

UA CAREER SERVICES



# STYLE GUIDE

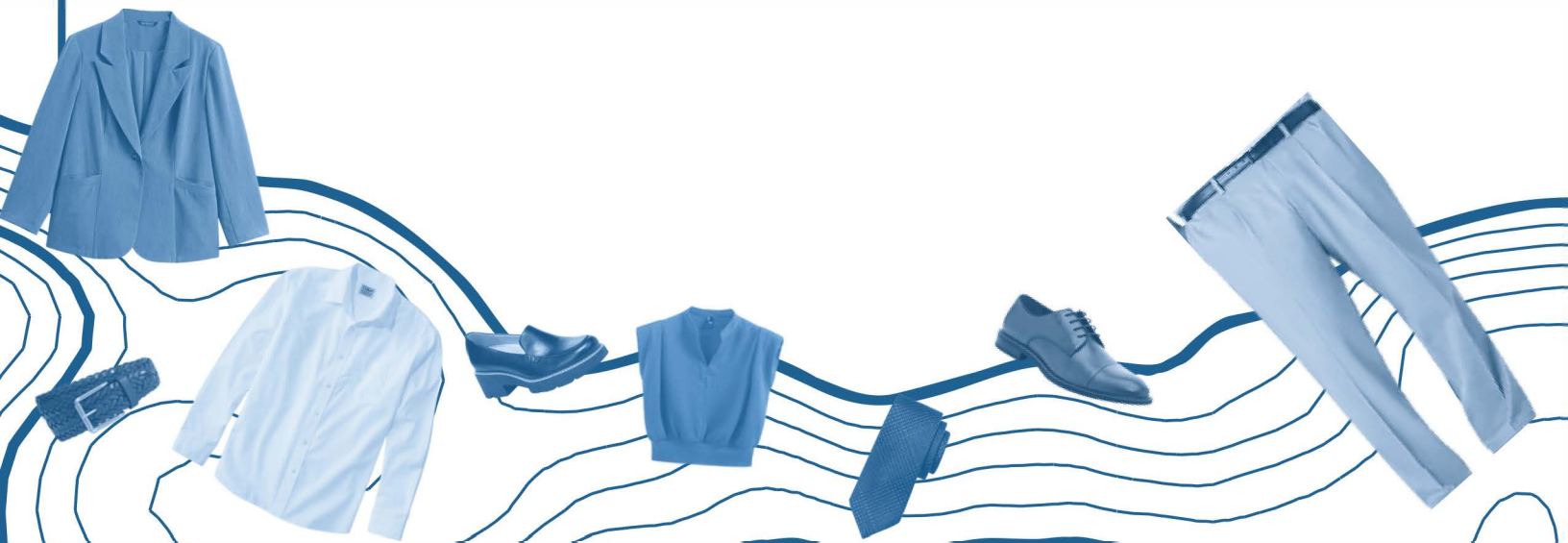
*Dressing for Success  
in the Workplace*



Written and designed by Mallory Durkin and Elvie Underwood

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Dressing for Success: Why It Is Important
2. Understanding “Professional” Attire Standards
3. Casual Attire
4. Snappy / Smart Casual Attire
5. What to Wear: Job Interviews
6. Business Casual vs Business Professional
7. Women’s Business Casual Attire
8. Men’s Business Casual Attire
9. Women’s Business Professional Attire
10. Men’s Business Professional Attire
11. Women in the Trades
12. Best Practices in Attire Choices (Dos and Don’ts)
13. Dressing for Weather in Alaska
14. Need Items to Complete Your Wardrobe?



# DRESSING FOR SUCCESS: Why It's Important

**Dressing appropriately can have an impact on your professional image and career advancement.**

Your outfit is often the first impression you make, and it can communicate your confidence, competence, and attention to detail. Whether you're attending an important meeting, a casual office day, or a high-stakes interview, choosing the right attire can set you up for success.

Networking and job interviews can be stressful enough - the last thing you want to worry about is what to wear!

If you are unsure about specific expectations, you can ask a recruiter, hiring manager or current employee about appropriate clothing. When in doubt, overdressing is preferred to underdressing.

# UNDERSTANDING “PROFESSIONAL” ATTIRE STANDARDS

**Business attire refers to the clothing worn in professional environments, from "casual" to "business formal."**

Understand expectations, decode terminology, and see sample outfits for different professional settings with this guide.

**Our guide categorizes attire by traditional gender norms, but we encourage individuals to wear what aligns with their identity, recognizing the diverse spectrum of expression beyond the binary.** Dress codes are guidelines, not limitations. Your authenticity is what truly defines professionalism.

“Professionalism” in regards to dressing is an outdated and confusing term - it varies by industry, has shifted over the years, is often unnecessary in increasingly virtual environment, and relies on standards rooted in Western, Eurocentric expectations.

Despite these terms the ambiguity of these terms, for certain industries or positions, understanding these terms remains essential as they persist in job descriptions, event invitations, and more.

**This guide aims to help clarify these terms and help students dress for success!**



# CASUAL

Casual attire is your everyday go-to for comfortable and relaxed clothing (avoiding anything with provocative images or text). Picture yourself in jeans, t-shirts and comfy sweaters, paired with easy-to-wear shoes. For certain jobs (like student jobs, seasonal work, etc.) casual attire may be the standard for daily work responsibilities.



**WEAR TO: Student Club Meetings; Class; Coffee with Friends**

# SNAPPY / SMART CASUAL

Snappy Casual attire elevates the standard from basic t-shirt and jeans, and bridges the gap between casual and business casual. Choices like slacks, khakis, or dark wash denim, paired with collared shirts or blouses create this polished look.

Collared shirts,  
blouses or sweaters

Slacks, khakis, or  
dark wash denim



Loafers, flats, or  
ankle boots

Avoid sneakers and  
casual sandals

**WEAR TO: Networking Events; Career Fairs; Info Sessions; Student Jobs**



# WHAT TO WEAR: Job Interviews

Navigating interview attire varies depending on the industry—whether it's the corporate world or a creative field, standards vary. **When uncertain, err on the side of overdressing.** Read online forums, talk to those in the field, and observe what current employees wear. If you are unsure, consult with a Human Resources representative or directly with the hiring manager. A good rule of thumb is to dress *one step more formal* than you will daily on the job.

Here are 6 examples of sample interview outfits that *could* be appropriate for more casual to more “professional” standards across a variety of industries:



1 construction or landscaping worker



2 office administration or other “office” worker



3 local community engagement coordinator



4 park ranger or conservationist



5 government, legal, or finance position



6 nonprofit organization administrative assistant

# BUSINESS CASUAL vs PROFESSIONAL

**Business casual** attire strikes a balance between formal business attire and relaxed, casual wear, maintaining a professional yet approachable look. This style is often the preferred standard in Alaska over business professional attire, but its appropriateness can vary by industry and company policies. When in doubt, it's advisable to err on the side of overdressing. Additionally, if unsure about the dress code for a specific occasion or workplace, it's always appropriate to inquire about expectations to ensure adherence to professional standards.

**Business professional** adheres to traditional norms suitable for conservative settings or companies with stringent dress codes, commonly found in industries such as accounting, banking, finance, government, or law. These garments should be fitted. Jackets and pants or skirts should match in color and fabric. Men are expected to wear a necktie. Dress shoes are essential, ideally matching your belt. Even if business professional is not the standard for daily attire at a job, it may be expected for an interview. Consult with current employees and/or the hiring team to clarify expectations.





# WOMEN'S\*

## BUSINESS CASUAL

Business casual attire is a professional dress code that blends elements of formal business attire with more relaxed, casual clothing. Typically, it includes collared shirts, blouses, or sweaters paired with dress pants or skirts, and closed-toe shoes.

Blouses, collared shirts,  
or sweaters

Dress slacks,  
trousers, or skirts  
(no shorter than one  
inch above the knee)



Flats, loafers, dress  
sandals, loafers

No jeans or leggings

Neutral nail polish  
and makeup

**WEAR TO: Networking Events, Some Job Interviews, Some Offices**

\*Our guide categorizes attire by traditional gender norms, but we encourage individuals to wear what aligns with their identity, recognizing the diverse spectrum of expression beyond the binary.

# MEN'S\*

## BUSINESS CASUAL

Business casual attire is a professional dress code that blends elements of formal business attire with more relaxed, casual clothing. Typically, it includes collared shirts, blouses, or sweaters paired with dress pants or skirts, and closed-toe shoes. Quick tip: business casual is business professional with one or more item removed (ex: a business suit with no jacket or tie).

Neutral nail polish  
and makeup



Tie not required

Match shoes to belt



**WEAR TO: Networking Events, Some Job Interviews, Some Offices**

\*Our guide categorizes attire by traditional gender norms, but we encourage individuals to wear what aligns with their identity, recognizing the diverse spectrum of expression beyond the binary.



# WOMEN'S\*

## BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

Traditional business professional attire typically includes tailored suits or blazers paired with coordinating trousers or knee-length skirts. Blouses with modest necklines or button-down shirts are standard, paired with closed-toe heels or dress shoes. Avoid heavy perfume and maintain a well-groomed appearance for an optimal first impression. Makeup or nail polish is optional.

Full suit with jacket and matching trousers or pencil skirt



Black or nude hosiery under skirt

Neutral nail polish and makeup



Pressed dress shirt, always tucked



Skirt length at or below the knee

Closed-toe flats or heels under 2.5 inches



Opt for a shoulder purse or tote, avoid backpacks or crossbody bags

**WEAR TO: Some Job Interviews, Some Offices, Some Conferences**

\*Our guide categorizes attire by traditional gender norms, but we encourage individuals to wear what aligns with their identity, recognizing the diverse spectrum of expression beyond the binary. We also acknowledge that "professional" dress varies by industry, has shifted over the years, and relies on standards rooted in Western, Eurocentric expectations.

# MEN'S\*

## BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

Traditional business professional attire typically includes a full suit in a classic color such as navy, charcoal, or black, paired with a dress shirt and a neutral tie. Trousers should be well-fitted and coordinate with the suit jacket. Closed-toe dress shoes in leather or a similar material are expected. Accessories should include a leather belt that matches the shoes and dark dress socks. Avoid heavy cologne and maintain a well-groomed appearance for an optimal first impression. Makeup or nail polish is optional.

Full suit with matching jacket & pants

Neutral, darker colors



Pressed dress shirt, always tucked

Plain or simply patterned tie

Dark leather belt & shoes of matching color (black or brown)

Dark colored dress socks

Neutral nail polish and makeup

**WEAR TO: Some Job Interviews, Some Offices, Some Conferences**

\*Our guide categorizes attire by traditional gender norms, but we encourage individuals to wear what aligns with their identity, recognizing the diverse spectrum of expression beyond the binary. We also acknowledge that “professional” dress varies by industry, has shifted over the years, and relies on standards rooted in Western, Eurocentric expectations.



# WOMEN\* IN THE TRADES

Acknowledging the challenges that accompany entering male-dominated environments, women and nonbinary individuals often strategically choose attire that commands respect while aligning with the demands of their roles. Many women take to online forums to discuss their experiences and give recommendations to others coming into their fields.

Prioritizing functionality, many women recommend opting for practical clothing and footwear that allows them to perform their duties effectively in the case of a “working interview” where a candidate is taken to a work site to demonstrate their skills.

In interviews, adhering to a “business casual” dress code often strikes the balance between professionalism, competence, and compatibility. Women may opt for long-sleeved, button-up shirts, well-fitting jeans in dark washes, or sturdy work pants. Long hair can be perceived as too casual or potentially hazardous so many women choose to tie their hair in a bun, braid, or ponytail. For other companies, business professional attire, including a full suit, is expected for job interviews.

When in doubt, speak to women in your profession, do online research, and speak with a Career Counselor!

**Below are 3 examples of outfits that women in a variety of fields have worn to job interviews.**



**1** On-the-job-inspired work attire, clean, sturdy clothes and shoes



**2** Snappy casual / business casual you can work in if needed, closed toed shoes



**3** More formal, traditional interview attire

\*Our guide categorizes attire by traditional gender norms, but we encourage individuals to wear what aligns with their identity, recognizing the diverse spectrum of expression beyond the binary.

# BEST PRACTICES IN ATTIRE CHOICES

## ✓ DO:

- Research industry norms for attire
- Choose matching colors, patterns, and accessories
- Wear appropriate, close-toed shoes
- Keep dresses and skirts no more than 1 inch above the knee
- Match your socks to your pants, and your belt to your shoes
- Make sure your hands are clean and well groomed
- Ensure undergarments can't be seen through your clothing
- Make a positive first impression
- Show off your personal style

## ✗ DON'T:

- Wear low-cut, skin-tight or revealing clothing
- Wear clothing with inappropriate messages or images on it
- Wear casual sandals, flip-flops, canvas sneakers, or UGG-style boots
- Wear cropped shirts or shorts
- Wear skirts or dresses with high hemlines (well above the knee)
- Wear sweats or pajamas
- Wear off-the-shoulder shirts or dresses
- Wear athletic clothing or shoes (including leggings and sneakers)
- Wear hats
- Wear visible undergarments

# DRESSING FOR WEATHER IN ALASKA

Living in Alaska comes with its unique challenges, including extreme weather exposure during your daily commute! It's always okay to dress for the weather and layer down once you are inside. Many Alaskan businesses may also be less formal than average, but don't automatically assume this is the case when interviewing or networking.





# NEED ITEMS TO COMPLETE YOUR WORK WARDROBE?

Check out the UAA or UAF Career Closets! The Career Closet is a place where students can find new and gently used professional attire for interviews, networking events, everyday wear for jobs, and more. The goal of the Career Closet is to remove financial barriers that may prevent students from looking and feeling their best during the internship and job search process!



- Suits
- Blazers
- Sweaters
- Shirts
- Pants
- Skirts
- Dresses
- Ties
- Belts
- Jackets
- Shoes
- Hygiene products



## & MORE!

