

Image Matters



First impressions last and you never get a 2nd chance to make a good first impression.

Everyone knows that, that is why we all agonise over what to wear for a special occasion, or getting ready to meeting new friends. But your everyday office look can be just as difficult to achieve. They need to flatter you and make you feel confident and allow you to project your professionalism and authority.

In this issue, read about how you can look your best whatever the occasion. We've got expert tips on how you can build a professional yet stylish wardrobe for work, how to get the right pieces for that special occasion or how to choose the right tie that works the entire outfit.

So, go on, let your image work for you and shine at all times!

What's in this issue?

- **What to Wear to Special Events**
- **Are you a Business Casualty?**
- **Choosing a Tie**

Happy Reading!

Guinevere Ho
Principal Image Consultant/Style Coach

What to Wear to Special Events?

“I haven’t got anything to wear to the company Dinner & Dance!” Sounds familiar? How many times have you panic when you realise you have a special ‘event’ coming up. To make matters worse, you realise that it’s definitely one of those times when you’re probably going to have to wear something more formal, probably even a dress!

The trouble is that most of us have shifted into everyday wear that is more comfortable and casual, some of us permanently - for virtually every occasion. We go to work in cool comfortable pants/skirts and blouse separates or even clad in jeans and T-shirts to a wedding dinner or even a cocktail event. So when it comes to choosing something different for a special event, a lot of us go blank and wonder where on earth we’re going to start looking.

Don’t worry! Help is here!

Before you go running to the nearest shopping mall and rampage your way along the aisles with nothing more than a determined, “I’ve got to find something to wear” through gritted teeth, let’s take a moment to figure out just what sort of outfit you actually need.

What sort of event is it?

If you’ve had a proper invitation, then one of the following might help you:

White Tie means ultra-formal. Gentlemen wear full dress suits, with white tie, waistcoat and shirt. Ladies wear long gowns.

Black Tie or Formal means formal. Gentlemen wear tuxedos and ladies wear cocktail dresses, long dresses or dressy evening separates.

Creative Black Tie leaves room for a touch of creativity in a gentleman’s interpretation of formal wear; he could update a tuxedo with a black shirt and no tie. Ladies wear long or short dresses or evening separates.



Formal for Her

White Tie for Him

Cocktail Attire means short, elegant dresses for her and dark suits for him.

Semi-formal is the trickiest of all dress codes. Usually it means that tuxedos are not required, nor are long dresses. An evening wedding (after 6 pm) would still require a dark suit for him, and a cocktail dress for her. Daytime semi-formal events mean a suit (light coloured acceptable) for him and an appropriate short dress or dressy suit for her.

Dressy Casual usually means no jeans or shorts. Similar to business casual, but a touch dressier.

Casual generally means anything goes.

Informal can mean the same as casual. However, when associated with a wedding or other special event, some form of decorum and good taste should prevail. A dress or dressy suit for her or a nice pair of non-suit trousers and shirt for him are informal, but still respectful of the event.

And if all else fails?

If the invitation doesn't specify the formality of the event, a softly-coloured suit or soft print dress for daytime or a little black dress for evening (after 6 pm) will take you almost anywhere.

Alternative suggestions for the 'little black dress' for warm or cool colour skin tones:

- **Warm skin tones** - try chocolate brown, deepest brown, sugar beet, Egyptian red
- **Cool skin tones** – try charcoal grey, violet, burgundy, bright purple or clear navy

One way to tell if you have warm or cool skin is to look at the colour of your veins at the inner

arm. If the veins are green in colour, you have warm skin tones. If your veins look more blue or purplish in colour, you have a cool skin tone. Another good indicator of skin tone is which jewelry looks best on you. Silver tends to work well for cool skin while gold makes warm skin glow. Either of these methods will help you to easily identify your colouring, at which point you can begin selecting colours of dresses and make-up that will look excellent on you.

Many women **repeatedly buy clothings, foundations, eye shadows, and lipsticks that looked great in the store but terrible on them.** It can seem impossible to know what will work and what will be a waste of hard-earned money.

To help you save money and still look great, consult a Certified Colour Consultant to get your Personalised Colour Analysis. A detailed colour analysis by a Certified Colour Consultant will help you find the hues that give you natural radiance and vitality and dress for success in colours that works best for your line of work.



Professional Colour Analysis

Are You a Business Casualty?

Workers at Google can wear flannel pajamas to work. Lawyers and bankers aren't caught in anything less than a suit and tie. Employees at a high tech start-up opt for a business casual look, what does it mean? What do they exactly wear?

Whether you are a CEO, or in marketing, sales, human resources or engineering, or you are self-employed, business casual dress will touch your world. Business appropriate, business casual, business professional - deciphering today's dress codes is tough business.

Business casual became the norm during the dot-com boom, when a relaxed dress policy was a perk to help attract and retain young talent. After the dot-com boom went bust, some businesses reverted to more conservative dress policies to demonstrate a new, more serious business climate.

When business casual was first introduced, we did away with certain parts of business professional. For example, men lost the jacket and ties, while women dropped the pantyhose. From there, it's been a slippery slope into party gear, beachwear, sometimes even pajamas.

Does this mean business casual is dead? Not really, but it has gotten way out-of-hand. Many companies don't spend enough time conveying why dress is important in the workplace beyond a short session for employees at a company orientation. Over time, employees figure out what they can 'get away with' and their wardrobes reflect that.

Dress is a powerful business tool. Whether

you are dressed down or up, this fact cannot be overlooked if you aspire to go beyond your current level of success.

Casual wear appropriate for the business arena scarcely resembles the clothing suitable for buying your groceries in the neighbourhood or weekend lounging. To avoid becoming a business casualty, follow these workplace do's and don'ts.

**Weekend Casual
(not appropriate for business)**



Too Colourful



Too Relaxed

Do keep a jacket in your office. Always be prepared for an impromptu meeting with an important client or customer. Should an unplanned opportunity arise to meet with a client who might observe a more conservative dress code, employees can simply don their jacket, add a tie if appropriate and dress up quickly.

Do have more than one wardrobe. To save some cash, some of us wear the same things to work that we would wear on any given weekend. However, business casual isn't casual dress. It's an upscale professional look so do not be confused with what you might wear on a night out with your friends.

Do ditch the khakis. They look sloppy, rumpled and slept-in within minutes. Instead wear dark blue jeans, tan or beige trousers in cotton twill if your company has Casual Fridays.

Don't show too much skin. Anything that reveals too much skin is inappropriate. Keep skimpy tops that reveal bare midriffs, cleavage, too-tight knit shirts that reveal bulging pecs and low-rise pants that afford others the opportunity to potentially see more than they should, out of the office.

Do invest in a suit. Men and women should

invest in two basic suits and three coordinating shirts or blouses as they are timeless, neutral and almost always appropriate. All pieces work



Business Casual for Him

together to produce a wardrobe that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Do be clean and well-groomed. The way you care for yourself indicates to employers the level of care you put into your work. If you look sloppy, higher-ups in the organisation will think your work is sloppy.

Don't wear slippers. There isn't anything remotely business-like or professional about slippers, so save them for the beach. Even if they cost you \$100 and are adorned with jewels from Tiffany, don't do it.

Don't confuse "casual" with "sloppy." At minimum, clothes should be ironed and unstained. Business casual attire should be crisply pressed and wrinkle-free.

The Bottom Line?

The work environment demands a certain level of professionalism at all times. You are the face of your business, you represent the brand - it's attitudes, values and beliefs. To be taken seriously in today's game of business, you must take your casual apparel seriously.

Look around your office, see how successful people dress and imitate. I'll bet you won't find senior-level folks at work dressed shabbily - or in flip-flops.



Business Casual for Her

Choosing a Tie

You've got the suit, you've got the shirt, and now you just need the tie. But which tie is the right one? In a nutshell, the proper tie should tie everything together and also acts as a focal point for the rest of what you're wearing. Still confused? Well, below are some tips to help you.

Tie as unifying element

In order to be a unifying element, the tie you select should repeat the colours of both the suit and the shirt or include colours from either the shirt or the suit. So, if you are wearing a navy blue blazer and light blue shirt, you can opt for a tie with navy and lighter blue elements or navy blue and white woven tie (white is considered a non-colour).

The only minor exception to this is if you wear a white shirt. While it's still often a nice touch to wear a tie with some white in it, you can wear ties without white with a white shirt, provided the tie incorporates the colour of the rest of your clothing in its design.

Tie as focal point

As a rule of thumb, you should select a tie with a pattern. You can choose a tie with a pattern composed of the shirt and clothing colours.

Save solid ties for formal wear (tuxedo use) or for wear with patterned dress shirts, or at least for only the most dressy, semi-formal suit occasions. The monochromatic look (same colour of shirt and tie) was popular a few years ago, it has waned, so you should give serious thought before you pair a solid tie with a solid shirt of the same or substantially similar colour.

Patterns on patterns

Finally, when you have patterned ties with patterned shirts (meaning stripes, checks, etc.), the basic rule is that the patterns should be selected carefully so that they do not

clash with one another and create a busy look. It is generally not a good idea to pair a striped shirt with a striped tie. Striped shirts call for smaller neat ties or larger abstract patterns.



Stripe on stripe, too busy

And please think solid suit when working with



Solid suit with patterned shirt and tie

patterned shirts and ties. As you can imagine, unless you are an exceptionally deft coordinator, the combination of patterned suit, patterned shirt, and patterned tie is pretty overwhelming and headache inducing - not quite the look you were going for.

Image Mastery International, a Franchise of First Impressions, U.K. is an image consultancy firm that specialises in Corporate and Personalised Image and Etiquette programs. For Enquiries, please call **Guinevere Ho** at **8163-8169** or email to quin@imagemasteryint.com.