



What is your dress IQ?

Think you know about good business dress? Answer these questions to find out. By *Dr Duff Watkins* and *Jean Woo*.

TRUE OR FALSE?

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

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

1 TRUE – Forget what you've heard, the button-down collar is more casual. The buttons originate from polo, where they kept the players' collars from flapping into their faces as they galloped about on horseback. That's why you don't see them at black tie events. Some smart dressers won't even wear one with a double-breasted suit.

2 TRUE – This is classic male business wear for a reason: it communicates trustworthiness. Unless you are in an artistically creative role, departing from this look entails risk with the result that you could blow your credibility.

3 FALSE – Clients prefer accountants who look like accountants, not swingers. Traditional formal business wear communicates 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 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 his or hers? The objective of dressing above your role is to allow others to visualise you in a more senior role. But use common sense – dressing like the CEO when you're a trainee will send you broke and convince

others that you lack judgement. Instead, observe how your direct superior dresses, then consider emulating his or her level of dress.

5 FALSE – There is no reliable evidence that casual dress increases productivity. In fact, there is more evidence to the contrary. For example, one study of Fortune 500 companies reported that 70 per cent of CEOs claim casual dress at work reduced productivity.

6 TRUE – Jackets denote formal authority for both genders but especially for women. In one study, 85 per cent 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 a manager.

7 TRUE – Shoes are the most persuasive socioeconomic indicator you wear. For centuries our language has used shoe metaphors to convey messages about status, such as "down at the heel", "best foot forward", "shoe's on the other foot". To convey the right signals, your shoes must be in excellent condition and appropriate for the situation. +

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