



The Man in the Mirror

An etiquette brief on professional image for men
by Civility Experts Worldwide

Introduction

Smart executives understand that when it comes right down to it, there's more to professionalism than a great suit, image isn't always everything...but it is something. And, all things being equal, a powerful image, confidence and poise, can make all the difference.

For an expanded lesson plan including activities and answer keys, please visit the shopping cart at www.etiquetetrainingtoolkits.com

Lesson K4L3: Professional Dress for Men (Excerpt)

Human Resources professionals estimate that 95% of people dress inappropriately for their jobs.

These days, due in part to “casual Fridays”, there is a lot of confusion about what is appropriate attire for men in the modern workplace. More and more businessmen are interested in learning how to present themselves positively.

"They expect a professional presentation, so they expect to see a "professional." Dress appropriately for the occasion, but don't be one of the crowd." -- Wess Roberts

References and Resources

The Metrosexual Guide To Style – A handbook for the Modern Man by Michael Flocker – Da Capo Press, 2003

Dress Your Best – Hosts of TLC’s What Not to Wear – The Complete Guide to Finding the Style That’s Right for Your Body – Author – Clinton Kelly and Stacey London- Publisher – Crown Publishing, 2005

Professional Presence: The Total Program for Gaining That Extra Edge in Business – by America’s Top Corporate Image Consultant, Author: Susan Bixler Publisher: Berkley Publishing Group, Jan 9, 1992



What is Professionalism?

Professionalism means different things to different people but in order to establish general guidelines and take the guesswork out of dressing decisions, we need to define once and for all what professionalism is.

Professional Dress for Men

Professionals in modern business circles understand that “success” requires insight as well as the right attitude. As you climb the corporate ladder you will need to acquire knowledge and skills that set you apart from the competition.

Knowing how to look and act like a professional is synonymous to being a professional. Professionalism overall is a combination of confidence, competence, courtesy, attitude, demeanor, and image.

There’s more to personal presence than an expensive suit- grooming, posture, poise and attitude all play important roles. Knowledge about how to present yourself professionally helps give you a powerful edge over the competition.

Research on first impressions indicates that in the first 15-30 seconds people make overt, deliberate decisions about whether or not you are “their kind of person”, and whether or not they will even approach you, on the basis of your outward, physical appearance. This is significant and reinforces the notion that it doesn’t matter how smart you are, how many degrees you have, what a great communicator you might be, etc, if you never get a chance to show anyone any of that because they dismiss you, or do not approach you purely on the basis of your image/appearance. Sounds harsh, and intellectually we all know it’s immature and unreasonable (not to mention often inaccurate) to judge people this way, but we’re human and we do it!

The Importance of Image

Professional image is directly related to each of the following:

- How credible people think we are
- How confident we look
- How service-oriented others perceive us to be
- How well we are received by co-workers
- How productive we are (there are studies to support this)
- How we speak (word choice, tone of voice)
- How we move (body language, posture)
- How much people think we’re worth, e.g., what we get paid
- How educated people think we are

What rank or title people assume we have achieved The New Collins English dictionary defines appearance as “the outward aspect of a person or thing.”

In today’s business world, it’s hard to tell whether people are just lost when it comes to deciding what to wear in the work environment or whether they have simply forgotten the significant impact that appearance makes on their professional image and achievements. Whether we choose to admit it or not, our outward appearance says a lot about us and the goal when dressing for business

is to make first impressions positive impressions. You usually only get one chance!

WHAT IS ELEGANT, SEMI-FORMAL, BUSINESS CASUAL ANYWAY?

So you've been invited to a high profile company function. Good for you, but, what are you planning to wear? When questions regarding types of formal wear arise, there are standard codes of dress depending on the situation. Read the invitation carefully and if you are unsure, call the host!

Business Casual

Means a collar is required (at least have one available). A jacket and tie are not necessary but "real" shoes- meaning not sandals or golf shoes or running shoes- are. Also, hats, sunglasses and other "play" clothes are not appropriate. Don't wear anything you wouldn't be comfortable interviewing in, after all, if you're on company time you are always "interviewing".

Semi-Formal

A business suit and tie for men and a business suit for women are appropriate. Semi-formal attire is appropriate for any business function where attire was not specified. Men should choose conservative ties, no cartoons or loud patterns.

Formal

A dark suit and tie for men and a dressy business suit for women is appropriate. Women may also wear dresses or pantsuits. The rule is generally that the more formal the event, the more covered up a woman should dress. Take a wrap or dress jacket if you go strapless or sleeveless. Choose dress fabrics like velvet or silk, which you would of course not wear to work.

Cocktail

Business dress for men is always appropriate. A jacket and tie should be worn for the duration of the function. Women may choose "cocktail" suits, shorter dresses or dressy pants. The mood is generally light-hearted unless the invitation states "formal-cocktail reception" where "formal" refers to dress and "cocktail" refers to the food and beverage service.

Black Tie

Typically you will receive a formal invitation for these events that will state that black tie apparel is required. A black tuxedo coat, black trousers, white tuxedo shirt, black bow tie and matching cummerbund are expected. Women should wear a formal gown, preferably long. A cocktail dress should be reserved for a cocktail style function.

White Tie

This style of dress is usually reserved for very formal, typically official or government occasions. Attire consists of a long tailcoat, usually white, but black is acceptable, with matching trousers. Women are expected to wear a very formal, definitely long, gown.

A handkerchief is a small, square, thin, cloth used for wiping the nose and eyes. The first handkerchief solely for the face was used in conjunction with religion. These early handkerchiefs, called "facials," were simply small pieces of silk tissue used by priests at the altar and then left there when the service was completed. In early times the handkerchief functioned both as a utilitarian accessory and as a showy dress item, carried in the hand as opposed to being tucked into a pocket. By the time of the early Renaissance, handkerchiefs were considered an essential accessory, prompting Erasmus to note that "To wipe your nose on your sleeve is boorish." Soon handkerchiefs became more ornate, at which point they also began to serve as tokens of a man's love for a woman, and vice versa. www.neckties.com

Business Dress Guidelines for Men

Know yourself. What suits your height, weight, posture and state of mind, your personal style, may not be what suits everyone else. Stick with what works for you and you'll be more comfortable and more confident.

Think about the details:

- Polish your shoes
- Wear dark socks with dark shoes and suit
- Iron your shirt
- Check that hems and buttons are in place
- Shave
- Think about how you smell
- Appropriate overcoat (should be long enough to entirely cover suit jacket)
- Choose a matching belt.

Tips for men:

- Darker colors and monochromatic clothing sends a message of "together", powerful and professional. Navy is the number one choice by professional men. Fewer patterns are better.
- Wool and wool blends are the best all-season choices for suit fabric. Natural cloth or material is always best for shirts.
- Always leave the bottom button of your suit undone to prevent buckling and sagging due to items, such as wallets, carried in your pockets.
- Trousers should be hemmed to the top of the shoe.

Professional Dress for Men

- Sleeves should be 5 inches from the thumb. It is appropriate to have ¼ to ½ inch of shirt sleeve/cuff showing beneath suit jacket sleeve.
- When you fit a shirt collar, you should be able to slip two fingers between your neck and the buttoned shirt.
- Ties should be 3 inches at the widest part. The tip of the tie should fall to ¼ inch below your belt.
- Try to always wear quality, polished leather shoes, lace up or slip-on, when you wear a suit. Wear socks the same color as the shoes. Belts should also match shoes.
- Less is more when it comes to jewellery for men and gold is more dressy than silver.

The top ten mistakes men make when it comes to image/dressing are:

1. wearing dress socks with sandals
2. wearing sparkly or shiny shirts, sweaters or ties to work
3. wearing colors that are not flattering
4. too tight pants- “panty” lines are not attractive on either sex
5. novelty items- ties, shirts, shorts
6. open-toed shoes with poorly kept feet- cut your toenails please
7. ring-around-the-collar shirts
8. too much jewellery
9. gym shoes with suit pants
10. exposed body hair, e.g., back hair, ear hair, nose hair, overflowing the shirt chest hair

Posture

Many of us do not realize the implications of poor posture. The reality is that even sitting incorrectly at your desk can cause health problems such as back pain and headaches. The way a man conducts himself in a professional environment is indicative of what he is about. Executives, colleagues and clients are much more likely to take notice of a man who stands tall and holds his head high than a man who tends to slouch and avoids eye contact. Not to say that snobbery is encouraged but a healthy level of confidence and pride is hard to ignore.

In standing position, seek to maintain the natural curve of the spine. Keep your head directly over your shoulders. Stick your chest out slightly and keep your head back. Make sure to keep your shoulders directly in line with your pelvis. Engage the abdominal muscles and tuck in the buttocks –do not clench the buttocks causing tension. Keep feet slightly apart with one foot positioned naturally in front of the other with relaxed knees (slight bend). Do not lock your knees as this is unnatural and causes unwanted clenching and tension.

Posture can accentuate clothing; standing tall avoids bunching and shows that you are comfortable in the clothing you are wearing and that your clothing suits the image you are trying to portray. If you dress well but cannot hold yourself properly in the clothing, people may think that you are uncomfortable in your own skin and that your clothing does not match your self-image.

Body language is a form of communication; just as verbal communication sends a message, so too does body language. It is important to send a positive message to people through your body language. Maintain eye contact when speaking to someone; this simple action is a demonstration of trust and integrity. Avoid crossing your arms because this sends a subliminal message that you are not open or that you may be feeling hostile towards what the person is saying or doing. Placing your hands on your hips is often perceived as aggressive. Allow for personal space so as not to appear threatening.

Many studies that suggest that posture is a key ingredient to projecting a positive first impression and that many people make judgment about credibility and confidence on the basis of posture.

Grooming

A reasonable degree of vanity never hurt anyone; if anything, tending to your appearance is indicative of healthy self-awareness and self-respect. So, don't be afraid to spend a little extra time on caring for yourself and pay attention to details.

Hair

Maintaining the same hair style for too long is the same as dressing according to the fashion trends today that you did a decade ago. If you're still sporting a mullet, it's time to check into hair-styling rehab. Many men (and women) make the mistake of going to a certain hair salon because it's the cheapest place in town. The reality is that the quality of the cut usually reflects the value of the cut.

Try out a few different hair stylists to find someone you are most comfortable with. Your look should say "contemporary" but be sure that the cut matches your personality and suits you professionally. For example, a Mohawk may not be the best choice in a law office. Before heading to the salon, browse through some current magazines to see what your options are. It's often easier to convey the look you want by showing your stylist a photo rather than trying to verbally explain what you envision.

It is important to choose a style that not only suits you but also one that is versatile. Versatile means that you can switch things up for different occasions; maybe simply adding a little gel for an evening out, or combing your part differently. The goal is that you want your hair to be neat and tidy even when you don't have time to do anything with it in the morning.

Before leaving the salon, ask your stylist to show you what types of products would help you to maintain your look. Products sold in salons are often marked up considerably so take into account what types of products the stylist recommends, then head to your local drug store to find the equivalent. Remember that the cheapest brand is often not the best for the job so choose carefully. Ask for help if you're totally lost!

Tips Balding Eagles

Instead of trying to savour what little hair you have left, take the plunge and go short. Wearing toupées, adding pouf, and combing the hair over patches isn't fooling anyone. These efforts are futile anyway. The truth is that there is dignity associated with a man who ages gracefully and embraces the effects of aging.

Male pogonotrophy (the growing of facial hair; beardedness) is often culturally associated with wisdom and [virility](#). Many men style their facial hair into [beards](#), [moustaches](#), [goatees](#) or [sideburns](#). However, many others completely [shave](#) their facial [hair](#). A man's facial hair, especially short hairs that were missed in shaving, is often referred to as [whiskers](#), although only certain nonhuman mammals have true sensory whiskers. www.answers.com

Shaving & Facial Hair

A man's face can be transformed simply by the way that he tends to his facial hair. Just as a woman can change her look by using make up, so too can a man achieve appealing looks with his facial hair. If treated properly, facial hair can be an asset; however, if facial hair is out of control, the wrong message may be being sent. For example, a man with untended facial hair could be perceived as rough, tough, and not good enough. Trim beards, cropped side burns and sculpted goatees can create more definition in a man's face. Clean lines are slimming and can soften a look. End side burns around the bottom of your cheekbone with a slight, downward, definitive slope. Long side burns look eternally better on slimmer faces but even then, one runs the risk of looking droopy and accentuating the effects of gravity. Shaving beneath jaw line, is a simple way to keep facial hair looking clean cut. Beards, moustaches and goatees should be well kept and maintained.

The rough and rugged male that we see in the truck commercial or mountain climbing is the man that we should see arriving at the office each day. (Unless we work in a lumber yard). A smooth shave is not only professional but it is also much less distracting than a 5:00 shadow at 9:00 in the morning. Follow these tips from www.health24.com on shaving and remember that you may need to shave late in the afternoon if you are going to be working late with clients.

Accessories

It is recommended that every man own a professional briefcase (possibly made of leather) to carry documents and belongings. Neutral colours are best. Your

briefcase should not draw attention away from your overall image but should instead subtly enhance your professional image.

Cufflinks are re-emerging as a fashion trend. They should be worn with dress shirts when an occasion calls for formal dress. A watch is another recommended accessory. Try to purchase a versatile watch that can look professional, formal, and casual. A silver, stainless-steel watch goes with everything and neutral leather watch straps are also considered manly and versatile.

Scents or Sense?

Wearing too much cologne, aftershave, or deodorant can be very unattractive. An overpowering scent can often give the sense that you may be overcompensating for something. Less is more when it comes to fragrances so avoid mixing fragrances and try not to get carried away. More and more people are becoming sensitive to scents and some more severe sensitivities may even lead to breathing difficulties. Be considerate of others in the work environment and be aware of how you smell. On the other end of the spectrum, body odour can be very unpleasant for others around you. Be aware of this possibility and make sure you wear a good deodorant and do your laundry regularly.

Shirts

Purchase dress shirts that are 100% cotton and have them professionally laundered. They should be hung in your wardrobe to avoid creases. Don't wear a tie with a short sleeved shirt and as a general rule of thumb, dress shirts should be tucked in and casual shirts can be left untucked. Every man should own well-cut, solid-colour, button-down shirts. Some should be white as they can be paired easily to create different looks. Patterned shirts can be paired with patterned ties but one pattern has to be very subtle in order for it to work. Two loud patterns only create noise. You can have fun with shirt colour but remember to do it tastefully. Bigger is not always better. Simple patterns, complimentary colours and professional cut are most desirable.

You can get your shirts or any other item of clothing or accessories monogrammed at www.llbean.com or www.landsend.com

Shoes

Contrary to popular belief, shoes are important to a man's overall image. A man wearing the right fitted suit and tasteful accessories can be a complete knock out except if he commits a major fashion footwear faux-pas. Such faux-pas include wearing sneakers with a suit, wearing casual sandals with dress slacks, or wearing dress shoes with casual shorts or pants. Every man should own at least two pairs of versatile shoes that can be worn in both casual and formal situations.

Professional Dress for Men

Sneakers still have a place in a man's wardrobe but they should be kept for relevant occasions such as jogging and corporate team baseball.



Wardrobe Checklist - Essentials for Every Man's Closet for Men

- Dress Pants
- Casual Pants
- Good-fitting Jeans
- Formal Suit
- Casual Suit
- Sport Coat
- Umbrella
- Briefcase
- Button-down dress shirt(s)
- Golf Shirt
- Casual Shirt(s)
- Ties
- Dress Belt
- Casual Belt
- Dress Shoes
- Casual Shoes
- Sneakers
- Dark-Coloured Dress Socks
- Sports Socks, Other

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