



Style coach

When going for business casual, don't dispense with the formality entirely

What does business casual mean?

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Formal business wear is like a uniform. With business casual clothes your personality shows through more, which can make it difficult to get right.

People who are very neat and classic often struggle with business casual because they feel better in something more structured.

Conversely, people who are very laid-back often get business casual wrong because they wear things that are just not appropriate for work, such as T-shirts with slogans or logos, combat trousers or sports watches.

Don't think of business casual as being cheaper and quicker. Your clothes still need to be of good quality and they still need to be clean and pressed, well co-ordinated and flattering. You should spend as much money, time and effort, on a business casual wardrobe as you would on a business formal wardrobe. It is the fabrics and colours that are different, rather than the quality.

If you wear a jacket, it might be brown

needlecord rather than navy wool. If you wear a suit, it might be sand-coloured brushed cotton rather than a dark "City" suit. You can be more creative with colour, so you need to think about what colours suit you.

The exact interpretation of business casual will vary between organisations but there are some basic do's and don'ts. Generally, smart separates will suffice, maybe with an open-collared shirt.

You can mix and match items but you still need to have co-ordinated accessories. You will not normally have to wear a tie but most of the time a jacket is appropriate, even if you take it off as soon as you sit down.

Sports trainers are out but smart leather trainers in brown, black or tan are OK. A nice smart brown lace-up would be even better.

Keep to the same weight of fabric as you would for business formal clothes. Chunky jumpers are not appropriate, nor are heavy boots or large belt buckles.

Look at what the people in the know are wearing — and if you are not sure, remember that it's always better to err on the side of formality.

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