

THE INSTITUTE

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

MEN'S STYLE GUIDE

What you wear tells a story about who you are.

This guide will help you develop the professional appearance and personal habits expected in the workplace. It provides a practical foundation for building a versatile wardrobe and presenting yourself with confidence, professionalism, and intention.

PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES

SMART CASUAL Elevated everyday Polo • Oxford shirt • Sweater • Chinos • Dark jeans • Loafers Classroom	BUSINESS CASUAL Casual professional attire Dress shirt • Chinos • Dress pants • Blazer • Cardigan • Dress shoes • Tie optional Big Meet, Roundtable, Masterclass, Jobs Jamboree
BUSINESS Elevated professional attire Suit • Dress shirt • Tie • Dress shoes Corporate environments, Presentations, Interviews	FORMAL Formal attire Dark suit or tuxedo • Dress shirt • Tie or bow tie • Dress shoes Etiquette Dinner, Chancellor's gala



SMART CASUAL



BUSINESS CASUAL



BUSINESS



FORMAL



GOLDEN RULES OF STYLE

PRIORITIZE FIT OVER BRAND

A \$150 tailored suit looks significantly better than a \$1,000 off-the-rack suit that bags or drags.

THE SHOE-BELT MATCH

Align the color of your shoes with your belt. Dark brown shoes offer the highest color flexibility.

DRESS FOR YOUR INDUSTRY

Gauge your office style. Tech favors business casual; finance and law require business professional.

WEAR THE RIGHT SOCKS

Wear mid-calf dress socks that match your trousers. No skin should show when you are seated.

KEEP IT WRINKLE-FREE

Invest in a budget handheld steamer or iron. Wrinkles instantly ruin the look of a sharp outfit.

MASTER THE BASICS

Learn to tie a tie, shine your shoes, and properly care for your clothes.

STAY WELL-GROOMED

Keep your hair clean and styled and keep facial hair clean-shaven or well-groomed.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Fitness improves how your clothes fit and how you feel in them.



THE CORE WARDROBE

SUITS

Two tailored, two-button suits in navy blue and charcoal gray.

SHIRTS

Three 100% cotton, button-down, long-sleeved, collared shirts in solid white and light blue.

TIES

Two conservative silk ties in solid colors, simple stripes, or small micro-patterns.

TROUSERS

Two pairs of flat-front chinos or smart ankle trousers in navy, olive, or khaki.

SHOES

One pair of dark brown leather Oxford or Derby dress shoes.

BELTS

Leather belt that matches the exact shade and finish of your dress shoes.

SOCKS

Wear dark dress socks that match your pants.

“Clothes do matter, but in the big scheme of things they are superficial to the personality and moral standing of the person wearing them.”

— LEN LOGSDAIL, MASTER TAILOR



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, modern-fitting blazers, trousers, and dress shirts.

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. Their chinos and cotton oxford shirts are top tier.

SECONDHAND & RESALE

THRIFT & CONSIGNMENT SHOPS

Look for high-end suits in affluent neighborhoods.

RESALE APPS

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

