

THE INSTITUTE

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

WOMEN'S STYLE GUIDE

What you wear tells a story about who you are.

This is no different in professional settings. The goal is to express your personal style keeping the occasion and the conventions of professional dress in mind.

Use this Style Guide as a starting point for dressing appropriately for Institute events and other professional settings.

PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES

SMART CASUAL

Elevated everyday

Day dress • Top or Sweater •
Pants/J Jeans • Skirt

Classroom

BUSINESS FORMAL

Elevated professional attire

Structured dress •
Matching set (pant or
skirt)

Corporate environments;
High stakes job interviews

BUSINESS CASUAL

Casual professional attire

Dress • Pants • Skirt •
Blouse • Blazer or Cardigan

Big Meet, Roundtable,
Masterclass, Jobs Jamboree

BUSINESS SOCIAL EVENT

Semi-formal social attire

Cocktail dress • Maxi dress •
Skirt and blouse

Cultural events

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

Professional attire

Structured dress • Skirt •
Dress pants • Blazer

Presentations, Interviews

EVENING FORMAL

Formal evening attire

¾ to full length dress •
Evening colors

Etiquette Dinner,
Chancellor's gala



CASUAL



BUSINESS CASUAL



PROFESSIONAL/ FORMAL



FAQS

BUSINESS ATTIRE & MODESTY

Keep hemlines at or below the knee and necklines modest. Bare shoulders can be appropriate in professional wear, but should be covered in more formal settings.

SHOES

Choose classic closed toe styles such as pumps, 1-3 inch heels, or elegant flats.

JEWELRY & ACCESSORIES

Jewelry, watches, and belts can elevate an outfit and show off your personality. The more formal the occasion, the less your accessories should draw attention.

COLORS & PRINTS

Colors and prints can work well in business casual or business professional settings. The more formal the business setting, the more muted/neutral the colors and prints should be.

MAKEUP

For professional settings, choose neutral tones and subtle eye and lip color. For professional social events, more color and definition can be appropriate.

NAILS

Keep nails clean, either natural or polished. When wearing nail polish, neutral or muted shades are most appropriate for formal professional settings.

WARDROBE STAPLES

Neutral staples in solid colors or subtle patterns can be mixed and matched to create different outfits: a versatile dress that can be dressed up or down, slacks or trousers, a blazer, and a few blouses.



RESOURCES

COLOR ANALYSIS

Scan the code below for a helpful guide to learning about the colors that best match your skin tone:



FIND YOUR STYLE

Scan the code below for a helpful guide to finding your unique style:



BEST FIT

Scan the code below for a helpful guide to choosing clothing with the right fit, cut, and silhouette for you:



MAKEUP GUIDE

Scan the code below for a guide to wearing makeup in a professional setting:



WARDROBE ON A BUDGET

You do not need to build your entire wardrobe at once. Start with the core wardrobe and add to it over time. Prioritize fit, quality, and versatility over brands and trends. Remember, “Buy nice or buy twice.” Spend more on pieces you will wear often and expect to last, such as shoes and outerwear.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY RETAILERS

H&M

Affordable staples, dress pants, modern-fitting blazers.

UNIGLO OR ZARA

Mid-priced fast fashion. Good for items that are trending but worn occasionally.

OUTLET STORES

Good opportunity to find quality brands at discounted prices.

ROSS, TJ MAXX, MARSHALLS, & TARGET

Affordable basics and occasional quality finds.

J CREW

Look for seasonal sales.

SECONDHAND & RESALE

THRIFT & CONSIGNMENT SHOPS

Look for high-end items in affluent neighborhoods.

RESALE APPS

Use eBay, Poshmark, and Mercari to find premium brands at lower prices. Search by your measurements.

