

What's your dress IQ?

Duff Watkins and Jean Woo

Got style? Know everything about good business dress?

Answer these 7 questions and find out!

True or false?

1. **A charcoal grey or navy suit with a plain white shirt and small pattern tie is appropriate for a man attending a job interview.**
2. **Standard shirt collars are dressier than button down.**
3. **Accountants who dress down are wise because it creates rapport with their casually dressed clients.**
4. **Managers should wear jackets even on 'Jeans for Genes' days.**
5. **The shoes you wear to work are as important nowadays as they were last century.**
6. **In terms of job roles, you should dress for where you want to be, not where you are now.**
7. **People are more productive in casual clothes.**

What the experts say

1. True. This is classic male business wear for a reason: it communicates trustworthiness. Unless you are in an artistically creative role, departing from this classical look entails risk, ie, you can blow your credibility, fast!

2. True. Forget what you've heard, read or think, button down is more casual. The buttons originate from the sport of polo and kept the collar tabs from flapping into the faces of the horse riding players. Hence, button down is casual. That's why you don't see button down collars at a formal black tie event. Some smart dressers won't even wear one with a double breasted suit.

3. False. Clients prefer accountants who look like accountants not swingers. Traditional formal business wear, ie, suit and tie, communicate the professionalism that people seek in their accountant. As always, the issue is credibility. If your image does not mesh with your words, the client won't buy.

4. True. Jackets denote formal authority for both genders, but especially for women. In one study, 85% of observers assumed that a woman who was not wearing a jacket was junior to her counterpart who was wearing a jacket. So wear your jeans in support of the day – but keep your jacket on if you're exercising authority as a Manager.

5. True. Shoes are the most persuasive socio-economic indicator that you wear. For centuries our language has used shoe metaphors to convey messages about status, eg, 'down at the heels', 'best foot forward', 'shoe on the other foot.' To convey the right signals, your shoes must be in excellent condition and appropriate for the situation. For a corporate environment, it's a simple choice between lace ups or slip-on shoes.

6. False. This is a common misconception. To follow this suggestion strictly is absurd and probably counter-productive. You think your boss won't notice that your threads are better than theirs? The objective of 'dressing above' your current role is to allow others to visualize you in a more senior role. But use common sense. Dressing like the CEO when you're a management trainee will backfire, send you broke, and convince people that you lack judgment. Instead, observe how your *direct* superior dresses – then consider emulating their level of dress.

7. False. We hear this lot. An awful lot. But there is no reliable evidence that casual dress increases productivity. In fact, there is far more evidence to the contrary. For example, one study of Fortune 500 companies reported that 70% of CEOs claim that casual dress at work *reduced* productivity. This finding correlates with our research. We've yet to find a company claiming improved productivity through the adoption of casual dress.

Scoring

Number correct

- 7 Congrats! You should be appearing in this magazine instead of reading it.
- 6 Excellent! Go to the head of the class.
- 5-6 Good. You're heading down the right path, probably in well shined shoes.
- 2-3 Fair. You're stumbling down a path, possibly towards unemployment.
- 1-2 Poor. You're eligible for a federal subsidy for the stylishly challenged.
- 0 Congrats! You should be appearing on Total Makeover instead of viewing it.

641 words

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