

**Best Job Interview Attire**  
By Jill Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

**Q: I'm a novelist who's looking for a publisher. I tend to be original in my dress, but my friends are telling me I need to adopt a more conservative look when I go on interviews. What is your opinion?**

A: Great advice! Your friends happen to be right on target.

The goal of any interview is to make a positive first impression; you want to inspire confidence and trust. In addition to your abilities as a writer, you will be judged on your people skills, attitude, appearance, and how you handle yourself. Think of yourself in terms of a live advertisement. The moment you walk through the door, your choice of clothes will make a first impression which will be hard to overcome if you get it wrong.

Dressing is a way of expressing yourself, but interview attire often requires a measure of compromise. It is situational according to industry standards, but generally speaking, you should air on the conservative side unless your field is unconventional.

To be safe, take time to get in touch with the Human Resources department to find out what their dress code is, and dress one notch up. For example, if men wear slacks and sport shirts, you should wear slacks, a button-down shirt, tie, and sport coat. If women are in casual dress, you would want to wear a skirt or pants, blouse, and a matching or contrasting jacket. For very traditional fields, men would opt for a dark suit and black or brown leather dress shoes while women would choose the risk-free skirt suit and coordinating close-toed pumps.

Avoid items that draw attention or would have a way of screening you out. For example, men are wise to leave gold chains, bracelets, and pinkie rings at home. Women should refrain from wearing anything that dangles, jingles, is too revealing, or too short. Accessories should be tasteful and kept to a minimum. An axiom to remember: "Less is always more."

Grooming is a huge part of appearance so get it right if you want the best interview advantage. Although popular in certain niches, a five o'clock shadow will never replace a clean-shaven face. Hair should be clean and simply styled, makeup applied subtly, and cologne or perfume used sparingly. Remember to keep it simple, keep it neat, and keep it clean.

Finally, plan your wardrobe including any coat, umbrella, handbag or briefcase, notebook, and pen you might be using. Be sure your choices are in excellent condition and coordinate with the rest of your attire.

Most people fail to recognize an important communication rule: Your appearance and mannerisms are actively transmitting nonverbal messages while you are communicating verbally. You may be a great thinker or conversationalist, but the way you present yourself at an interview has the power to either clinch or ruin your prospects.

*Do you have an etiquette question you want Jill to answer in her monthly column? Email your question(s) to: [information@DefiningManners.com](mailto:information@DefiningManners.com) or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.*