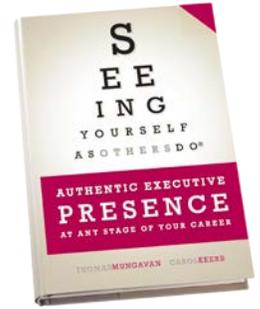


Executive Guidelines: Men's Clothing



Appearance forms perceptions very quickly. We can debate the accuracy of the perceptions but there is little debate that the impact is significant. Clothing expectations vary based on organization, industry, geographic location and position. Each of us must make a choice about how we dress and understand the implications of those choices.

A hundred years ago, executives wore suits to the beach and to play golf. Fifty years ago many executives were expected to wear vests and hats to work. Today the patterns are more causal and more widely defined. We meet with CEO's of companies in The Fortune 500 Companies list where they are wearing jeans. Others still wear the white shirt and red tie on most days.

“Business Casual” is not casual

The very casual attire tends to be seen on CEO's and other leaders who want to be more approachable. It is a nice try and not that effective. Our survey data tells us that most people do not want their CEO to wear jeans even if they want to wear jeans themselves.

Approachability

How one communicates and listens, as a leader, is the most impactful in terms of being approachable. More formal business dress to business casual dress is the range that most executives are most effective. Defining casual in the workplace is dynamic today. For the executive, it is more restrictive.

Executive Business Casual

In many organizations, business casual is a nice sport coat, no tie and a nice pair of loafers. Some keep a generic sportcoat in their office to use as needed. For others, wearing a nice sweater and tailored slacks is reasonable.

- ◆ Sport coats should be high quality and fit (like suits) - \$500 and up
- ◆ Slacks should be tailored (like suits) in conservative colors and plain or no pattern (gray, khaki, dark blue are good colors) - \$125 and up
- ◆ Simple, conservative design sweaters of natural materials - \$100 and up
- ◆ Sport shirts should be high quality, made of natural materials and starched - \$70 and up



Most companies expect suits for key occasions.

Preferred suit colors:

- ◆ Gray, black, dark blue (tan in summer) generally accepted
- ◆ Brown colors accepted in some areas of the country.

- ◆ In some organizations: a navy blazer with gray or beige trousers
- ◆ Suits should be made of top quality fabric with muted patterns.
- ◆ Good fit and cut are very important. Select suits that require the minimum tailoring and then be sure the tailoring results in a “custom look.”
- ◆ Expect to pay \$800 or more for a suit. Those that do recognize those that don't.

Shirts should be 100% cotton

- ◆ Quality cotton oxford shirts should be professionally laundered with heavy starch and on hangers.
- ◆ Safest colors are white and light blue. Solid colors and stripes are the next safest.
- ◆ Long sleeve shirts with a cotton undershirt are worn year-round.
- ◆ Collar style:
 - With single breasted suit: button down preferred
 - With double breasted suit: button tab preferred
 - Loose collars should lay flat or don't wear them.
- ◆ Size should be fitted without choking - two fingers in neck (when buttoned) should be comfortable. Expect to spend \$70 or more for a shirt.

Ties should be conservative and in natural materials

- ◆ Silk ties are preferred.
- ◆ Colors should blend well with the suit, socks and shirt.
- ◆ The tie length should reach the belt level.
- ◆ Conservative designs are best.
- ◆ Expect to pay \$50 or more for ties.

Shoes and socks

- ◆ Wing-tip or cap-toe shoes in conservative organizations are the rule. Loafers are acceptable in more informal organizations.
- ◆ One color shoes in black or cordovan are always appropriate (and brown shoes with brown suits). They should always be polished and in good repair.
- ◆ Sock color should match the shoes or the suit.
- ◆ Socks should reach the mid-calf so that leg does not show when sitting.

Accessories are noticed

- ◆ The plain leather belt should match the shoe color. The buckle should be simple and normally gold in color.
- ◆ One simple ring on each hand is the maximum.
- ◆ Cuff links are optional and appropriate.

- ◆ A simple gold watch is preferred. Other wrist bracelets are generally not desirable. Avoid other jewelry or pins (possible exception is company logo pin).
- ◆ Carry a quality pen with you. When not wearing suit coat - one pen in shirt pocket is acceptable. (Do not carry notes in shirt pocket.)

Grooming

- ◆ General cleanliness, trimmed nails, etc. are expected.
- ◆ Good business attire is suitable for most dinners and receptions.
- ◆ Conferences
- ◆ Normal business attire is assumed for most conferences
- ◆ Resort locations typically allow more casual dress
- ◆ Travel days generally are “business casual.”
- ◆ Weekend meetings generally are “business casual.”
- ◆ Golf games and other events require appropriate dress to that event. Top quality and conservative are the rule for such attire.

General Comments

It is almost impossible to discuss this topic without debate. There is typically either disagreement about the generalizations or about what the rules should be. The answer to almost all questions is to look at the organization and/or who will be making decisions based on their perception of you. What is your dress communicating to them? Is it what you want to communicate?

Ultimately, we get to decide what dress standard we use. Others get to decide what their assumptions are about you based on your dress choices. Many times it is an unconscious judgement, but a judgement non-the-less. Hopefully, this list will give you a starting point or some things to think about regarding dress.