WOMEN’S BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW ATTIRE

The Suit:

- Choose conservative colors such as black, navy, (gray, tan or brown in non-interview settings), in a flattering cut that is properly fitted.
- The fabric should be gabardine, a firm hard-finish durable fabric such as light wool, or rayon.
- Jacket should match skirt/pants.
- Suit should be a solid color, subtle pinstripes, or hound’s-tooth pattern.
- A business dress, worn with a jacket, or a tailored pantsuit are acceptable in less formal work environments. Skirt is more conservative & formal, more widely accepted. Also more accepted for 2nd or 3rd interviews. Wear a slip!
- Avoid wearing trendy lapels or buttons.
- Make sure the skirt length is just at knee or right below the knee.

The Blouse:

- Wear a neutral color such as white or beige; avoid bright colors and large prints. Cotton or silk. No lace.
- Long sleeved, collared blouse is more conservative. Shell tops are appropriate but less formal.
- Do NOT wear a low-cut, see-through, or tight-fighting blouse.

Make-up, Hair and Jewelry:

- Avoid bright colors and excessive amounts. Go light, fresh & natural looking.
- Light shades of lip coloring and nail polish (or clear) are recommended.
- Jewelry should be small and conservative. Only 1 ring per hand, maximum. Avoid costume jewelry.
- Earrings should be small studs or clip-ons with only 1 earring per ear. Remove jewelry from other piercings.
- Can be worn down as long as it is neat. Pull it back or style it to keep it out of your face. Not a distraction!
Shoes and Hosiery:

- Do not wear open toe or open heel shoes or heels higher than 2 inches. Shoes should match outfit.
- Your shoe color should coordinate with your ensemble and remain in the neutral zone, such as navy, black or taupe.
- Wear hosiery that is close to your skin color or is dark but transparent, NO tights. Bring extra pair & clear nail polish for runs.

DO DRESS FOR THE INTERVIEW, NOT THE JOB!!

GENERAL TIPS:

- Err on the conservative side. Go classic not trendy.
- If your interview attire/appearance speaks louder than you, you won't be heard. The louder your appearance is, the less attention the employer will pay to your capabilities, skills & experience.
- Practice good hygiene: brush teeth and wear deodorant.
- Make sure all clothing is clean, neatly pressed and coordinated.
- Keep perfume to a minimum; apply at least 2 hours before the interview. Best approach - don't wear it at all.
- Carry a briefcase or portfolio with copies of your resume. Women can avoid carrying a purse this way.
Specifics for Women's Business Casual

In general – casual skirt or slacks; cotton shirts in solids, tame prints, and plaids; sweater; low heels or other dress shoes; socks or stockings. A blazer can polish up your look for less casual situations.

Business casual is crisp, neat, and should look appropriate even for a chance meeting with a CEO. It should not look like cocktail, party, or picnic attire. Avoid tight or baggy clothing; business casual is classic rather than trendy. Khaki pants, neatly pressed, and a pressed long-sleeved, buttoned solid shirt are safe for both men and women. Polo/golf shirts, unwrinkled, are an appropriate choice if you know the environment will be quite casual, outdoors or in a very hot location. This may not seem like terribly exciting attire, but you are not trying to stand out for your cutting edge look, but for your good judgment in a business environment.

Pants / skirts:
Women can wear casual khaki or twill pants or skirts. Neither should be tight. Fabrics should be crisp; colors should generally be solid; navy, black, gray, brown and khaki are always safe bets. For the most business-like appearance, pants should be creased and tailored; neither extreme of tight or flowing. If you are pursuing a conservative industry and are in doubt, observe well-dressed women in your industry on the job, at career fairs, at information sessions, etc. Neatly pressed!

Skirt length and slits:
Your skirt should come at least to your knees while you are standing. While you are seated, your thighs should be covered. If your skirt comes to just below the knee, a slit to just above the knee might be acceptable. A very long skirt should not be slit to above the knee. Generally slits in the center back of a skirt — to facilitate walking and stair climbing — are acceptable. Slits to facilitate a view of your legs are not appropriate for business purposes. Slips should not be visible.

Shirt / sweaters:
In addition to tailored shirts or blouses, tailored knit sweaters and sweater sets are appropriate business casual choices for women, as are cardigans & polo/knit shirts. Cotton, silk, and blends are appropriate. Velvets and shimmery fabrics suitable for parties are not appropriate. Fit should not be tight. Cleavage showing is not appropriate to business and job search occasions.

Shoes / belt:
Low heels or other dress shoes. Leather or fabric / microfiber. Appropriate colors are black, navy and brown (to coordinate with your other attire and accessories); white and pastels are not appropriate. For the most conservative look, toes should be covered. Sandals which are neither extremely dressy or extremely casual might be appropriate. Thin straps and high heels are not appropriate. Chunky heels and platforms are not appropriate. Make certain you can walk comfortably in your shoes; hobbled in shoes that are pinching your feet does not convey a professional image.

Hose:
Highly Recommended.

Source: VA Tech Website
**Women’s Business Casual – Continued**

**Jewelry / accessories:**
Wear a conservative watch. Jewelry and scarf styles come and go. Keep your choices simple and leaning toward conservative. Avoid extremes of style and color. If your industry is creative, you may have more flexibility than someone pursuing a conservative industry.

**Cosmetics:**
Keep makeup conservative and natural looking. A little is usually better than none for a polished look. Nails should be clean and well groomed. Avoid extremes of nail length and polish color, especially in conservative industries.

**Purse / bag:**
If you carry a purse, keep it small and simple, or carry a small briefcase or business-like tote bag in place of a purse. A structured bag tends to look more professional than something soft or floppy. Purse/bag color should coordinate with your shoes. A briefcase is certainly not necessary for most business casual events. Leather, microfiber and fine wovens are appropriate. Canvas and straw are not appropriate.

**Cost / quality:**
You are not expected to be able to afford the same clothing as a corporate CEO. However, do invest in quality that will look appropriate during your first two or three years on the job for a business casual environment or occasions.

**Details:**
Everything should be clean, well pressed, and not show wear. Even the nicest khakis after 100 washings may not be your best choice for a reception. Carefully inspect new clothes for tags, and all clothes for dangling threads, etc. (as with interview attire). Dress conservatively & comfortably.

**Don't confuse club attire with business attire. If you would wear it to a club, you probably shouldn't wear it in a business environment. Also, most attire worn on television is not appropriate for business environments. Don't be deluded.**

- Solid colors work better than bright patterns.
- Opt for looser clothing; clothes should not be too tight.

Source: VA Tech Website