

Personal Impact Guide To

# UPWARDLY MOBILE CLOTHING

for upwardly  
mobile women

Kimberly Law AICI CIP  
[www.personalimpact.ca](http://www.personalimpact.ca)

# UPWARDLY MOBILE CLOTHING

for upwardly mobile women

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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 makeup kit. Fascinated by all the colours and textures, we decided to try them out. With the makeup 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 Makeup 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 25 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.

## WELCOME TO UPWARDLY MOBILE CLOTHING FOR UPWARDLY MOBILE WOMEN

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

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 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. In 'Upwardly Mobile Clothing for Upwardly Mobile Women' I will show you how to make your work clothes work for you!

# WHY IS IMAGE IMPORTANT?

## Image is based on:

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

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

### Did you know?

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 skills are major factors, but image also plays a major role. When you cultivate this image, doors will open before you." ~ Lauren Solomon,

AICI CIP

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.

## Benefits of a positive 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 may 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.

## WHAT TO WEAR – WHEN

Appropriate business dress depends on the industry, the company culture and your job. 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 dress formal, casual or fashion-forward? Do the standards vary between departments?

**Did you know?**

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

### Your Job

- ☞ 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 in the garden landscaping? 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.

## Four Categories of Business Dress

There are 4 categories of Professional Dress. 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 and then Casual Work Attire. *Casual work attire is only acceptable for specific work environments and situations.*

- ③ **Formal Business Attire** – most formal
  - ☐ Primarily tailored design details
  - ☐ Matching jacket and bottom

- ③ **Semi-Formal Business Attire**
  - ☐ Includes a tailored style jacket
  - ☐ Coordinated garments that are mainly tailored, with some untailed details to soften the look

- ③ **Informal Business Attire**
  - ☐ A mixture of tailored and untailed details
  - ☐ No jacket     **Did You Know?**

*Skirts are considered more formal than pants in the workplace.* ③ **Casual Work**

**Attire** – most casual

- ☐ One or more clothing layers
- ☐ Mainly untailed design details



## WHEN TO WEAR

### FORMAL BUSINESS ATTIRE

When you want to appear authoritative, credible, powerful, classic, stable, influential, traditional, conservative or precise, choose formal business attire. This category includes **multiple layers** that are **tailored**. Tailored details are:

Structured	Neutral Colours / Dark Light Contrast
Angular Shapes	Firm and Smooth Textures / Matching Fabrics
Straight Lines	Small Prints & Patterns
Form Fitted	Collar or Lapel

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

- ③ Skirt Suit
- ③ Pant Suit      *Women have been wearing suits*
- ③ Matching Jacket & Dress      *worn for riding and travelling.*

#### Did You Know?

*since the 1600's. Originally they were Business suits became common in the 1970's.*

#### Matched Suits are best when:

- ③ presenting yourself as a Leader, an Expert or an Authority figure
- ③ it matches your industry or the industry of your client
- ③ attending important meetings
- ③ at a job interview
- ③ negotiating a deal
- ③ doing international work
- ③ making a presentation
- ③ you need flexibility in your clothing categories

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, Upper Management, Business Administration, Finance & Legal*

## WHEN TO WEAR

### SEMI-FORMAL BUSINESS ATTIRE

When you want to appear more approachable and receptive, while still appearing influential, capable, credible, dependable and polished, choose smart 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 (Blazer)**

③ When worn with a coordinating / non-matching tailored **Did You Know?** bottom (pant, skirt or dress) the tailored jacket creates a *Men tend to view beige, navy, softly tailored unmatched suit.* *grey, tan and black as the most appropriate colours for women to wear in business.*

③ In this category, a dress with tailored elements may be worn without a jacket provided it has long sleeves or  $\frac{3}{4}$  length sleeves.

③ In Canada and the U.S., this is the highest level of Business Casual and the most relaxed Formal Business Attire.

#### Tailored Jackets are best when:

- ③ the dress code or company culture is Relaxed Formal to Business Casual
- ③ you are presenting yourself as Capable, Knowledgeable and Efficient
- ③ you are in a relaxed formal to semi-casual business situation
- ③ it fits with the client's company culture or lifestyle
- ③ Business Casual is expected and you need to make your best impression
- ③ you are attending conventions and conferences
- ③ you need flexibility in your clothing categories
- ③ you are interviewing for a job at a company with a business casual dress policy

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:

## WHEN TO WEAR

*Communications, Sales, Service Management, Retail Management, Customer Service, Reception, Job Interviews*

### INFORMAL BUSINESS ATTIRE

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

Business Casual Attire usually means: **a tailed bottom** (dress pants, straight or A-line skirt) **and coordinated top**. Alternately, a short sleeved dress. This category requires **NO Jacket**.

#### Bring it Up a Notch

Collared shirt, sweater or blouse  
Long sleeve, ¼ length sleeve  
Tailored trousers / Tailored skirt

Coordinating vest or cardigan

#### Bring it Down a Notch

No collar  
Short sleeve, sleeveless  
Khaki's / Jeans – coloured, dark denim, corduroy

#### Tailed Bottoms with or without a Collared Shirt are best when:

- ③ your company is informal
- ③ it fits with the client's company culture
- ③ you want to appear accessible, approachable, informal or relaxed
- ③ you need functional clothing
- ③ you are attending casual business socials, off-site retreats, or casual time at conventions ③ attending entry level job interviews

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, Contractor, Communications, Service, Trade & Food Services*

## WHEN TO WEAR

### **Still not sure what to wear?**

Notice what your boss and your clients typically wear. To impress your boss, dress at the same level or slightly more casual. If your boss wears a jacket, so should you. To impress your client, dress at the same level or a little more formal. If your clients always wear jeans, you might want to leave the jacket and the jeans at home. Dress for Success with a tailored bottom and a coordinating top.

## CASUAL WORK ATTIRE

When you want to appear very casual, artistic, relaxed, unofficial, laid-back, task oriented, free and easy or unstructured, choose casual work attire. This category includes **one or more layers** that are **untailored**. Untailored details are:

Unstructured	Not Matching / Colour Contrast
Curved Lines	Rounded Shapes
Loose or Tight Fit	Rough and Soft Textures
No Collar or Lapel	Larger Patterns / Novelty Prints

The most casual work attire is: **Jeans and a T-Shirt** or **Cords and a Sweater** or **Unstructured Skirt and Top**.

Casual Work clothing is best when: *Since 2001, the trend has been moving away from business casual attire. Many companies are now*

- ③ your company has approved this category of dress
- ③ your company and clients are extremely casual
- ③ you need extremely functional clothing that will likely get very dirty or ruined
- ③ you want to appear extremely relaxed, laid back, unconventional
- ③ you are attending casual off-site events (i.e. picnics or camping)

### **Did You Know?**

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

Although each industry and company has its own culture and policies for acceptable standards of dress, this category may be appropriate for the following:

*Casual Labour, Creative Environments & Behind the Scenes*

## **WHEN TO WEAR**

*(NOTE: \*this category is not acceptable for a job interview)*

## TAILORING TIPS FOR BUSINESS

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. *body shape than men.*
- ☐ Cotton appears very casual in knit styles such as tshirts. Opt for blends or silk instead.
- ☐ Collared styles appear more formal.
- ☐ Classic styles and neutral colours appear more serious.

#### Did You Know?

*Women interviewers tend to be more accepting of clothing that emphasizes*

### 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 professional.
- ☞ Check company policy regarding open-toed shoes, sling-backs heels and backless styles.
- ☞ Dress boots appear more casual 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.
- ☞ Hose should always be worn unless no hosiery is has been approved by the company.
- ☞ Light weight trouser socks may be worn with pants.

### 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.
- ☞ 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 other visible body piercings.
- ☞ 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.

## 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. However, for extra comfort a small amount of Lycra may help. 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 wearability.
- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ Fully-lined jackets drape best and look more finished. Check to see that the lining is smooth. Although an un-lined jacket may feel more comfortable in warmer climates, it will appear more casual.
- ⇒ Lined trousers drape best and provide a smoother look. 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 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. You will look like a million bucks.
- ☞ 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, co-workers and clients will be confused. The basis of image is consistency.
- ☞ Even on casual days, be prepared. Keep a **Did You Know?** A matched suit can make you appear taller and slimmer. A coordinating jacket handy for unexpected meetings with the boss or conservative clients.
- ☞ Hair and makeup are the finishing touches for a polished professional look. Choose your colours and styles carefully so that you appear healthy, up-to-date and put-together. Hairstyles and makeup should be understated, unless your industry is fashion-forward. See *'Masterful Makeup in Minutes'* and *'Personal Care from Feet to Hair'* for more information.
- ☞ 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.
- ☞ Use good posture. It really does make a difference. See *'Presence & Poise, the Communication Factor'*.

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

There are times when I get up in the morning and I don't care how I look. I think everyone has those days. 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 sweats and no makeup, 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:

📁 Fad clothing and accessories – **don't** try to be a fashion statement (unless you are in the fashion industry)

📁 Necklines lower than two fingers above cleavage

📁 Skirts shorter than 3 inches above the knee

📁 See-through garments

📁 Anything denim (unless it is accepted by the company)

📁 Large, noisy jewellery

📁 Extremely bright, florescent or metallic colours (except metal jewellery)

📁 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

📁 Digital watches

📁 Any dramatic details: prints and patterns, accessories, hair colours and styles

📁 Frilly details: ruffles, tiers or a lot of lace

📁 White shoes; even with white clothing

📁 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 In other words... **Anything that might be Distracting!**

### Did You Know?

The texture of fabric influences the brightness of a colour. E.g. Hot purple in a satin appears brighter colour in a dense, woven wool. Satin reflects light, while wool

## COLOUR COMMUNICATES

Have you ever wondered why the traditional navy or charcoal 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.

You can never go wrong wearing colours that suit you close to your face – such as with a blouse, jewelry, scarves or a 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, it's important to dress in appropriate colours based on what you want to communicate.

### **Formal | Mature | Authoritative | Confident**

Darker shades of most colours are considered more formal. They help you appear authoritative, confident and mature. When you wear dark colours, such as navy or charcoal grey, people trust that you can handle the job. Black is the most formal and authoritative colour. Too much black can be intimidating. Darker shades are the most formal when worn alone. For a strong, professional presence, wear a dark matched-suit with a light-colour blouse. This will draw attention to the face.

### **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. A lower contrast or monochromatic combination (suit and blouse) in lighter colours also works well.

### **Team Player | Approachable | Dependable | Trustworthy**

Medium, muted colours and neutrals are more approachable than dark colours yet still appear serious. 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 blue, come across as more serious and trustworthy than warmer colours. This is effective when a suit is worn with a top and accessories that are either lighter, brighter or in a similar tone.

### **Energetic | Enthusiastic | Youthful**

#### **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%)*

Bright colours such as blue, yellow and apple green bring up the energy level of you and the people around you. They also increase brain activity. Of all the bright colours, red has the greatest effect which makes it a very powerful colour. Bright colours are great for getting

and keeping attention. Because bright colours are stimulating, avoid wearing too much. Bright colours can work especially well in the warmer months. Some bright colours, like red, may be worn all year round. 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 attention of the listener. Extremely bright colours, such as florescent colours, do not belong in the work place.

## INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TRAVEL

When travelling for business, research dress guidelines before you leave. Although business dress guidelines for men are fairly consistent world-wide, for women, the guidelines vary more widely. When in doubt, dress modestly in classic, conservative quality clothing.

### Canada & U.S.

Dress according to the corporate culture of the organization. In Canada and the U.S., Business Dress on the east coast tends to be more formal than the west coast. Urban areas tend to be more formal than rural areas.

### Latin America

Dress and grooming are indicators of status. You can't go wrong with a high quality or custom-made matched suit in tropical weight wool. The best colours are traditional business colours, neutrals and pastels. Women may also wear a skirt and blouse or a conservative dress. Some countries are more fashion-forward than others. Urban areas are more formal than rural areas. Impeccable grooming, well-maintained clothing, hosiery and polished shoes are a must.

### South East Asia

Although conservative in government offices and larger traditional companies, many companies are becoming less formal. Skirt suits worn with pumps are always safe. Pant suits or a skirt and blouse are also appropriate for many regions and industries. Lightweight fabrics are most comfortable. Although some countries are more fashion-forward and influenced by Europe and North America, conservative, professional attire is always the safest choice.

### Western Europe

Business women tend to be very polished and well put together, even in a Business Casual environment. Quality and style is very important. The way you are dressed is considered evidence of your social status and success. Women are advised to dress in an elegant suit in muted colours. Most European countries also allow pantsuits or a conservative dress. The use of fragrance and accessories varies from one country to another. Shoes should be high quality leather, fashionable, and well maintained. In Europe, Business Casual means high quality, tastefully coordinated clothing. Always dress formally in a suit for the first meeting.

### Eastern Europe

Business Dress tends to be traditional and understated. You will never be caught off guard in a dark or muted matched suit with modest accessories and tasteful, understated makeup.

\*In Muslim countries, modesty is **very** important for women, especially in rural and religious regions. Some larger cities allow fashion-forward attire in some industries. Skirts should always be knee length or longer. Shoulders must be covered when wearing sleeveless tops. Some regions may require head scarves.

### Middle East & North Africa

It isn't so much what is worn, but the style of the garment that is important. Modesty is the key, especially for women. **Cover up** – the more, the better. The amount of expected modesty depends on the country

and region. Traditional and religious areas require women to keep most of the body covered when out in public. This includes shapeless styles with high necklines and elbow-length to long sleeves. Hemlines are below the knee to the ankle, depending on the region. Head scarves will likely be required in rural areas and in many urban areas. Many regions will not allow women to wear pants.

## **South Africa**

A conservative tropical weight matched skirt or pant suit is always appropriate.

## 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>would you Like to be perceived?</i>	Clothing Suggestions <i>How</i>	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑤ Traditional</li> <li>⑤ Formal</li> <li>⑤ Authoritative</li> <li>⑤ Influential</li> <li>⑤ Credible</li> <li>⑤ Powerful</li> <li>⑤ Precise</li> <li>⑤ Consistent</li> <li>⑤ Conservative</li> <li>⑤ Classic</li> <li>⑤ Stable</li> <li>⑤ Official</li> <li>⑤ Polished</li> <li>⑤ Dependable</li> <li>⑤ Structured</li> </ul>	<p><b>Business - Formal</b> Tailored style business suits with coordinating shirt or blouse and appropriate accessories</p> <p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>③ Matched skirt suit / blouse / thin sole pumps / gold necklace &amp; stud earrings</li> <li>③ Matching tailored style jacket &amp; dress / thin sole pumps / scarf / rose gold earrings</li> <li>③ Matched pant suit / silk shell top / dress boots / silver necklace &amp; stud earrings</li> <li>③ Matched pant suit / dress shirt (French-cuffs) / tie / thin sole oxfords / gold cufflinks / gold watch</li> <li>③ Matched pant suit / dress shirt (open collar) / thin sole slip on dress shoes</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑤ Polished</li> <li>⑤ Less formal</li> <li>⑤ Credible</li> <li>⑤ Semi-approachable</li> <li>⑤ Semi-authoritative</li> <li>⑤ Semi-formal</li> <li>⑤ Influential</li> <li>⑤ Dependable</li> <li>⑤ Flexible</li> <li>⑤ Capable</li> <li>⑤ Business Casual</li> <li>⑤ Receptive</li> <li>⑤ Stable</li> <li>⑤ Effective</li> </ul>	<p><b>Business – Semi-Formal</b> Blazer or sport coat with coordinated business separates &amp; accessories</p> <p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>③ Blazer / collared blouse / slacks / thin-sole pumps</li> <li>③ Blazer / A-line skirt / fine-knit top / dress boots</li> <li>③ Tailored style dress with formal details <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> length sleeves / thin sole pumps / gold necklace &amp; earrings</li> <li>③ Sport coat / collared dress shirt / tie / trousers / thin-sole oxfords</li> <li>③ Sport coat / mock-neck / slacks / thin sole dress boots</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑤ Informal</li> <li>⑤ Relaxed</li> <li>⑤ Casual</li> <li>⑤ Business Casual</li> <li>⑤ Receptive</li> <li>⑤ Relaxed</li> <li>⑤ Unofficial</li> <li>⑤ Comfortable</li> <li>⑤ Task-Oriented</li> <li>⑤ Free &amp; Easy</li> <li>⑤ Unstructured</li> <li>⑤ Easy-going</li> <li>⑤ Functional</li> <li>⑤ Approachable</li> <li>⑤ Agreeable</li> </ul>	<p><b>Business – Informal</b> 2+ piece coordinated business separates and business appropriate accessories</p> <p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>③ Light-weight, jewel-neckline sweater / straight skirt / sheer hosiery / thin sole pumps / scarf / silver earrings</li> <li>③ Blouse / vest / narrow legged slacks tucked into dress boots</li> <li>③ Short sleeve knee length dress / thin sole pumps / gold earrings / bead necklace</li> <li>③ Collared dress shirt / tie / slacks / belt / thin sole slip-on shoes</li> <li>③ Collared shirt / light-weight pull over sweater / slacks / thin sole dress boots</li> </ul>	
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## PROFESSIONAL POLISH AT A GLANCE

Category of Dress	What Outfit to Wear	When to Wear It	What Your Outfit Says	Relax Your Look	Add Some Impact
<b>Formal Business Dress</b>	<b>Business Suit with:</b> x Collared or un-collared shirts, blouses, knit tops, light-weight sweaters x Foot Wear: Classic – closed toe, thin sole	x Company culture demands high level professionalism x Situations require credibility, authority or high level professional image x Important meetings x Overseas work	x Powerful x Authoritative x Formal x Precise x Classic x Conservative x Traditional x Influential x Credible	If this is your day-to-day dress category, take it a step down with a coordinating tailored jacket.	Add impact to this level by choosing a dark or dull coloured suit with a light-coloured shirt for contrast.
<b>Semi-Formal Business Attire</b>	<b>Blazer with:</b> x Skirt or trousers, slacks and collared or uncollared top x Dress x Foot Wear: Classic, current x Thinner soles x Dress boots	x Day to day business situations <i>*except high level executive meetings</i> x Meeting with someone dressed more casual x Conferences	x Influential x Credible x Capable x Polished x Receptive x Current x Dependable x Approachable	If this is your day-to-day category, take it a step down by taking off your jacket and adding a collared shirt.	If the Blazer is your day-to-day dress, step it up to a matched suit for added impact
<b>Informal Business Attire</b>	<b>Tailored Bottom with Business Appropriate Top:</b> x Shirt, blouse or sweater x Fine-gauge knits, cashmere, wool, cotton, silk x Slacks, trousers, khakis or skirts x Collared dress (shirtwaist)	x Office casual x Casual business social events x Management level – trades, outdoor work x Business sports	x Approachable x Informal x Unofficial x Easy Going x Relaxed x Agreeable x Comfortable x Functional	For most corporate situations, this is your most relaxed look.	If the collar is your day-to-day look, step it up with a jacket for added impact.

<b>Casual Work Attire</b>	<b>Untailored Top and Bottom Relaxed Casual Wear:</b> x Casual pants and skirts x No Collar – casual tops, sweaters x Fads, active sportswear	x Trades x Outdoor work x Artistic work x (messy) Behind the scenes creative x Business sports x Casual business events Retreats  x	x Functional x Comfortable x Casual, x Laid-Back x Free & Easy x Leisurely	*Only recommended for work if warranted by activity or circumstances.	If this is your day-today look, step it up to Business Casual with a collar or tailored bottom.
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22 **SUGGESTED READING**

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

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

Mastering Your Professional Image, Dressing to Enhance Your Credibility *Diane  
Parente & Stephanie Petersen*

