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Dressing Successfully in a Casual Business World

In a Business-Casual World, How Do I Dress for an Interview? Just a few years ago, everyone knew the answer to this question. The standard interview uniform was suit and tie for men and suit with a skirt for women. Anyone arriving at work in a new suit was presumed to be interviewing elsewhere that day. But now that workplace dress codes have relaxed, both men and women have more choices when it comes to interview attire.

Does That Mean the Uniform Is Out? Not necessarily. It's still important to make a good impression. You just face more decisions about how to do that.

How Will I Decide What to Wear to the Interview? Remember, each company has an individual culture and environment. Try to find out what the standard is for the company before the interview. When you schedule the interview, ask what would be appropriate. Or call the human resources department and ask what the company's dress code is. Sometimes an interviewer will tell you what to wear: "We don't dress up here, so a suit is not necessary." Some people actually go to the place where they will be interviewing and stand outside at lunchtime or after work to check out employees' clothes.

If Not a Suit, Then What? A good rule of thumb is to wear something somewhat dressier than what the employees wear to work. Never wear jeans and a T-shirt, especially slogan T-shirts. A jacket is always a safe bet for men and women, with slacks or a skirt. Somehow a jacket seems to pull the outfit together.

But the suit is still a staple in some professions. Sales people, for example, prefer the suited look, as do other professionals such as lawyers and bankers. Whatever you decide to wear, make sure it fits properly and is of the best quality you can afford.

Whether you are interviewing at an Internet company or a bank, it's always best to keep your outfit on the conservative side. You're giving the interviewer a picture of yourself, so make sure it reflects well on you.