



## Tips for Deciphering Dress Codes

### Baseline casual

Baseline casual is the norm in super-casual offices. It's also standard wear for employees in more buttoned up workplaces on days when they'll be cleaning their offices, taking a client to a baseball game or attending the company picnic.

- **Men:** Denim, cotton or corduroy pants paired with knit or plaid shirts and casual shoes/accessories are appropriate baseline casual attire.
- **Women:** Baseline casual means denim, cotton or corduroy pants or skirts, knit shirts or cotton blouses, and casual closed-toe shoes and accessories.

### Mainstream casual

Mainstream casual is another word for your standard business-casual attire.

- **Men:** Wear higher-quality khakis, microfiber or gabardine pants with solid or subtly patterned pressed cotton shirts. Polo-style shirts and pullover sweaters are also appropriate. Finish the look with leather loafers and casual, coordinated accessories.
- **Women:** Wool, blend or manufactured fabric skirts or slacks, combined with coordinating blouses or tops, as well as sweaters, cardigans or contrasting vests. Top off the outfit with flat leather shoes and casual, coordinating accessories.

### Executive casual

Executive casual is the logical look for business owners and senior management -- basically formal business clothing with a relaxed attitude. Executive casual is the very dressiest of casual clothing, complete with luxurious fabrics and elegant tailoring.

- **Men:** Stick to high-quality fabrics. That means cuffed, lightweight wool trousers, long-sleeved, well-pressed shirts, fine-gauge sweaters, coordinated sports coats and blazers, woven leather loafers and high-quality accessories.
- **Women:** Wear high-quality pantsuits, silk or cotton blouses, fine-gauge cotton or silk shells, quality low-heeled pumps and high-quality accessories.

### Traditional business

Traditional business wear can be summed up (generally) in three words: suit and tie. Despite the popularity of business casual, the traditional business wardrobe is still very much alive, and most businesspeople occasionally need to dress in this traditional attire.

- **Men:** Men should wear wool suits in medium-to-dark colors, white or blue business shirts with a button-down or straight color, and quality ties, belts, shoes and jewelry.
- **Women:** Women have a bit more flexibility in traditional business attire. They can wear suits, tailored separates or tailored business dresses and look appropriate. They should layer with silk, knit and cotton blouses or fine-gauge sweaters and quality low-heeled pumps and accessories.

## **Boardroom attire**

Boardroom attire screams "I made it" to the outside world. Boardroom attire is made of the most luxurious fabrics, the best fit and the most exceptional accessories. It's standard for CEOs, and adopted by many second-level executives who hope to "dress for the job they want."

- **Men:** Wear only the highest-quality wool suits with pleated trousers and superior white cotton business shirts with straight collars. French cuffs are optional. You can show originality in your high-quality silk power tie and highest-quality gold or stainless steel watch or jewelry.
- **Women:** Clothing choices for women also are most traditional in this category. Women should wear the highest-quality suits in wool or silk, as well as the highest-quality silk blouses. Leather belts and silk scarves are optional, but be sure to wear the highest quality gold or stainless steel watch or jewelry.

SOURCE: Tips for Deciphering Dress Codes, By Laura Morsch CareerBuilder.com  
<http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/Careers/08/18/dress.code/index.html>

## **SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BUSINESS CASUAL DRESSING**

### **Business Casual Do's:**

1. Do remember that image matters, even on casual days. Keep neckline, hemline, and waistline modest and appropriate for work.
2. Do keep a basic suit jacket handy to lend authority when needed. Even jeans and a simple shirt can look authoritative when worn under a jacket.
3. If you're in a position of authority, wear well-made accessories to create additional impact on casual days. Leather, fine gems, silk scarves, etc., can all upgrade even the most basic outfit.
4. Casual doesn't mean sloppy. Make sure clothes are pressed, mended, and stain-free.
5. Always put business before casual. If it's casual Friday and you have a meeting with an important client, wear your regular business clothes.

## **Business Casual Don'ts:**

Don't assume business casual means the same as after-hours casual. T-shirts, shorts, and flip-flops do not belong at work, unless you're a lifeguard or run a food stand at the beach.

Don't jeopardize your credibility with clothing that's unsuitable for your position.

Your business clothing should always keep those around you focused on the work at hand. Exposed midriffs, thighs, and chests are inappropriate for work.

Clothing, accessories, or grooming that offers political commentary, extreme group affiliation, or other controversial topics are inappropriate for businesses. T-shirts or sweatshirts with sayings, jewelry with satanic symbols, or pink hair are all examples of off-putting attire.

Dress down doesn't mean anything goes. Attire that you'd clean house in, paint in, or clean out your garage in does not belong at work, unless you do those jobs for a living.

**SOURCE: Dot.Com Dress Reversal**, By Matt Krumrie; Employment Times November 30th, 2004  
[http://www.employmenttimesonline.com/career\\_advisor/article.php?ID=577](http://www.employmenttimesonline.com/career_advisor/article.php?ID=577)

# HAVE YOU CRACKED THE DRESS CODE?

## SOME STATISTICS

ITEM	SOURCE
<p>When it comes to looking for something to wear to work, nearly half of U.S. workers throw on <b>jeans</b> or whatever is comfortable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 42 percent of men and</li> <li>• 39 percent of women</li> </ul> <p><b>Business casual</b> is a close second choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37 percent of both men and women</li> </ul> <p>25 percent of workers and nearly 45 percent of recruiters say their employer has instituted "casual Friday,"</p> <p>Everyday is casual clothing day for 32 percent of workers and 25 percent of recruiters.</p> <p>26 percent of workers and 12.6 percent of recruiters say their employer never has "casual Friday"</p> <p>53 percent, of workers said their company did not have a dress code</p>	<p><b>Workers: Comfort Is Main Criterion For Attire</b>, By Kathy Gurchiek 11/2/06 (Survey responses to a June 2006 Yahoo! Hot Jobs &amp; Banana Republic "Dress in the Workplace" poll of 2,198 job seekers &amp; workers and 902 job recruiters).</p>
<p>A switch from a casual to a professional business dress code could result in an average 3.6 percent productivity gain for their company</p> <p>56 percent of senior executives say their companies maintain a business attire policy</p> <p>Of those companies with a business dress code, 19 percent have reinstated their policy within the past year.</p>	<p><b>Dress Code - US corporations reinstating business dress policies.</b> John Fetto American Demographics ("American Industry Dress Code Survey," - a national poll of 201 senior executives at companies with over \$500 million in annual revenue)</p>
<p>According to a 2000 survey by the Society of Human Resource Management, 87 percent of HR professionals polled said their companies offer the casual dress option one day a week or every day. In a similar SHRM study in 1992, just 63 percent of respondents said their companies offered casual dress codes.</p> <p>In a 1998 survey by USA Today, 64 percent of respondents said they work more efficiently when wearing casual dress.</p>	<p><b>Casual Dress - dress codes have relaxed as a result of the Internet age</b> - Training &amp; Development, Nov, 2000</p>



## SOME STATISTICS

ITEM	SOURCE
<p>A study by the Society for Human Resource Management found the percentage of employers who allow casual dress once a week declining.</p> <p>Another study found that the majority of people who work in an office environment must adhere to a dress code,  64 percent coming to work in business-casual attire and  26 percent allowed to dress far more casually.</p> <p>A 2005 survey by a California staffing firm found that 80% of professionals said a person's work attire affects his or her professional image.</p>	<p><b>Dressing down: Most readers back office dress codes</b> – Boston Business Journal July 14, 2006.  <a href="http://www.BostonBusinessJournal.com">www.BostonBusinessJournal.com</a></p>
<p>Of 215 responses to an online survey,  59 percent of respondents work in a company that has a business-casual dress code;</p> <p>26 percent have casual Fridays but are required to be dressier during the week;</p> <p>9 percent are required to wear a shirt and a tie; and</p> <p>6 percent work in an environment where shorts, T-shirts and sandals are fine.</p>	<p><b>Dress Business Casual In Summer,</b>  Memphis Business Journal - June 21, 2006</p>
<p>While the majority (55 percent) of respondents said their current office dress codes are business casual or casual, more than two-thirds are unsure about what to wear when asked to dress business casual.</p> <p>89 percent of respondents agree that workplace dress codes are more casual today than 10 years ago, but four of five, people (80%), do not think it is any easier to know what's acceptable to wear to work.</p>	<p><b>Survey: Workers confused over what to wear,</b> Dayton Business Journal - August 13, 2002 (<i>The survey was commissioned by the Center for Small Business in the College of Business Administration at California State University, Sacramento</i>)</p>

## SOME STATISTICS

ITEM	SOURCE
<p>There is little question that business casual, largely popularized by the dot-com craze in Silicon Valley, has permeated the workplace, with six in 10 (60%) employers allowing a dress-down day at least once a week, according to a 2006 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management.</p> <p>But a backlash is brewing: The number of employers allowing casual dress days every day has plunged from 53% in 2002 to a new low of 38% (in 2006).</p> <p>The mishmash of conflicting policies has created general confusion and a host of fashion faux pas.</p> <p>55% of employees consider tank tops and exposed undergarments the season's top work-wear mishap, according to an April survey by Monster, an online career and recruitment resource.</p> <p>Nearly 30% cited flip-flops, while just 8% were put off by Hawaiian-print shirts.</p> <p>The online poll got more than 18,000 responses.</p> <p>How employees look can affect how they're perceived:</p> <p>36% of respondents said those who dress casually are perceived as more creative, yet</p> <p>49% said they run the risk of being taken less seriously,</p> <p><i>(According to a survey by online job service TheLadders.com. The survey was conducted in August 2006 and included 2,243 executives).</i></p>	<p><b>Business Casual Causes Confusion</b>, By Stephanie Armour, USA TODAY</p>
<p>The way you dress at work does impact how you work – This was the overwhelming opinion of 78 percent of the 505 people who responded to the latest Business Pulse survey</p>	<p><b>Readers: Appearing successful impacts attitude and productivity</b>, Tampa Bay Business Journal - September 17, 2007. (Nonscientific weekly online poll designed to be a snapshot of what readers are thinking).</p>

# HAVE YOU CRACKED THE DRESS CODE?

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**Business Casual Causes Confusion**, By Stephanie Armour, USA TODAY, July 9, 2007  
[http://www.usatoday.com/money/workplace/2007-07-09-business-casual-attire\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/workplace/2007-07-09-business-casual-attire_N.htm)

**Business Casual Dress Codes - Have They Spiraled Out of Control? A Look at the Abuses of Business Casual Dress Codes**, By Jane Meyer, Mar 10, 2008  
[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/639927/business\\_casual\\_dress\\_codes\\_have\\_they.html?page=2&cat=31](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/639927/business_casual_dress_codes_have_they.html?page=2&cat=31)

**Business Casual: The New Dress Code**, by Pat Boer - Monster Career Advice  
<http://career-advice.monster.com/business-etiquette/Business-Casual-The-New-Dress-Code/home.aspx>

**Business Dress Code Basics: Adhering To Business Dress Code Policy** By Jamie Simmerman.  
[http://www.lifescrypt.com/channels/Beauty/Beauty\\_Details/business\\_dress\\_code\\_basics.asp?trans](http://www.lifescrypt.com/channels/Beauty/Beauty_Details/business_dress_code_basics.asp?trans)

**Cracking the Business Casual Dress Code**, by Mary Lou Andre 2007  
<http://career-advice.monster.com/business-etiquette/Cracking-the-Business-Casual-Dress-Code/home.aspx>

**Cracking The Dress Code**, By Dave Zielinski; Publication: Presentations February 10 2005  
<http://www.allbusiness.com/services/business-services-advertising/4249617-1.html>

**Dot.Com Dress Reversal**, By Matt Krumrie; Employment Times November 30th, 2004  
[http://www.employmenttimesonline.com/career\\_advisor/article.php?ID=577](http://www.employmenttimesonline.com/career_advisor/article.php?ID=577)

**Dress Business Casual In Summer, Memphis Business Journal - June 21, 2006.**  
<http://memphis.bizjournals.com/memphis/stories/2006/06/19/daily16.html>

**Dress Code - US corporations reinstating business dress policies.** John Fetto American Demographics  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m4021/is\\_2002\\_May\\_1/ai\\_88679443](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m4021/is_2002_May_1/ai_88679443)

**Dressing down: Most readers back office dress codes** – Boston Business Journal July 14, 2006

**Redefining Business Casual**, By Paul Burnham Finney October 23, 2007  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/23/business/23attire.html>

**Start Dressing Like A Pro**, By Roberto Rocha, Success Correspondent  
[http://www.askmen.com/money/successful\\_100/105b\\_success.html](http://www.askmen.com/money/successful_100/105b_success.html)

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**Survey: Workers confused over what to wear**, Dayton Business Journal - August 13, 2002.  
<http://dayton.bizjournals.com/dayton/stories/2002/08/12/daily10.html>

**What Is Business Casual?** Businessweek:Lifestyle By: Anne Field, June 9, 2005  
[http://www.businessweek.com/2000/00\\_44/b3705141.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/2000/00_44/b3705141.htm)

**Workers: Comfort is main criterion for attire, By Kathy Gurchiek** 11/2/06  
[http://www.shrm.org/hrnews\\_published/archives/CMS\\_019057.asp](http://www.shrm.org/hrnews_published/archives/CMS_019057.asp)