

BUSINESS ATTIRE ~ Etiquette Dinner

The requested attire for this event is business attire. Business attire is a more formal approach to professional dress and the preferred style for an employer related dining function. This attire will support and enhance your professional image if you follow the guidelines and tips below.

General Guidelines

- Develop a look that is successful, polished and professional. The focus should be on YOU, not on the clothes you are wearing.
- Wear clean, pressed clothing that fits properly. Your clothing should not be pinched or gap when you breathe or walk.
- Check clothing for missing buttons, hanging threads, lint, dandruff, stray hairs and stains. Remember to remove the tacking stitches and external tags from new clothing.
- Hair should be clean, groomed, styled and appear natural looking in color. Multi-colored hair such as orange, purple and green stripes is not professional.
- Hands and nails should be clean and trimmed. Buff nails or use clear nail polish.
- Wear deodorant. If perfume or cologne is used, do so sparingly. Clothes should not smell like moth balls or smoke.
- Breath should smell fresh, but do not chew gum, toothpicks, candy or breath mints at the reception or dinner.
- Jewelry should be minimal and not make noise. Remove all visible body piercing other than one pair of conservative earrings for women.
- Cover any visible tattoos. The focus should be on your professionalism not your body art.
- Cell phones should not be visible or on.
- If you would wear your attire to a club, you probably should not wear it as business attire.

Business Attire Tips for Men

- Wear a two-piece, single-breasted conservative suit that is dark in color. Navy, black, dark gray or a very dark brown are safe colors. Solid dark colors or a very subtle pattern in wool or wool blend fabrics support the conservative look. Avoid shiny fabrics! A suit jacket should be lined, with sleeves that extend to the wrist bone.
- Pants should come as a set with the suit and long enough to cover the top part of the shoe. Pants may be straight leg or cuffed, not billowy.
- Ties should be made of silk or silk-like fabric with little or no pattern design. Select dark colors that blend with the suit and shirt. The color and pattern should not shout, "Hey, look at me!" Ties complement the suit and supply the polish that brings a professional look together.
- Long-sleeved shirts should be worn even in summer. Collars should be clean, buttoned and not frayed. Shirt fabric should be cotton or cotton blend and crisply ironed. White, light blue solid or other soft colors may be worn. Small conservative stripes are appropriate. The shirt pattern and color should not overpower the professional look you are trying to create. *If a white dress shirt is worn, a white silk or cotton undershirt with short sleeves should be worn underneath the shirt and tucked into the pants..*
- Shoes should be polished and without holes in the soles. A leather lace-up or slip-on business shoe that is black or cordovan (mahogany) in color is a good investment. Styles such as Birkenstocks, penny loafers, hunting boots, flip flops and athletic shoes are not appropriate for business attire events.
- Socks should match your suit, not your shirt! Wear dark, solid colored socks that are mid-calf length. Sock fabric selection is individual, but a light-weight cotton blend, wool or silk fabric may be more comfortable in business shoes. White socks or athletic socks are not appropriate with business attire.
- A belt should be black or cordovan leather and blend with your suit and shoes.
- Be sure to shower, shave and wear deodorant. Facial hair should be trimmed and professionally groomed if worn.
- Wear a conservative watch and remove earrings or other visible body piercing. A wedding ring or class ring may be worn.
- Limit pocket contents to your wallet, keys, business cards, writing pen. Please do not stuff your hands in your pocket and jingle your change!

Business Attire Tips for Women

- Wear a two-piece matched suit that is conservative in color such as navy, dark gray, brown or black. Fabric may be wool, wool blend or micro fibers with no pattern or a very subtle weave pattern. The suit jacket, pants or skirt should be lined.
- Skirts or tailored pants are appropriate. When selecting a skirt or pants, place a chair in front of a mirror and sit down. The mirror will reveal your image as seen by employers, other professionals and your peers. How professional do you look?
- The length of the suit skirt may vary with each individual. Slightly above the knee or to the top of the calf are professional skirt lengths. If the skirt pulls up toward mid thigh or higher when you sit, it is not appropriate. If the skirt is too narrow or tight fitting, restricting movement or forcing you to sit on tilted hip, it is not appropriate.
- Check the skirt slit to make sure it is not thigh length or slit so high even more is revealed! In professional attire, the skirt slit is designed to facilitate movement.
- Pants should be creased and tailored, not tight. Pant length should fall below the ankle but not below the shoe heel. If you step on your pants when you walk, they are too long. If the pants pull up to mid-calf when sitting, they are too short.
- Underneath the suit jacket, wearing a tailored cotton shirt, blouse or good quality knit shell will complement your professional image. The shirt, blouse or shell should be conservative cut with non-revealing neckline and long enough to tuck into the pants or skirt or sit slightly below the waistband. Light, solid colors such as white, cream or blue should be worn. Small patterns or conservative stripes may be worn. The shirt or blouse collar may be worn in or outside the suit top. Select a short or long sleeve. A tank top or sleeveless shell may be worn if the suit jacket remains on the entire event. *Camisoles should only be worn under a light colored shirt, blouse or shell and not as an outer garment with any business attire!*
- Shoes should match your suit and be made of leather or fabric. Black, brown or navy pumps with one to two inch heels compliment the professional attire. Shoes that are not appropriate with business attire include; open-toes, sling-backs, mules, platforms, narrow high heels, athletic shoes, sandals, flip flops, and Birkenstock style. Shoes should be comfortable when walking or standing. Practice walking in front of a mirror so your posture is natural and correct when walking or standing. Wear new shoes at least one or two times prior to an event.
- Hose should be worn and match the color of your skin and be clean. Patterns and opaque stockings are not considered business attire. Always carry an extra pair of hose in your purse in case of snags or a run. Do not carry the extra pair of hose in your pocket.
- Carry a small, conservative purse that matches your shoes. Items to consider carrying in your purse: identification, money, one valid credit card if needed, business cards, mirror, lipstick, writing pen, comb, extra pair of hose and cell phone turned off or silent.
- Hair should be clean, styled and conservative. If hair is longer than shoulder length, consider wearing hair up in a neat twist or pulled back with a conservative clip that matches or complements the suit.
- Nails should be professionally groomed. Wear nails short and polished with a clear finish.
- Shower and wear deodorant. If perfume or cologne is used, do so sparingly. Breath should be fresh.
- Make-up should look natural. Eye make-up and lipstick should complement your face. Wear mat lipstick in a conservative color. Avoid lipsticks that are ultra shiny or frosty. Do not use a lip liner that is darker than your lipstick. This draws attention to your lips and not to your professional image.
- Jewelry should be minimal and not noisy. A conservative watch completes your professional image. A wedding ring or class ring may be worn. A conservative bracelet and small earrings such as pearls or gold or silver studs may also be worn. Avoid long, noisy earrings, dangling charm bracelets and dramatic necklaces.

Written October 2005/Revised April 2006

Gina Starnes, Associate Director, University Career Center, The University of Kansas