

# Dress Codes for The Workplace

A set of rules specifying the correct manner of dress (or specifying what manner of dress is prohibited) while on the premises of the institution.

– Definition of a dress code



## Business or Office Attire

For men: Long-sleeved shirt, neck-tie and pants, or jacket suits. Styles should be classic, with nothing too trendy or obtrusive. For instance, a skinny tie is unacceptable for business occasion. For women: Long-sleeved blouses and knee-length skirts (with the exception of long skirts for Muslims), skirt suit or pants suit. Choose rich fabrics like silk, linen and fine wool, full linings in both the jacket and the skirt, and quality work on details, stitching and buttons.

## Business Casual Attire

For men: Long-sleeved shirt paired with khaki pants or dark pants; or sports jacket; necktie is optional. Contrast-collar shirts, worn on its own, are a great alternative to traditional shirt and blazer routine for a less rigid yet savvy look. For women: Jacket blouse or long-sleeved blouse; and skirt or pants. The most current dress style to own for work is a classic sheath, which is fitted to flatter the body's natural curves without being too tight or revealing. Pair it with a cardigan or a blazer when meeting a client. Slingbacks are also acceptable for footwear.

## Smart Casual Attire

This is the most poorly interpreted dress code option. Smart casual still means work-appropriate, so keep your clothes neat, clean and conservative. Hair, eye wear and accessories can reflect your personal style, so long as it does not get in the way of your job (such as hair covering half your face). For men: Polo T-shirt with light-coloured pants or button-down shirts with pants. For women: Light-weight skirt with blouse or stretch pants with short or long-sleeved top.

## Creative Casual

With the increasing number of creative industries such as advertising and public relations agency, the choice of clothes has become trendier and more laid-back. The style is savvy yet sophisticated for those in these industries. For men: A T-shirt or smartly pressed cotton shirt is often worn under a light-weight jacket. Jeans or skinny pants in darker shades are often acceptable. For women: Dressier blouses or separate coordinates are often worn by ladies working in the advertising or creative industries. Jeans or skinny pants in darker shades are often acceptable.

## Dress-down Day or Dressy Casual

For men and women: If jeans are acceptable by the company, opt for dark blue jeans (without holes). If T-shirts are also allowed, avoid offensive slogans, suggestive language or signs on them.

You need not be obsessed with the clothing pieces listed in the above classifications but it helps you begin basic observations and distinctions of the various dress codes. Most importantly, are you consciously using your clothing and grooming, especially when dressed down, as valuable business assets and high-powered tools to propel you toward greater success?

By Audrey Quek

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A qualified image consultant trained with First Impressions, U.K., Audrey Quek established Audrey Quek Image Consultancy in 2004. Audrey has since worked with numerous organisations - including MNC's, government institutions, retail outlets, banks and hospitals - to sharpen their corporate branding impact. In addition, she also trains students and teachers from schools and universities, as well as individual coaching to women and men, on the finer skills of presentation, etiquette and communication.

Audrey contributes regularly to newspaper and magazine articles on image awareness and improvement, being designated a "makeover maven" by Urban of The Straits Times (July 2007).

Part of the prestigious Elite Models, Audrey won the title of Miss Singapore World 1999, representing Singapore at the Miss World finals in London that same year. Her poise and class led her to win Miss World Fuqing 2000. Her most recent win saw her clinching Most Beautiful Mum 2007 by Junction 8.

In response to a growing need by graduating students and working adults, Audrey's debut book titled "ABC to your Dream Job!", is aimed at equipping jobseekers ace job interviews through the important areas of interview etiquette, dressing, grooming and communication.

In response to creating choices in creative, flattering, yet affordable dressing styles for women at office, socials and interviews, Audrey launches the AUDREY QUEK-EXECUTIVE LABEL for Women, a ready-to-wear clothing line in her debut book.

Prior to her work as an image consultant, Audrey graduated with an honours degree in Real Estate from the National University of Singapore in 1998. As her desire to see others reach their potential, image-wise as well as personality-wise, Audrey will continue reaching out to help as many attain personal success.

WHAT

makes up a dress code is a matter of company culture, your job function, and how much customer interaction you have. Dress codes for construction, recreation, and creative sectors tend to be a little more lax, while jobs that involve face-to-face customer interaction tend to be all business. If you are required to meet customers daily, select your clothes with greater care as you need to make a positive impression at each appointment, no matter how many times you may have already seen the customer.

Dress codes differ from company to company, and within an organisation, the guidelines too may change from time to time. No matter how formal or casual your corporate culture may be, dress neatly, modestly, and always in consideration of your colleagues, superiors and customers. Bear in mind that you are representing your company and its products and services at all times during office hours. When you are required to wear a uniform, keep it neat and clean. Do not neglect your hairstyle, shoes or makeup. As you take pride in your work, do the same for your appearance. Your grooming and dress standards become even more important if you are looking to be promoted within your organisation as they are clues to your work habits.

Maintain a professional image at all times - remember your actions and clothing send a message to those around you - is it saying "sloppy" or "smart" employee? Between the two, which worker would your employer promote or retain?

It is always wise to ask the Human Resources Department the dress code for the staff before commencing work there. Are pants for women allowed? Are suits a must? Is a necktie compulsory? Accept their dress code and do not whine about it after you have started work.

As soon as you begin working, your chances of being invited to social networking events and functions increase, so make an effort to follow dress code on the invitation card. You would not want to be caught 'sticking out like a sore thumb' for your ignorance or inability to understand the dress codes. Remember, dress for the people you meet and not how you feel that day. Dress appropriately for the occasion and let your clothes send a right first impression for you!

The more common dress code terms in today's workplace and social events are:

## Formal, Lounge Suit or Cocktail Events

For men: Jacket suit consisting of a long-sleeved shirt, neck-tie and jacket paired with tailored pants. Polished dress shoes; neither sneakers nor sandals are acceptable.

For women: Long evening gown for formal; short cocktail dress for lounge or cocktail events. Ensure your hair and makeup matches your dressing.



## PROMOTION FOR ALL NTU STUDENTS

The first 100 students who sign up for the 'Graduates' Image Success' (contents found on [www.audreyquek.com](http://www.audreyquek.com)) at \$998 from Audrey Quek Image Consultancy will receive an autographed book 'ABC to your Dream Job' worth \$921.40 and a goodie bag worth \$950.