

DRESSING TO WIN

in the workplace!

Personal Impact Guide to IITTI Level 1 Standard, Personal Appearance

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KIMBERLY LAW, AICI CIP
PERSONAL IMPACT INTERNATIONAL

283 Davie Street, Suite 1303
Vancouver, BC
V6B 5T6

Tel: 1-604-298-7228 Email: info@personalimpact.ca
www.personalimpact.ca



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INTRODUCTION



Makeup and fashion have been my passion ever since I was a little girl. Growing up, one of my favourite things to do was play dress-up in my mother's clothes. My friend's mother was the local Avon Lady (as they were called in the 1960s) and one day my friend showed me her mother's make-up kit. Fascinated by all the colours and textures, we decided to try them out. With the make-up and clothes, our looks were complete! I was in heaven. At least until our mothers found out.

Over the years, my interest in personal presence expanded. What is it that makes some people stand out? Is it just makeup and clothing, or is there more to it? The search for these answers took me on a journey down many roads over the years. I became fascinated by

image and perception. Following my passion, I completed the John Casablancas Professional Modeling Program, the Vancouver Community College Esthetician School Program, the John Casablancas Professional Make-up Artistry Diploma as well as the Marketing & Public Relations Program at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). Combining all my talents and interests, I was honoured to become the first certified image professional (AICI, CIP) in Western Canada through the Association of Image Consultants International.

As the founder of Personal Impact, International, I have over 30 years' experience in the arenas of Personal Appearance, Personal Branding and Professional Marketing. My clientele is varied and ranges from stay-at-home moms to business executives. I offer a broad range of experience and in-depth knowledge to men and women of all ages, in all industries. I am committed to helping others improve their quality of life through self-awareness, personal change and affirmative growth.

In today's fast paced world, there is no second chance to make a good first impression. Even though most of us would like to be judged solely on our merit, our ability and our personality, the reality is that we are initially judged by the image we present. And this perception will affect how others react and respond to us. I have learned that anyone can have a great image and presence. With a little tweaking in one or more of the areas that represent personal image, you can make a more positive impact on others.

There are 8 special reports in this series that cover personal care, makeup, wardrobe planning, business dress, dining etiquette, communication and manners. Throughout this series, I will show you how to reach your personal and professional best in an upbeat, non-threatening manner. I hope you enjoy learning about these topics as much as I have.

DRESSING TO WIN IN THE WORKPLACE

Congratulations on your purchase of Dressing to Win in the Workplace.

Research has shown that how one appears is directly connected to one's thoughts, feelings and behaviour... *and the reactions and responses of others.*

In today's fast-paced world, you don't get a second chance to make a first good impression. As a real estate professional in the late 1980's, I quickly learned that first impressions really do count. A quality matched business suit, known as the power suit, was my greatest ally. The power suit told the world that I meant business. If you look successful, potential clients generally assume that you are.

However, the rules on business dress have changed. Since the dawn of 'business casual' in the 1990's, companies continue to shift their requirements on what to wear at work. Some have established dress codes with specific guidelines, while others leave it open for their employees to determine what's appropriate. Without defined guidelines, dressing for work can be very confusing. When you're competing for sales, jobs or promotions, professional polish can be your competitive edge. I have learned through much experience that anyone can have great image and presence. With a little tweaking in one or more of the areas that represent personal image, you can make a more positive impact on others.

Dressing to Win in the Workplace, conforms to the 'IITTI Standard', set out by the Institute of Image Training & Testing International and is a great reference tool with guidelines that will show you how to make your work clothes work for you!

For those of you who plan to sit for the IITTI Level I exam, Dressing to Win in the Corporate Arena is your study guide for the Personal Appearance component of the IITTI Level I certification exam.

What is IITTI Certification?

The Institute of Image Training & Testing International www.iitti.org is an international non-profit organization dedicated to global business etiquette standardization.

IITTI (pronounced "ET"), is a standardized, independent testing system for business image and etiquette. The IITTI certification serves as the 'ISO' system for corporate image and etiquette standards. It provides a uniform way for employers and job-seekers to measure soft skills that are critical to business success.

International business etiquette is a key component to being successful in today's highly competitive global environment. This guide provides everything you need to know for the personal appearance component of the exam. One of our main objectives in writing this guide was to cover the content in the exam. We don't want to waste your time. This guide is fast paced and fluff-free. We suggest reading through it a number of times, as repetition is an important part of learning new information and concepts.

Need more help? Contact us at www.personalimpact.ca to learn about our online and in-person training.

WHY IS IMAGE IMPORTANT?

Image is based on:

Verbal Communication:	The words we use and the tone of our voice.
Non-verbal Communication:	Body language, our actions and posture.
Visual Communication:	Our physical features and grooming practices; the clothing we wear and how we wear it.

- How we appear accounts for more than half of the impression we make.
- People who use their image as a business tool have an advantage over their competitors.

Have you ever wondered why some people move up the corporate ladder quickly, while others consistently get passed over for promotion? Or why certain people do so well in sales? Yes, education, talent and people skills are major factors; but image also plays a major role.

Most companies spend a lot of money each year developing and maintaining their company image. As a representative of your company, it's up to you to reinforce this image by presenting yourself in a way that's consistent with the company brand. Let's face it – when we meet someone for the first time, whether we like it or not, we instantly form an impression about them. If the impression matches what they are trying to communicate, we are more likely to trust them. Once trust is established, it's easier to build rapport and strong business relationships.

Did you know?

"Image determines how you see yourself and ultimately how the world sees you. This means that your entire life depends on the clarity, consistency, and quality of your image. When you cultivate this image, doors will open before you." ~ Lauren Solomon, AICI CIP

Benefits of a positive business image

- Potential clients are much more likely to believe in the product or service you are selling.
- Current clients will see consistency between you and the company brand, therefore building trust.
- People will take you more seriously.
- You will look like you fit in.
- Employers will see you as a team player dedicated to the business, which could lead to opportunities for advancement.
- By dressing for the job you want in the organization, employers are more likely to believe you have what it takes to do the job, and that you would be a good fit for the position.

WHAT TO WEAR – WHEN

Appropriate business dress depends on the industry, the company culture and your position. Before deciding what to wear consider the following:

Industry

- The first step is to look at the industry. What is the standard of dress in your industry? Is it generally more conservative or more fashionable?

Company Culture

- Next, look at the company culture. Is your company traditional or contemporary? Is the standard of dress formal, casual or fashion-forward? Do the standards vary between departments?

Did you know?

"How one looks on the job is the single most important factor in a person's professional success." ~ John Molloy

Your Position

- What is your business position or rank in the company? (Entry level, Middle Management, Senior Management, etc.?)
- Who will see you and how will they be dressed? (Clients, coworkers, nobody, etc.?)
- What do you do? (Sales, Technical, Finance, Customer Service, etc.?)
- How do you want to be perceived by the public, your clients, and your employer? (Do you want to come across as Authoritative, Creative, Original, Functional, Stable, etc.?)
- What is your activity and purpose each day? Will you be at a sales call or a business mixer? Will you be in the back room counting inventory or out on a construction site? Prepare according to where you'll be and what you'll be doing.

What you do, who you see, and the industry you are in will dictate how you should dress. Some of us wear many hats and may need to dress differently for various occasions. However, it is still important to maintain a certain level of consistency.

Tailored Construction Details for Business Attire

Details created through construction design, fabric qualities and added embellishments give the garment personality. Details that are tailored and formal appear more professional. Clothing details that are tailored are internationally considered to be the most professional. Although tailored clothing may be tailor-made, the word *tailored* in reference to professional attire actually refers to the structure of the fabric, design and construction details. Tailored details are:

Structured
Angular Shapes
Straight Lines
Form Fitted

Matching / Neutral Colours / Dark Light Contrast
Firm and Smooth Textures / Matching Fabrics
Small Prints & Patterns
Collar or Lapel

Formal vs. Informal Garment Details

Details that are more formal are considered to be more professional, official and business-like. Garment details that are more informal are considered to be more casual, unofficial or social.

More Formal:	More Informal:
Men	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored-style jacket • Collared dress shirt • Tailored style trousers or slacks • No print (solid) or small print • A necktie • Jewellery & accessories (small to medium size details) • Jewellery (gold , precious & semi-precious stones) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating vest or cardigan • Polo-style shirt or un-collared top (only if permitted by dress code) • Khaki's, dark jeans or cords (only if permitted by dress code) • Medium to large prints • No necktie • Jewellery & accessories (medium to large size details) • Jewellery (silver, other metals/ precious & semi-precious stones)

More Formal:	More Informal:
Women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored-style jacket • Collared shirt, sweater or blouse • Long sleeve or ¼ length sleeve • Tailored trousers / Tailored skirt • No print (solid) or small print • Jewellery & accessories (small to medium size details) • Jewellery (gold – alone, or with precious or semi-precious stones) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating vest or cardigan • No collar • Short sleeve, sleeveless • Khaki's / jeans – coloured, dark denim, corduroy • Medium to large prints • Jewellery & accessories (medium to large size details) • Jewellery (silver, other metals – alone or with precious or semi-precious stones)

Three Categories of Business Attire

There are 3 categories of Professional Attire internationally accepted through the Institute of Image Training & Testing International (IITTI.org). If we think of them on a continuum, the most formal category is Formal Business Attire; the next is Semi-Formal Business Attire, followed by Informal Business Attire.

- **Formal Business Attire** – most formal
 - ☑ Matching jacket and bottom (men)
 - ☑ Matching jacket and skirt, pants or dress (women)
 - ☑ Multiple clothing layers
 - ☑ Primarily tailored garments
 - ☑ Tailored design details

- **Semi-Formal Business Attire** – most flexible
 - ☑ Always includes a tailored style jacket
 - ☑ Multiple clothing layers
 - ☑ Coordinated garments which have mainly tailored details with some untailored details to soften the look

 - ☑ Tie (as required by corporate policy)

- **Informal Business Attire** – most casual
 - ☑ One or more clothing layers
 - ☑ A mixture of tailored and untailored details
 - ☑ Coordinated top and bottom
 - ☑ No jacket
 - ☑ Cardigan, vest or over-blouse (optional)
 - ☑ Tie (as required by corporate policy)

WHEN TO WEAR FORMAL BUSINESS ATTIRE

When you want to appear authoritative, credible, powerful, classic, stable, influential, conservative, formal or clear-cut, choose formal business attire. This category includes **multiple layers** that are mainly **tailored** in design.

The most formal work attire is: **the Matched Business Suit.**

- Pant Suit
- Skirt Suit
- Matching Jacket & Dress

Formal business attire will appear more informal when wearing the tailored suit with garments or garment details that are more informal. This will communicate a more relaxed message, while still maintaining the professional credibility and formal message. Keep in mind that all garments must be coordinated, business appropriate and meet the company expectations. For example: if a woman wears an un-collared top with the business suit instead of a collared shirt or blouse, her outfit will be perceived as a little more relaxed. If a man is not wearing a tie with his dress shirt, he will be perceived as more casual than if he wears a dress shirt and tie with his suit.

A Matched Business Suit is best when:

- presenting yourself as a Leader, an Expert or an Authority figure
- it matches your industry or the industry of your client
- attending important meetings
- at a job interview for a formal or semi-formal company culture
- negotiating a deal
- doing international work
- making a presentation
- company expects 'formal business dress'
- business dress code is 'formal'

Did You Know?

The structure of the suit with its square shoulders and the extended bottom of the jacket, create the illusion of greater upper body strength and size.

Although each industry and company has its own culture and policies for acceptable standards of dress, you may want to consider this category for the following:

*Executive, Legal, Upper Management, Business Administration & Finance
and/or any formal event representing your organization

WHEN TO WEAR SEMI-FORMAL BUSINESS ATTIRE

When you want to appear more approachable, receptive and flexible, while still appearing influential, capable, credible, dependable and polished, choose semi-formal business attire. This category includes multiple layers that are **predominantly tailored** mixed with some **untailored** details.

The key garment for Semi-formal Business Attire is: **the Tailored Jacket (Sport Coat / Blazer)**.

Note: This category may be described as 'Business Casual'. 'Business casual' often requires a jacket.

When worn with a coordinating / non-matching tailored style pant, skirt or dress the tailored jacket creates a softly tailored, unmatched business suit. In this category women may wear a dress without a jacket provided it has tailored details (see page 4) along with either long-sleeves or $\frac{3}{4}$ length sleeves.

The Semi-Formal category is the most flexible business attire category. In Canada and the U.S., this is the highest level of Informal Business Attire and the most relaxed version of Formal Business Attire.

Each category of business attire can be made to appear more formal or more informal by strategically mixing formal with informal garment details. (See page 4 & 5)

Tailored Jackets with Coordinating Unmatched Bottoms are best when:

- the company attire expectations range from relaxed Formal to Informal
- you are presenting yourself as credible, approachable, capable – yet still knowledgeable and efficient
- it fits with client's company culture or lifestyle
- you are in a relaxed formal to semi-casual business situation
- you are attending conferences or conventions where formal attire is not expected
- you need flexibility in your clothing category for your job or audience
- you are in a leadership or authoritative role in an informal (business casual) work environment
- you want to make your best impression in an informal (business casual) work environment
- Business Casual is expected and you need to make your best impression
- you are interviewing for a job at a company with an informal dress code

Did You Know?

Since 2001, the trend has been moving away from casual business attire. Many companies are now moving back to formal or semi-formal business attire.

Although each industry and company has its own culture and policies for acceptable standards of dress, you may want to consider this category for the following:

*Communications, Sales, Reception; Job Interviews for Service, Education, Retail or Hospitality Management
Administration: Elementary, Secondary, Post-Secondary Education*

WHEN TO WEAR INFORMAL BUSINESS ATTIRE

When you want to appear functional, informal, easy-going, unofficial, approachable, relaxed, agreeable and comfortable, unstructured or task-oriented, choose informal business attire. This category includes one or more layers that are **predominantly untailed** with some **tailed** details.

Informal Business Attire means business-appropriate garments and accessories worn with **NO Jacket**. Because there is no jacket worn, it is important that the outfit has some tailored or formal elements. *This category is often described as 'Business Casual'. However, beware: Business Casual often requires a tailored jacket. This can lead to confusion. When in doubt – dress 'Semi-Formal'.*

Each category of business attire can be made to appear more formal or more informal by strategically mixing formal with informal garment details. See page 4 & 5)

Men

Informal Business Attire usually means: **A collared shirt and slacks with NO Jacket**. Often a dress shirt is required along with a tie. *If permitted, this category may include: collared sweaters (i.e. turtleneck, mock, angular), polo shirts and casual pants such as khakis, dark jeans, etc. (See informal list on page 5 for additional options)*

Women

Informal Business Attire usually means a **tailed bottom** (dress pants, straight or A-line skirt) **and coordinating top, blouse or light-weight sweater with NO Jacket**. In this category women may wear a short-sleeved dress, provided it has some tailored or formal details (see page 4). *If permitted, this category may include: sleeveless tops and dresses. (See informal list on page 5 for additional options.)*

Business Clothing with no Jacket is best worn when:

- your company is informal
- it fits with the client's company culture
- you want to appear accessible, approachable, informal or relaxed
- you do not want to appear authoritative
- you need functional clothing to do your job
- you are attending casual business mixers, socials, off-site retreats, or for casual time at conventions
- you are in an entry level position or interviewing for an entry level position in a 'Business Casual' or 'Informal' work environment that does not require Formal or Semi-formal business attire at any level.

Although each industry and company has its own culture and policies for acceptable standards of dress you may want to consider this category for the following:

Retail, Technician, Creative Jobs, Food Service, Trades, Education – young children / technical / creative

TAILORING TIPS FOR WOMEN

When it comes to achieving a professional appearance, women have more flexibility and options than men. Many of the rules for traditional tailoring do not apply. This can create confusion for many women. The following tips may help:

General Tips

- Choose updated classics, not fads. Use accessories to accentuate personal style.
- Fit is important – have garments altered to fit you.

Fabrics

- Choose natural fabrics like wool, cotton and silk, or natural fabrics with a small percentage of synthetic fibres.
- Matte fabrics are more professional than shiny fabrics.
- Outer layers (pants, skirts and jackets) appear most professional in structured fabrics and tailored designs.
- Classic menswear prints and patterns such as: checks, stripes, plaids, paisley and foulards are considered more serious and credible in a business setting. Consider small non-descriptive patterns as an alternative. Avoid floral designs and animal prints when working in a predominantly male environment.

Sweaters & Knit Tops

- Choose refined fabrics, quality construction and modest styles.
- Colours must coordinate with key garments.
- Cotton, or cotton with a small percentage of Lycra for stretch, is the best quality for tailored shirts.
- Cotton appears very casual in knit styles such as t-shirts. Opt for blends or silk instead.
- Collared styles appear more formal or serious.
- Classic styles and neutral colours appear more serious.

Did You Know?

Women interviewers tend to be more accepting of clothing that emphasizes body shape than men.

Blouses

- Choose refined fabrics, quality construction and modest styles. Silk and high-quality synthetics are considered professional.

Shoes

- Choose quality leather or suede shoes in up-to-date classic styles.
- Pumps are most professional.
- Choose neutral colours such as black, brown, taupe and cordovan.
- Shoes should be the same tone as, or darker than, your hemline.
- Closed-toe shoes and thinner soles are considered more formal.
- Check company policy regarding open-toed shoes, sling-backs heels and backless styles.
- Dress boots appear more informal than shoes – check company policy on what is appropriate.

Hosiery

- Fine, light-weight, sheer hosiery is considered more formal than opaque hosiery.
- Skin tone or neutral tones that blend with your hemline are best. Avoid bright colours and dramatic designs.
- Darker tones, heavier weights and opaque hose may be worn in winter (if permitted).
- Hosiery should always be worn with Formal Business Attire, unless no hosiery is has been approved by the company. In hot climates or in summer, hosiery may be optional, but is still required in many industries. When no hosiery is permitted, groomed legs and feet are a must.
- Light-weight trouser socks may be worn with pants and coordinating shoe style.

Other Accessories

- Take it easy on accessories. Accessories can create the look that says, “This is who I am”. They are the extras that can give us individual style. But remember, in business **less is more**.
- Jewellery should be understated and coordinate with the classic look of business attire. Materials are simple metals, pearl, precious stones (real or faux) and classic bead designs.
- Stick with simple metal, pearl, precious stones (real or faux) and classic bead designs rather than ornate pieces.
- Check company policy regarding earring size and quantity (one in each ear is most professional).
- Remove jewellery from visible body piercings other than ears.
- Watches should be in classic analogue style.
- Scarves tied or draped around neck make a great accessory and draw attention to your face.

- Briefcases should be quality leather in a functional style. (Black is the most traditional colour for a briefcase)
- Carry a briefcase or a handbag, not both.
- Laptops are transported in carry-cases or tote bags, not backpacks.
- Cases for mobile phones and other electronic devices should communicate professionalism. Black is most conservative.

TAILORING TIPS FOR MEN

When it comes to achieving a professional appearance, the traditional rules of dressing apply. The following tips may help:

General Tips

- ☑ Choose up-to-date classics, not fads. Use accessories to accentuate personal style.
- ☑ Fit is important – have garments altered to fit you.

Fabrics

- ☑ Choose natural fabrics like wool, cotton and silk or quality blends of natural and synthetic fabrics.
- ☑ Outer layers (pants and jackets) appear most professional in structured fabrics and tailored designs.
- ☑ Traditional men's wear prints and patterns are most appropriate (checks, plaids, stripes, paisley, foulards, etc.). As an alternative, small, non-descriptive patterns work well.

Jackets

- ☑ Bottom button is always left open.
- ☑ Hemline covers the seat.

Did you know?

It pays to be prepared, even on casual days. Keep a coordinating jacket handy for unexpected meetings with the boss or conservative clients.

Trousers | Slacks

- ☑ Waistband is worn between the waist and navel. Jeans are the only exception.
- ☑ Traditional-style trouser legs fall in a straight line to the top of the heel with a slight break in front.

Dress Shirts

- ☑ Choose 100% cotton with high thread count for best quality, look and feel.
- ☑ Cotton with a small percentage of polyester or Lycra wrinkles less and travels well.
- ☑ Shirt cuff fits wrist and shirt collar fits neck.
- ☑ An undershirt may be worn for a smoother look.
- ☑ Shirts are worn tucked into pants for a professional look, unless required by dress code.

Knit Shirts & Sweaters

- Refined fabric and blends are more professional than cotton knits, which can appear too casual.
- Choose well-made, quality pieces.
- Coordinate colours with key garments.
- Collared styles appear more formal.
- Un-collared styles should only be worn under a tailored style jacket (if permitted).
- Neutral colours appear more serious.

Shoes

- Choose quality leather or suede shoes.
- Updated classic styles with thinner soles are more formal.
- Thicker soles are more informal.
- Choose neutral colours such as black, brown, taupe and cordovan.
- Shoes should be the same tone or darker than your pant hemline.

Socks

- Avoid bright colours and dramatic designs.
- Neutral tones that blend with your hemline are best.
- Sport socks and thicker socks are more casual and generally not permitted.
- Socks should cover shins when sitting (no skin showing).

Did You Know?

Women interviewers tend to consider a wider variety of colours to be appropriate in the workplace than men.

Accessories

- Silk ties are best! Coordinate your tie with the colours in your shirt, jacket or both.
- Braces (also called suspenders) and belts are worn separately, not simultaneously.
- Watches should be in classic, analogue style.

- ☑ Remove jewellery from all visible body piercings. (If you want to keep the piercing, there is clear, colourless acrylic jewelry called 'retainers' you can purchase to keep it from closing while at work.)
- ☑ Metals should match metals, leathers should match leathers.
- ☑ Briefcases should be quality leather in a functional style. (Black is the most traditional colour for a briefcase)
- ☑ Laptops are carried in carry-cases not backpacks.
- ☑ Mobile phone cases should communicate professionalism & business (black is most conservative).
- ☑ Laptops are transported in carry-cases not backpacks. Cases for mobile phones and other electronic devices should communicate professionalism. Black is most conservative.

HOW TO BUY A QUALITY SUIT

When buying a suit, the label and price tag aren't always the best way to judge value. By evaluating the construction details before you buy, you will make a wiser investment that will add to your professional image.

- ☑ The suit should look and feel comfortable. 100% wool is still considered the best quality for a business suit. The smoother the texture, the more refined the suit will appear. For moderate and warmer climates, “tropical weight” or “four seasons weight” fabrics will give you the most versatility.
 - ☑ Check for flaws in the fabric such as holes, weakened or thinning areas. This is an indication of poor quality fabric. Avoid buying a suit made with recycled fibers.
 - ☑ Watch out for loose threads or crooked stitching. All threads, including topstitching, should match the fabric unless designed for contrast. However, contrast stitching is seldom appropriate for a man's business suit.
 - ☑ Fully-lined jackets drape best and look more finished. Check to see that the lining is smooth. Although a half-lined jacket will feel more comfortable in warmer climates, it will only be appropriate for a relaxed work environment.
- Did you know?*
The bottom button of the suit jacket, sport coat and waistcoat are always left open.
- ☑ Lined trousers drape best. For comfort in warmer weather, pants may be lined to the knee.
 - ☑ Patterns, such as stripes, checks and plaids, should match up at the seams.
 - ☑ Check all buttons and fasteners to make sure they are securely sewn on. Additional buttons should be included in your purchase.
 - ☑ Edges and corners should lie flat without bulk or puckering. Hems are secure and invisible from the outside.

A quality suit that is well maintained will look great for many years. Learn to make the most of your purchase by judging the quality of ‘those little details’ before you buy.

IMAGE MAKERS

When it comes to your personal appearance, it's the little things that count. Good grooming really does make a big difference. **You** and **your clothing** should be in tip-top condition.

- Yes, it is possible to look professional on a budget. Choose quality over quantity. Buy quality fabrics and timeless styles – *the best you can afford*. Choose all-season fabrics such as lightweight wools, fine cottons, and silks. Natural fibres look and feel more expensive and can be worn all year round.
- Make small alterations to the sleeves, hemline and waistline or simply change the buttons to make your clothing look custom-tailored.
- In business it's better to be over-dressed than under-dressed, especially if you are trying to make a good impression. Keep in mind that consistency is very important. If one day you are wearing a business suit and the next day you show up in jeans and a t-shirt, coworkers and clients will be confused. The basis of image is consistency.
- Hair is the finishing touch for a polished professional look on both men and women. Choose your style carefully to appear healthy, up-to-date and put-together. Understated hairstyles are best, unless your industry is fashion-forward.
- Facial hair should be tidy and clean. A clean shave is always professional and appropriate.
- Well groomed hands and nails are a must for both men and women. As a woman, when wearing nail enamel, most companies prefer neutrals, soft colours and traditional colours such as red. French manicures generally work well. Hands and nails should be well-groomed.
- Even on casual days, be prepared. Keep a coordinating jacket handy for unexpected meetings with the boss or conservative clients.
- Makeup on women completes the professional look. It should always be worn to look understated unless your industry is fashion-forward. See [‘Masterful Makeup in Minutes’](#) and [‘Personal Care from Feet to Hair’](#) for more for more details.

If something doesn't seem quite right, it probably isn't. Using common sense and good judgment can create positive impressions that will help you soar to the top.

WHAT ARE JEANS?

When Levi Straus & Jacob Davis brought farmers and factory workers dungarees made of rugged indigo denim, reinforced seams and rivets in the late 1800's, they may not have realised at the time that they were really onto something. Although in the beginning jeans were meant to be workpants that would work hard and survive under strain, we have James Dean to thank for bringing them to the fashion scene as a symbol of youth rebellion in the 1950's movie, **Rebel Without a Cause**. After the launch of the movie, teens everywhere wore jeans as a sign of youth and rebellion. During the 1960's, jeans became more popular as a statement of non-conformity; in the 1970's, jeans became generally accepted for the most casual occasions. Today, they are the mainstream uniform for casual wear.

So, what are jeans? Today, jeans are very complex. Although jeans technically fall into the category of pants, they have enough personality on their own to be categorised as a specific garment.

Jeans today conform in many ways to current fashion. Fabrics, leg styles and details change as fashion changes. In some years jeans have a sense of glamour, and in other years the popular look is grunge. However, for jeans to be Jeans, they must appear relaxed, comfortable (even if they are not), and flexible to move around in. But more importantly, they must have one or more visible elements of durability and practicality:

Although when we think of jeans the first thing that often comes to mind is the durable fabric called Denim, since the Disco days of the mid-late 1970's we have seen jeans in every type of fabric from satin & plastic to stone washed & distressed denim. However, although satin is great for dancing to the tunes of Donna Summer or the Bee Gees, I wouldn't call it durable. Without other elements of durability and practicality, they would not qualify as jeans.

So what would the non-denim elements of durability and practicality look like? When Levi Straus and Jacob Davis went to work designing jeans, they had one thing in mind – How do we make a pair of pants last in harsh conditions, and how do we make them practical?

Although denim jeans of today are typically practical wash-and-wear material, Levi Straus and Jacob Davis took it a step further by considering functional design details like fly-front, western style pockets in the front and patch pockets in the back – all additional details that make jeans practical.

They also went to work on durability. The answer – rivets, top-stitching and a 'V' shaped yoke at the back to reinforce the points of strain. Although these details were originally incorporated into jeans for durability, these details have become signature details in not only jeans, but now also many other casual clothing styles today.

While jeans were originally created for work, they were worn only for very specific types of work. Then came the 1990's – the 'business casual' era. It started off slow in the early 1990's, with only a few hi-tech companies at first, and then came Jeans Day (in Canada/USA) and then Casual Friday and then Casual Every Day. Then businesses began to feel that they weren't being taken seriously. In an effort to regain their credibility and to be taken seriously again by their clients, many employers took action and abolished the lower levels of business casual. Since the year 2001, times are changing again. More and more companies are now creating and adopting policies around acceptable business casual wardrobes.

In general today, jeans are only accepted for the purpose jeans were originally intended – the most casual work environments, or on specially designated days.

I recently read an online forum asking the question, “Are jeans too casual?” Although there were many great comments, there was one that stood out for me. “To me no matter how expensive jeans are they are casual wear, just like a t-shirt. It's a matter of perception in our culture. In my opinion, if you are not sure and the fact that this question pops in your mind then you'll be safer going with a more dressy option, especially if you want to produce a certain impression.” (*Anonymous*). Employers see this issue the same way.

IMAGE BREAKERS

WARDROBE

There are times when I get up in the morning and I don't care how I look. I think everyone has those days, where we throw on the first thing that looks comfortable. However, this can sometimes get us in trouble. As an image consultant, I have made a few embarrassing mistakes of my own. One day, I ran down to the grocery store to grab a few things, wearing yoga pants and not bothering with my hair or makeup. And I ran into a prospective client. Oops! You never know where or when you might bump into someone important. Even though there are days when I would rather not dress for success, I have learned the hard way that you really do need to look the part.

Every outfit has a time and place. However, certain items do not belong in the work place, even on Casual Day. For business, leave the following at home:

Men

- Fad clothing and accessories such as novelty ties – **don't** try to be a fashion statement (unless you are in the fashion industry)
- Anything denim or corduroy (unless it is permitted by the company)
- Cargo-style pants (unless part of a uniform or permitted by company dress code)
- Digital watches
- Extreme prints and patterns
- Athletic shoes, socks or clothing unless required for the job
- Logos or slogans on clothing (unless it is your company logo)
- White socks worn with dark pants and shoes
- See women's section below for additional guidelines

Women

- Fad clothing and accessories – **don't** try to be a fashion statement (unless you are in the fashion industry)
- Necklines lower than 2 inches above cleavage
- Skirts shorter than 3 inches above the knee
- See-through garments
- Anything denim or corduroy (unless it is accepted by the company)
- Extremely large or noisy jewellery

- ☒ Extremely bright, florescent or metallic colours (except metal jewellery)
- ☒ Digital watches (except in the most casual work environment)
- ☒ Any distracting details: Prints and patterns, accessories, hair colours and styles
- ☒ Extensively frilly details: Ruffles, tiers or lace should be understated for a professional look
- ☒ Floral prints appear feminine. Animal prints are considered fun. Both are considered less professional and the wearer may be taken less seriously
- ☒ White shoes; even with white clothing unless part of a uniform or permitted in dress code
- ☒ Shoes that are too high or throw you off balance
- ☒ Undergarments that show (*but please wear some...*)
- ☒ Body-baring, tight garments
- ☒ Athletic shoes or clothing (unless required for the job)
- ☒ See men's section above for additional guidelines

In other words... **Anything that Might Be Distracting!** The focus should be on you, not your garments.

GROOMING & HYGIENE

Your clothing and accessories can be perceived as a reflection of your personality. If your clothes are wrinkled, stained, faded or held together with safety pins; if your shoes are scuffed or your heels are worn down, or if the metal on your accessories is starting to change colour from wear; you may be sending a message that you are lazy or don't care about details. Those little details *are* noticed. Clothing and accessories should be clean, wrinkle free and in good condition.

Hygiene – when done right it may go unnoticed. When neglected, it's the first thing people are aware of. Good grooming really does make a big difference. Poor hygiene or perceived poor hygiene will instantly influence people's impressions about you and can hold your social and business relationships back. Far too often people neglect regular bathing, skin and hair care, teeth brushing, flossing, etc. Hygiene is not only important for our general health, but when neglected it can be the cause of body odour, bad skin and bad breath. Here are some additional things to avoid when it comes to grooming and hygiene:

Men

- ☒ Wrinkled or stained clothing
- ☒ Mismatched, uncoordinated clothing (colours or styles)

- Clothing and shoes that are worn-out or in poor condition
- Sloppy clothing and accessories
- Facial hair that is not clean or well groomed
- Poorly groomed / dirty hands or nails
- Clothing that needs repair: missing buttons, fallen hems, spots, etc.
- Brightly coloured hair or extreme styles
- Visible tattoos
- Visible piercings with jewellery, gauges and fad body accessories (jewellery must be removed)
- Bad posture
- See *women's section below for additional guidelines*

Women

- Clothing and shoes that are worn out or in poor condition.
- Clothing that needs repair: missing buttons, fallen hems, spots, etc.
- Wrinkled or stained clothing
- Sloppy clothing and accessories
- Brightly coloured hair or extreme styles
- Visible tattoos
- Bad posture
- Visible piercings other than ears with jewellery, gauges and fad body accessories (jewellery must be removed)
- Chipped nail enamel; nail decals; non-traditional nail colour. Hands and nails must be clean and well-groomed.
- See *men's section above for additional guidelines*

In other words... **Anything that Might Be Distracting!** The focus should be on you, not your grooming or hygiene.

COLOUR COMMUNICATES

Have you ever wondered why the traditional navy or grey suit worn with a white shirt and bright red tie became known as “The Power Suit”? The light-dark contrast draws attention to the face, adding authority and presence. For a strong, professional presence, combine a dark, light and bright colour.

You can never go wrong wearing colours that suit you close to your face – such as with a necktie, pocket square, shirt or jacket. They will make you look healthier and more attractive.

Colour can also add or take away from the effectiveness of your wardrobe. It’s been proven that everyone has a physiological and psychological response to colour. So, as well as wearing suitable clothing styles for business, it’s important to dress in appropriate colours based on what you want to achieve.

Formal | Mature | Authoritative | Confident

Darker shades of most colours convey formality. They help you appear authoritative, confident and mature. When you wear dark colours such as navy or charcoal grey people will assume you can handle the job. Black is the most formal and authoritative colour; just be aware that too much black can be intimidating. When worn alone, dark shades are dramatic and unapproachable. For a confident and authoritative look, a dark suit with a light dress shirt and a brightly coloured tie are most effective.

Caring | Reassuring | Calming | Gentle

Lighter colours, especially pastels, send the message that you care. These are great colours to wear when you want to be perceived as reassuring or gentle. They also have a calming effect on others. For this effect a lower contrast or monochromatic combination (suit, shirt and tie or suit and blouse) in lighter colours work well.

Did You Know?

If you use too many colours in a combination it confuses the eye. Usually three colours in unequal proportions is the most you can use successfully. A good rule to follow in putting combinations together is: ONE DARK, ONE LIGHT, ONE BRIGHT (70%-20%-10%)

Team Player | Approachable | Dependable | Trustworthy

Medium muted colours and neutrals are more approachable than dark colours, yet still appear credible. People will assume you are a dependable team player who can get the job done. Warm colours such as earth tones come across as friendly and approachable. These colours work well for networking. Cooler neutrals such as grey and muted blue come across as more serious and trustworthy than warmer colours.

Energetic | Enthusiastic | Youthful

Bright colours such as bright blue, yellow, bright green and even pink increase physical energy and brain activity. Of all the bright colours, red has the greatest impact on physical energy, which makes it a very powerful colour. Since bright colours draw attention to the wearer they are great for getting

and keeping attention. Although men's business-wear doesn't usually include brightly coloured garments other than shirts and ties, they can work well as accent colours. Ties are a great example of this. A brightly coloured tie will draw focus to the face and keep the attention of the listener. These colours also work well as accent colours for blouses and scarves. A brightly coloured scarf will draw focus to the face and keep the audience attention. Extremely bright colours, such as florescent colours, do not belong in the work place.

CAREER WARDROBE PLANNER

Use the checklist in the column on the left to determine how you want to be perceived at work. Once completed, the centre column will provide you with suggestions on the appropriate business wardrobe category and how to get the look.

Desired Image Checklist <i>How would you Like to be perceived?</i>	Clothing Suggestions	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input type="checkbox"/> Formal <input type="checkbox"/> Authoritative <input type="checkbox"/> Influential <input type="checkbox"/> Credible <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful <input type="checkbox"/> Precise <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative <input type="checkbox"/> Classic <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Official <input type="checkbox"/> Polished <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable <input type="checkbox"/> Structured	<p>Business - Formal Tailored-style business suits with coordinating shirt or blouse and appropriate accessories</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Matched skirt suit / blouse / thin-soled pumps / gold necklace & stud earrings ▪ Matching tailored style jacket & dress / thin-soled pumps / scarf / rose gold earrings ▪ Matched pant suit / silk shell top / dress boots / silver necklace & stud earrings ▪ Matched pant suit / dress shirt (French-cuffs) / tie / thin-soled oxfords / gold cufflinks / gold watch ▪ Matched pant suit / dress shirt (open collar) / thin-soled slip on dress shoes 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Polished <input type="checkbox"/> Less formal <input type="checkbox"/> Credible <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-Approachable <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-Authoritative <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-Formal <input type="checkbox"/> Influential <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible <input type="checkbox"/> Capable <input type="checkbox"/> Business Casual <input type="checkbox"/> Receptive <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<p>Business – Semi-Formal Blazer or sport coat with coordinated business separates & accessories</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blazer / collared blouse / slacks / thin-soled pumps ▪ Blazer / A-line skirt / fine-knit top / dress boots ▪ Tailored style dress with formal details ¾ length sleeves / thin-soled pumps / gold necklace & earrings ▪ Sport coat / collared dress shirt / tie / trousers / thin-soled oxfords ▪ Sport coat / mock-neck / slacks / thin-soled dress boots 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Informal <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed <input type="checkbox"/> Casual <input type="checkbox"/> Business Casual <input type="checkbox"/> Receptive <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed <input type="checkbox"/> Unofficial <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable <input type="checkbox"/> Task-Oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Free & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Unstructured <input type="checkbox"/> Easy-going <input type="checkbox"/> Functional <input type="checkbox"/> Approachable <input type="checkbox"/> Agreeable	<p>Business – Informal 2+ piece coordinated business separates and business appropriate accessories</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Light-weight, jewel-neckline sweater / straight skirt / sheer hosiery / thin-soled pumps / scarf / silver earrings ▪ Blouse / vest / narrow-legged slacks tucked into dress boots ▪ Short sleeve knee-length dress / thin-soled pumps / gold earrings / bead necklace ▪ Collared dress shirt / tie / slacks / belt / thin-soled slip-on shoes ▪ Collared shirt / light-weight pull over sweater / slacks / thin-soled dress boots 	

SUGGESTED READING

Personal Care from Feet to Hair, *Kimberly Law*

<http://www.personalimpact.ca/store/e-books/personal-care-from-feet-to-hair/>

Masterful Make-up in Minutes, *Kimberly Law*

<http://www.personalimpact.ca/store/e-books/masterful-make-up-in-minutes/>

Image Power, *Contributing Author: Kimberly Law*

<http://www.personalimpact.ca/store/books/image-power/>

Bushido Business, *Contributing Author: Kimberly Law*

<http://www.personalimpact.ca/store/books/bushido-business/>

Managing Your Image Potential: Creating Good Impressions in Business,
Catherine Graham Bell

Business Casual Made Easy, *Ilene Amiel & Angie Michael*

Dress Casually for Success, *Men Mark Weber & The Van Heusen Creative Design Group*

Dressing the Man, *Mastering the Art of Permanent Fashion, Alan Flusser*