# **Interview Attire**

INTERVIEW BUSINESS FORMAL

MATCHED SUITS

* Grey, blue, or black
* Solid colors are best, subtle stripes OK
* No cling or shine
* Suit pants and jackets must be identical

PANTS VS. SKIRTS

* A skirt suit is considered more formal
* Skirts should fall to the knee or below
* Pants should be tailored to fit without being overly tight or dragging

HOSIERY/SOCKS

* Formal workplaces will expect panty-hose with skirts
* Socks should coordinate with suit—same shade or a shade darker
* Solid color socks or with subtle design
* NEVER wear white/athletic socks

GROOMING/ACCESSORIES

* Nails should be clean and groomed
* Keep makeup conservative
* Conceal tattoos and remove facial piercings
* Avoid using perfume or cologne; others may be allergic
* Watch/jewelry should be minimal and subtle
* Use briefcase/pad folio or small purse

DRESS SHIRTS/BLOUSES

* Pressed, clean, and well-tailored
* White, ivory, or light blue are best
* Solid colors or subtle patterns are best
* Avoid lace, ruffle, and shiny fabrics

SHOES

* Choose basic, conservative shoes that look clan and polished
* Neutral colors, like black, navy, or brown, recommended
* Must match conservative tone of suit
* Should have closed toe and heel
* If wearing heels, low heels recommended (2 ½” or lower)

TIES/BELTS

* Coordinator tie with suit and shirt
* Belt should match shoe color, no larger or flashy belts

WHEN TO WEAR IT

Q: When should I wear business formal?

A: Business formal is always the safest bet for an interview. Also wear business formal to the Career Fair if you are looking for full-time work or if you are a business student.

Q: What if I am overdressed?

A: It is much better to be overdressed than underdressed.

Q: When can I get away with NOT wearing business formal?

A: One instance is if the interviewer explicitly says to wear Business Casual, then you could do that. Another instance is if you don’t own a suit and cannon borrow one. In that case, just wear the nicest thing that you own (i.e. dress shirt, slacks, tie).

WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

* Men’s Business Formal
* Men’s Business Casual (Interview)
* Men’s Business Casual (Office)
* Women’s Business Formal
* Women’s Business Casual (Interview)
* Women’s Business Casual (Office)

THE RULE OF THUMB IS THAT YOU DRESS ONE OR TWO LEVELS HIGHER THAN THE JOB THAT YOU’RE APPLYING FOR.

INTERVIEW BUSINESS CASUAL

PANTS/SLACK/KHAKIS

* Pants should be tailored, not too tight
* Cotton, wool, or micro-fiber
* Darker=dressier; lighter=more casual
* NEVER wear jeans or cargo pants

SKIRTS/DRESSES

* Conservative pants, suits, skirts and dresses are all acceptable
* Skirts and dresses should be knee length
* A variety of colors and patterns are OK, but sold tones or subtle patterns are safer

JACKETS/BLAZER

* Sold Shade or subtle design
* Create more professional look
* Can be removed to create more casual look

TIES/BELTS

* Make a casual look more formal
* Belt should match show color; no large or flashy belts

SHIRTS/BLOUSES/SWEATERS

* Many choices are available, but use discretion when considering cut, fabric, or formality
* Long-sleeve button-down is more business-oriented
* Crisp, clean, and pressed
* Soft pastel colors and subtle patterns are recommended
* Should be well-tailored to fit without cling
* Avoid flashy, shiny or revealing looks
* NO t-shirts

SHOES

* Clean, polished, neutral tone
* Style and color must match outfit
* Should have closed toe and heel
* Avoid high heels (less than 2 ½“)
* Flats are okay, heels look more formal

GROOMING/ACCESSARIES

* Same as business formal

WHEN TO WEAR IT

Q: When could business casual be appropriate for an interview?

A: Business formal is always the safest bet for an interview. However, if the interviewer explicitly says to wear business casual, then you could do that. Also, business casual could be appropriate for internship interviews. If not sure, you could always ask the interviewer or call the employer’s office and ask the secretary

Q: What if I am underdressed?

A: If you are concerned about being underdressed, then wear business formal. It is much better to be overdressed than underdressed.

Q: Business casual is anything I would wear in an office setting, right?

A: Business casual for an INTERVIEW is going to be a step more formal than what might be appropriate business casual once you have the job/internship.

COMMON MISTAKES

* Too much makeup
* Messy hear/appearance
* Hair in front of eyes
* White/athletic socks
* Heels too high
* Difficulty walking
* Brightly colored heels
* Skirt too short

# **Interview Types**

PHONE INTERVIEW:

* Used often by employers as a screening tool. Usually 30 minutes.
* If asked to do a phone interview on the spot, it’s okay to say that you’re not able to talk at that time and you’d like to set a time when your class/work schedule is open.
* ACPC interview rooms can be reserved for phone interviews.
* Have your resume, job description, and transcript in front of you.
* Sound interested, speak clearly, and smile as you answer questions, it can be heard in your voice.
* Don’t have gum, food, or drink.
* Follow the interviewer’s lead in the conversation.
* If you did not hear or understand something, feel free to ask them to repeat it. If you are concerned that they are not hearing you, simply ask if they heard you.

VIDEO INTERVIEW:

* May replace on-campus or phone interview. Usually 30 minutes, may have more than one interviewer.
* May use Skype, InterviewStream, Polycom (in the ACPC), or the employer’s website of choice.

ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEW:

* Often an on-campus screening, 30 minutes, usually with a Department or HR representative.

ON-SITE INTERVIEW:

* Often occurs after a screening interview, but some employers prefer an initial interview at their facility.
* This can be a half day, full day or more. Some companies cover or reimburse travel expenses.
* This can include several mini-interviews: several one-on-ones with potential supervisors and colleagues, as well as meal, group, or panel interviews.
* NOTE: Some companies collect drug screening samples at on-site interviews, making job offers final only after passing a drug test, background and/or credit check.

MEAL INTERVIEW:

* This is *still* an interview. Treat it as such and be professional.
* Use manners, such as not speaking with food in your mouth.
* Remember your overall goal is not to have a good meal, it is to make a good impression, so order food that will not be messy to eat and do not delay the group while deciding your food order.
* Wait until everyone has their food to begin eating and finish with everyone else, even if you leave food on the plate.
* Keep your focus on the discussion while making sure you eat enough to sustain yourself. If that may be an issue for you, eat before the interview begins and keep a small snack with you if possible.

GROUP INTERVIEW:

* Grouped with potential coworkers, the interviewer will assess how you interact with others.
* Try to find a balance between standing back as a wallflower and dominating the conversation.
* Step up and engage, but show that you are willing to listen to others as well.

PANEL INTERVIEW:

* Usually with several interviewers, at least two people, and they will often take turns asking questions.
* Look each person in the eye as you answer and make the most eye contact with the person who asked the question. Look at each person throughout the interview.
* If possible, prepare enough questions to have one for each participant.

# **Tips for Video or Phone Interviews**

**Setting Up a Video Interview:**

**Check your background.** Do not sit in front of a window, bright light, or tv. Make sure that the background is professional and not messy. Sometimes a plain wall is the best option.

**Angle camera squarely.** Camera shot should be straight on or slightly down. The least flattering angle is a camera pointing up at you.

**Sit at an appropriate distance from the camera.** They want to see your face, but they don’t want to ONLY see your face. Think of a headshot: top of your shoulders, all of your head and a bit of background.

**Test your camera and microphone.** Make sure that the other end of the line will be able to see you and hear you properly.

**Have the right materials ready.** Have in front of you: your notes, job description, resume, pen/paper to take notes, prepared questions for company, and a small glass of water. Be sure to not read your notes aloud as the answer!

**Charge your laptop.** Make sure your charge is full.

**Setting Up a Phone Interview:**

**Check cell reception.** Before interview, make sure that the connection will be clear.

**Charge your phone.** Make sure that you have a full battery.

**Wear interview attire.** It will make you feel more professional and focused.

**Sit at a desk or stand.** Sitting at a desk will help you feel more professional. Standing will help you project your voice better.

**Answer the phone with enthusiasm and your name.** Such as, “Hello! This is Jennifer.”

**Smile as you answer questions.** It makes a difference in your voice.

**Sound interested.** Your tone of voice is the only nonverbal that the employer has to assess you on the phone. Use voice changes to show interest and enthusiasm.

**PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW:**

**Choose location wisely.** Pick a quiet, clean, well-lit location. No roommates or background noise. (Private interview rooms within the ACPC can be reserved.)

**Make a test call.** Ensure the connection/audio/camera all work properly. If using Skype or Google Hangouts, have a friend call you beforehand to check the connection. Check the volume.

**Dress professionally from head to toe.** You might have to stand up during the interview.

**Double-check time zones.** Ensure that you are planning for the correct time.

**DURING THE INTERVIEW:**

**Sit up straight.** Pick a chair that does not rock or swivel. Try not to move around too much; the video gets “fuzzy” for the interviewer if you do.

**Don’t stare at yourself.** Look into camera or at interviewer.

**Speak clearly.** If you are concerned that they are not hearing you, simply ask if they heard you.

**Ask for clarification.** If you don’t hear or understand something the interviewer says, feel free to ask them to repeat it.

**Convey warmth and personality.** Try to be as relaxed as possible, but remain professional.

**Follow the interviewer’s lead in conversation.** Try not to talk when the interviewer is talking. Pause a few seconds after the interviewer stops speaking to make sure (s)he is finished. (Note: Occasionally talking at the same time is a normal hiccup with this type of interviewing. If that happens, simply apologize and let the conversation move on.)

**Remain professional.** Never chew gum, eat, take another call, or text during an interview.

# **Interview Process**

**BEFORE:**

* DO RESEARCH! Research everything about the company, its current projects, its competitors, and the interviewer.
* Review interview types and practice answers to interview questions.
* Practice interviewing: online with InterviewStream or in-person at the ACPC with a Mock Interview
* Dress appropriately. Use minimal/no cologne/perfume.
* Avoid smoking before, and chewing gum, mints or cough drops during.
* Bring extra resumes (and your career portfolio if appropriate).
* Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
* Read company materials or review positive experiences from your resume.
* When the interviewer comes to get you, stand up, smile, and introduce yourself in a positive, courteous manner, give a firm handshake (without crushing the interviewer’s hand).

**DURING:**

* Convey optimism and enthusiasm, especially during the informal conversation on the way to the interview room. Many employers form a lasting first impression from the way you act during the first five minutes.
* Make good eye contact without staring at the interviewer.
* Use the interviewer’s name (use Mr. or Ms. and Last Name) during the interview.
* Listen to how you are speaking (not too quickly, not too slowly). Do not ramble or mumble. Use good grammar. Always “yes,” never say “yeah” or “yup” and try to avoid “uh” and “um.”
* Give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer; smile, nod, and look like a strong candidate.
* Do not put materials on the interviewer’s desk unless you are showing an example from your portfolio.
* Be honest and brief when answering questions, but provide enough detail to support your answer. Some interviewers say candidates can undersell themselves by being too brief.
* Answer negative questions with positive points.
* Use action words to describe KSAAs. Give detailed examples.
* **Be a STAR—Situation, Task, Action, Results**. Some employers use behavioral interviewing, e.g. “Tell me about a time when you led a team.” They want a specific example. In answering any question using STAR examples is much stronger; think to yourself, “Let me tell you about a time when I…”
* Ask questions that can’t be answered by the organization’s website. Write out several in advance in case some are answered during the interview. Start with position responsibilities, advancement opportunities; ask questions that would benefit the company.
* Ask about next steps, decision dates, permission to contact her/him, and phone or email preference.

**AFTER:**

* Write your thank you letters/emails to all involved in the actual interviewing process; send within 24-48 hours and briefly re-emphasize your strengths and highlight your qualifications.
* Evaluate the interview and debrief yourself, keep notes in an Excel file by company for future interviews.
* Review an interview evaluation (for OCI positions) with ACPC staff and/or do more mock interviews.
* FOLLOW UP! At three to five days after their stated decision date, contact the representative about your status. Plan your contact ahead of time to market yourself effectively, while making your call/email brief and concise.

Adapted from NACE Job Choices, interviewing articles, and ACPC employer feedback

**Interviewing is Key:**

**“Recruiters only spend an average of six seconds looking at a candidate’s resume. Congratulations, you have made it past the first six seconds. How do you now separate yourself from the other candidates?”-Alyson Davis, University Relations Specialist LORD Corporation**