result
- Interview Tips: Telephone Interviews, for phone-specific preparation and etiquette
- Interview Tips: Video Interviews, for live and pre-recorded video interview formats
- Interview Question Tips, for answers to the most common interview questions
- Interview Tips: Assessment Centres, for what to expect and how to stand out in assessment days
- Psychometric Tests Hints and Tips, for confidence in aptitude and personality tests

Do Your Research

Look at the company website and social media to get a feel for how employees present themselves day to day. LinkedIn is a good place to start, as company pages and employee photos often give a realistic picture of everyday dress code, which can be more useful than a generic policy document.

Using AI sensibly

AI tools such as ChatGPT can be useful for pulling together quick research on a company or sector, but generic AI advice about dress codes is not always accurate for a specific employer. Treat it as a starting point, then check it against what you can actually see on the company's own channels.

If you cannot find enough information, dress smartly and formally. You mean business, so show it. As a general rule, aim to dress slightly more formally than the role itself, one notch above what current employees appear to wear day to day.



Dress Codes Explained

Employers do not always use the same language, so it helps to understand what each term generally means.

Business Formal

The most formal dress code. A matching suit with a tailored shirt or blouse, with shoes that match the suit. This is standard for interviews in finance, law, and other traditional corporate sectors.

Business Casual or Smart Casual

A more relaxed version of business formal. A blazer or tailored jacket over a shirt or blouse, paired with trousers or a tailored skirt, works well. A tie is not usually required.

Smart casual sometimes stretches further than people expect. At some employers, well-fitted, unripped smart jeans paired with a blazer and smart shoes are perfectly acceptable, particularly in more relaxed or creative sectors. This is exactly why checking rather than assuming matters so much.

Casual

More relaxed, but casual for an interview does not mean the same as casual for a day off. Smart trousers or a tailored skirt with a collared top is a safer choice than jeans or a T-shirt, even where the everyday office dress code is relaxed.

When in Doubt

If you are genuinely unsure what to wear, ask. A quick, polite question to the recruiter or the employer's HR team is completely normal and shows good judgement rather than a lack of preparation. And if you are still torn between two options, choose the smarter one. Nobody is marked down for being slightly overdressed, but underdressing can genuinely cost you an impression you cannot easily undo.

General Guidance

- Choose tailored clothing: trousers, skirts, dresses, blazers, and shirts all read as smart and professional.
- Avoid bright colours, bold patterns, and large accessories, as these can be distracting in an interview setting.
- Ties are not always required. Research the sector and the specific business to judge how formal to go.
- Avoid clothing with visible logos and avoid ripped or distressed jeans altogether.
- A useful rule of thumb: dress as you would for a family party, not for a night out.
- Choose your outfit in advance and try it on beforehand, so you know it fits comfortably and is not creased.
- Comfort matters. If you feel confident in what you are wearing, that confidence will come through in how you present yourself.

Video and AI-Assessed Interviews

Many first-stage interviews now happen on video, and some are pre-recorded or scored partly by AI-based assessment tools. The same standards of dress apply, whether or not a person is watching live.

- Dress the same as you would for an in-person interview, from the waist up at minimum, in case you need to stand or the call runs differently than expected.
- Choose a plain, well-lit background where possible, and check what is visible behind you.
- For pre-recorded video interviews and AI-scored assessments, presentation still matters. These systems are typically trained on the same professional standards a human interviewer would expect.

Action Point

Nobody is hired for their outfit, but the wrong one pulls attention away from everything else. Recruiters are assessing your skills, experience, and enthusiasm for the role, and dressing appropriately simply clears the way for those things to be noticed. Pick something a notch smarter than the everyday dress code, try it on the night before, and then stop thinking about it.

Do and Avoid

DO	AVOID
Wear tailored trousers, skirts, or a blazer	Wearing bright colours or large, distracting accessories
Research the company and sector beforehand	Assuming every employer expects the same dress code
Try your outfit on in advance	Wearing something new and untested on the day
Ask the recruiter or employer directly if unsure	Guessing when a quick question could confirm it
Err on the side of smart if you are torn	Underdressing, since overdressing is rarely held against you
Dress smartly for video and pre-recorded interviews	Assuming video interviews need less effort than in-person ones
Use AI tools as a starting point for research	Relying on generic AI advice without checking it against the employer
Choose plain, well-fitted, ironed clothing	Wearing ripped jeans, logos, or clothing with slogans

Checklist Before Your Interview

- ☐ Researched the company and sector to judge the right level of formality
- ☐ Chosen an outfit one notch smarter than everyday dress at the company
- ☐ Tried the outfit on in advance and checked it is ironed and fits comfortably
- ☐ Removed any clothing with logos, slogans, or rips
- ☐ Planned the same outfit standard for video or pre-recorded interviews
- ☐ Checked shoes are clean and accessories are minimal



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