

## Dress code



What to wear when you go to a job interview? It is an important question, because sadly enough it is often the first impression rather than the interview content that is the decisive factor whether you will get an offer or not!

Just after your PhD or postdoc you might not have a full wardrobe with professional clothes and “getting dressed” is a big time- and money-investment! See it as an investment to get a well-paid and enjoyable job instead of saving on the wrong end.

Of course, **the dress code strongly depends on where you have a job interview**. You do not want to be underdressed, but certainly also not overdressed. Coming in a full suit (for women this would mean a blazer, a shirt and trousers or a skirt), might not be the right outfit when applying for a position in academia, but is a must in a large pharmaceutical company. Think yourself into the person you talk to. If you assume it is normal for him to come to work in jeans and T-shirt (not uncommon in technical environments of small and medium-sized companies) then he would probably “dress up” and wear at least some sort of shirt for the interview. If the applicant comes in a bow-tie in this setting, both she and the interviewer will feel uneasy.

**Your own feeling about your look is very important** as well. The employer might be pretty tolerant towards a variety of styles, but if you force yourself into something you are not at ease with, just to please someone else, then you damage your positive appearance. And not only the looks but also the clothes themselves should make you feel comfortable! You should better wear your brown shoes with your black outfit rather than your black shoes which do look good, but give you pressure points and sweaty feet during the interview. This would distract you from the essential part and you would have to think more about the shoes than about the conversation itself.

There are a few points that are important to take into consideration when dressing up for the interview. Wearing neutral colors (black, brown, grey, white) or light pastel colours is a safe option. Of course, more important than being in the “safe zone” with neutral or pastel colours, is that you wear colours in which you feel and look good! Especially if you are blond or red-haired and have light skin, **you might need to add a bit of colour to your outfit (this**



**can easily be done in the form of a thin scarf) in order not to look like a living corpse.** Look in the mirror. Do you look fit and energetic? Great!

**Take the time of the year into consideration.** You might think that your white summer outfit is giving you some camouflage in the ten centimeter snow coverage throughout town or that you show your ability to resist high temperatures by wearing your high black boots when the birds fall out of the sky due to the current heat-wave, but it really looks strange! Adapt your clothes to the current weather conditions!

As a women you should not wear anything that is too “revealing” (do not show your breast cleavage, and if you wear a skirt, make sure it is not too short), but **don’t dress as if you want to imitate a “male” dress code**, as has been done in the eighties. Care should be taken with perfume, make-up and jewellery. You might like the perfume you are wearing, but the other people in the room might think about this differently. **Don’t use too much perfume.** If you are a smoker, **don’t smoke before the job interview** and especially don’t try to hide the smell with perfume. Hiding the smoke smell is not successful anyway, and the combination of smoke and perfume smell is probably the worst you can do! With an overload of make-up you are not spreading a bad air in the room, however, it looks cheap and does not fit your qualification level. **You can of course wear make-up, but when you have clearly visible foundation lines in or around your face, you overdid it.** Jewellery you can of course wear as long as it is simple. You are not applying for a hot-secretary position at a dodgy hotel! You should look professional and **you should express that you can represent the organisation well.** Better safe than sorry!





Should you rather wear shoes with high heels or flat soles? The answer to this question is also relatively easy. If you are not used to wearing high heels, then trying this out during a job interview is not really recommended. Clumsy or very slow walking or snapping your ankle due to high heels looks embarrassing. And be prepared, they might give you a guided tour through the building or even want to show you the whole campus with numerous potholes in the street! If you apply for a (partly) lab-based job or you have to supervise people working in the lab, **wearing high heels might be perceived as "unpractical"**.

#### Take homes

- Wear colours in which you look energetic and fit
- You need to feel well in your dress
- Adapt your dress to the company and the season
- Wear something 'practical' and fitting your education level
- Do not overuse make-up, perfume and jewelry

