

Dressing for the Interview by Industry

By Peter Vogt, Monster Senior Contributing Writer

There's no getting around it: In every job interview, you're going to be judged -- at least partially -- by how you look.

But how you should look varies depending on your industry and the job you're interviewing for. Take a look at general interview attire expectations for eight career areas:

Technology

"If you're applying for a technical position, you won't need a suit," says Carole Martin, a former Monster contributor and author of *Boost Your Interview IQ*. "A collared shirt and khakis or slacks would work. Same goes for women -- sweater or blouse and slacks or a skirt."

But upgrade your attire if you're interviewing for a higher-level job. "You dress in the best clothes you have," says David Perry, managing director for Ottawa, Canada-based high tech recruiting firm Perry-Martel International and author of *Career Guide for the High-Tech Professional*. "No exceptions."

Finance

If you're interviewing for a finance job, remember that "nothing is more precise and exact than managing money," says Pamela Holland, chief operating officer for Brody Communications in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, and coauthor of *Help! Was That a Career Limiting Move?* "You cannot afford to have a hair out of place. Full business professional attire is required and expected."

Government

At a government interview, "don't be flashy," Holland says. "This is a time to show you're responsible, trustworthy and honest."

But a bit of color is OK, whether you're a man or a woman, says Kathryn Troutman, author of *Ten Steps to a Federal Job*.

"Be conservative with jewelry, makeup and hairstyles," she says. She advises being conservative overall, but adds "the days of all white shirts for men in government need to end."

Human Resources

For an HR interview, "you must look professional and authoritative," Martin says. "You'll need the look that you could handle any crisis and be dependable."

Sales

Typically, a suit is the uniform for a sales interview. After all, stresses Martin, "who would want to buy from a guy in a T-shirt and jeans?"

But you might be able to go with bolder designs and colors, Holland says. "The product or service you're representing will determine how classic versus trendy/fashionable you should be," she explains.

Automotive

"Here's an exception where a potential employer will understand if you have a little dirt or grease under your nails," says Holland of interviewing for an auto repair job. "You still want to look as neat as possible, but a suit is probably not necessary."

That is, unless you're interviewing at a high-end dealership, says Heidi Nelson, a personnel counselor for Car People Oregon, a Portland, Oregon, automotive staffing service for new-car dealerships. In that case, Nelson says, "I would dress up a bit more."

Hospitality

Image is particularly critical in the hospitality industry, says Martin. A suit is appropriate for some positions but not always a must. However, you always need to make a great first impression.

"You're representing the company, and you may be the first person seen," she says.

Trades

John Coffey worked as a factory production manager for years before becoming a career coach. His take on appropriate attire for an interview in the trades: business casual.

"For men, this might be a nice pair of Dockers and a buttoned shirt, along with well-kept and polished shoes," says Coffey, career success officer for Winning Careers in Woodbury, Minnesota. "The same goes for women -- nice slacks and a professional business top. I think a suit or sports jacket for this type of work is overkill."

Of course, one industry's excess is another industry's underdressed. So don't be afraid to ask, because no matter what, "your packaging counts," says Holland.

That packaging includes the little things. "The details matter," says Mary Lou Andre, president of Needham, Massachusetts-based Organization by Design and author of *Ready to Wear: An Expert's Guide to Choosing and Using Your Wardrobe*. For example, shoes "should be in excellent condition, as should totes and outerwear."

"You really never do get a second chance to make a good first impression," Andre stresses. "By investing some time and money in creating a suitable interview wardrobe, you will invite others to easily invest back in you."