

Fashion in the workplace

A survey reported that what you wear in the workplace can be important for your salary and your career.

1 Are these items of clothing usually formal, informal or both? Compare your answer with a partner.

a suit	a tie	jeans	a smart jacket	trousers
a dress	a skirt	a casual jacket	a T-shirt	sweatshirt

2 Look at the extract from a report and guess the correct figures. Scan paragraph one to check your guesses.

- (a) **68% / 86%** of people believe that how you dress can help you to get promoted
- (b) **50% / 75%** of recruiters think that how you dress influences your job and salary
- (c) **57% / 25%** of people are happy to buy a new set of clothes for a job interview

Dress to impress

How important is fashion in the workplace? A survey about dress code in the office confirms that what you wear is very important. 68% of interviewees believe that how employees dress at work affects their chances of promotion. 75% of recruiters think that how you dress for work affects both your job and salary. Imagine you are going to an important interview. Do you buy a new outfit? Over half (57%) of those people who took part in the survey would buy a completely new wardrobe. Similarly, people 'dress to impress' in order to get that dreamed-of promotion.

Clearly, how you present yourself sends signals about your attitude to work. Do you present yourself smartly – short hair, tidy nails? Do you avoid using too strong perfume or after-shave? There are 'career coaches' willing to charge you a fee for advice on fashion at work. The best advice from these 'image consultants' is: take care how you dress.

Think about investing in high-quality clothing – such as a smart jacket. Conservative styles are always best. The biggest crime for men seems to be wearing jackets and trousers which are too long; and for women – a skirt or trousers which are too tight.

Yahoo! ran a survey and discovered that 82% of those questioned are employed in less formal workplaces where it is sometimes quite difficult to decide what is appropriate: 'smart casual'? A suit or jeans? Overdressing seems to be better than dressing down, and even in a casual culture it pays to look professional. That means – no torn jeans! In a more formal, corporate environment, a casual suit is simply not appropriate. However, in a creative environment, you can afford to dress ... creatively. For men, that might mean matching a jacket with jeans, and for women, clever use of accessories such as jewelry or an eye-catching handbag. So the answer is: 'Dress for success'. Dressing well can, it seems, give you confidence and boost your self-esteem.

3 Read the whole article. What kind of advice do 'image consultants' offer about dress in the workplace?

4 Mark the following words from the article N (noun), V (verb) or N / V (both a noun and a verb).

survey	present	promotion	advice	coach	interview	invest
consultant	recruiter	dress	boost	impress	success	signal

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report back your findings to the class.

- (a) Is there a 'dress code' in your workplace? If so, what is it? Do you follow it?
- (b) How important do you think dress is at work? Do you think it influences salary and promotion?
- (c) Can you add any further advice to the ideas given by the 'image consultants' in the article?