

Dress Codes and Style Management

(Ladies)

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"Grooming" is a broad term encompassing several aspects of one's being. Polished professionals are the most valuable asset for any organization.

In the last issue Suneeta Kanga discussed the dress codes for gentlemen. Here she speaks on the best ways for lady executives to present themselves in the corporate world.

Dress Codes and Style Management for Women

Women's dressing varies vastly with age, inclination and occasion that it is impossible to generalize. However the look should favor quality and understatement. Researchers comment that what people think about us is decided within the first three minutes of a meeting. This makes dressing an important business tool. Proper presentation takes preparation and knowing the rules of the game. Be sure you not only know the rules, but have the right "uniform" as well. Make sure the message you send is a message of success. Here are some tips that will help you "Dress For Success".

Clothes

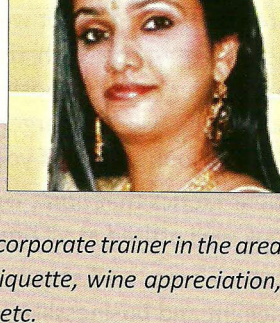
- Owning classic clothing and accessories is better than what is "in" fashion.
- Wear simple well-cut suits or dresses rather than ultra trendy ones. Try to break up your suits so that they can be combined to create several outfits.
- The outfit that seems to be the most popular amongst recruiters is the traditionally cut, medium-range wool suit (black, dark navy, or dark gray), white silk blouse, and skin-toned panty hose.
- It is also appropriate to pair a dress with a matching jacket.
- If you must wear a pantsuit, wear one

Accessories

- Belts should match the color of your shoes and handbag.
- Always wear coordinated jewellery.
- Pearls are forever and diamonds are a girl's best friend.
- Coordinate the metals. i.e. do not mix gold with silver and platinum with pearls.
- Nose studs may be worn but nose rings do not look smart.
- Pins or brooches if worn on a jacket should be small and compliment the neckline.
- Necklaces should be a narrow band in gold/silver/white gold with or without a small pendant.
- A pearl necklace looks very elegant. Make sure that the earrings compliment the necklace.
- Avoid long chandelier earrings and heavy necklaces.
- One or two bangles/bracelets/kada should suffice.
- Rings enhance the well manicured look, do not wear too many of them.

Shoes

- Always wear good shoes.
- Colors can be coordinated with your outfit.
- The shoes should be the classic stocky-heeled, closed-toe pumps preferably in conservative colors such as black, navy, deep brown or gray.
- The heel on the shoe should be about 1 1/2 to two inches high.
- Do not wear dark stockings, tights with light shoes.
- Tights should be toned in with the skirt and shoe color. (To prevent a ladder from increasing, apply a blob of nail paint and allow to dry.)
- If you wear open toed sandals/chappals, go in for minimal patterns not flashy and with a low heel.
- Platforms are not graceful.
- Black sandals go well with Western and Indian outfits. They could be heeled or flat according to your convenience.



Suneeta Sodhi Kanga is a corporate trainer in the area of grooming, international etiquette, wine appreciation, fine dining, beauty and style, etc.

She started her career as air hostess with Air India and was declared Miss World Airlines 1989 and has flown as VVIP hostess with prominent personalities such as Prime Ministers, on official foreign visits. She started her own consultancy for grooming and beauty, while also launching a slew of Ayurvedic beauty products. She has a very exclusive client list which includes prominent blue chip Indian and MNC corporates and is a regular speaker at various seminars and discussions in educational and other institutes on the subject of good grooming and etiquette. She contributes regularly to journals like *Sommelier on wine tasting and appreciation*, and *rediff.com* in this missive addressed to the young upwardly mobile corporate executive, Suneeta dwells on the need to create an 'aura' around you that speaks of culture, education and upbringing without saying a word!

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with a jacket that falls below the waist in a conservative color such as black, navy, or grey. A more 'safe' general guideline is that the jacket covers the hip area. Short jackets with pants sometimes accentuate the figure or figure flaws too much,

- For an average person, it is much more important that you look your best in a style that is appropriate for your lifestyle and body type than it is to have the latest label.
- This works for all body types. Wear clothing that fit properly. Squeezing into a smaller size does not make you smaller. It makes you look like you have gained weight and didn't buy clothing that are the right size.
- On the flip side, wearing baggy, bigger clothing in an attempt to hide things does not work either. You just make yourself look sloppy and larger. Don't buy what you wish you looked good in, but what really does compliment you.
- Clothes should not be too short or sexy. They should not hug the figure or reveal too much. "Cover all bases" with a matching skirt, jacket, and pants that can be dressed up or down with a white shirt or silk blouse.
- Underwear should not show and underwear lines are an absolute taboo.
- Choose colours like navy blue, beige, grey, cream or brown. When in doubt wear black and white, as you can never go wrong with these classic colors. Things to remember while choosing the colours for your office attire: You will look larger with light and bright colours. You will look smaller if you wear dark colours.
- Wear fabrics that don't wrinkle or crush fast so that you look well attired at all times.
- Cotton saris, well starched and neatly pinned, gives an elegant and businesslike look to a woman.
- A plain crepe or a basic silk sari is an absolute necessity for any wardrobe. You'll be neither under-dressed nor over-dressed in a crepe sari. Your silk sari could be heavy or basic depending on the occasion.
- Salwar suits are great for all occasions – informal, formal or grand. Equip yourself well; these garments are feminine, elegant and professional too.
- Scarves or duppattas should be draped smartly and neat.

Accessories

- Wear matching, unshowy accessories, which tone in with the outfit.
- Make an effort to change accessories with your clothes.
- You can mix and match and create an illusion of owning many outfits.
- A smart pair of sunglasses adds a lot to your style other than protect your eyes.

- And yes, a manicure and pedicure are a must too.

Handbags

- Carry a matching handbag and belt to complete the look. A classic, no-nonsense, black handbag is a must. It should be big enough to carry basic belongings like your wallet, make-up kit, deodorant and some work-related stuff.
- Handbags should not be overstuffed and excessively large.
- They should be slung over the shoulder or carried in the hand purposefully.
- When you are seated put the handbag on the ground to your left for easy access.
- Do not keep the handbag on your lap.
- Do not fidget with the zips and the flaps.
- You may sling it on the backrest of the chair.

Watches

- A slim delicate watch with either metallic or leather strap should suffice; it doesn't necessarily have to be an expensive watch, just a simple, classy one that goes with anything.
- Slim black straps are in.
- And Roman numerals always look elegant.
- Go-go watches or gents watches do not look good.

Bindis And Tikkas

- If you are wearing an ethnic outfit like a salwar-kameez/saris a small bindi/tikka in teardrop, oval or round shape enhances the face.

Handkerchiefs

- Handkerchiefs, if carried must be small dainty, clean and not stained.
- Never hold a kerchief in your hand. Use it discreetly and put it away in your pocket or handbag when not in use.

Essentials

- Carry a powder compact, lipstick and a brush for quick touchups whenever required.
- Always carry tissues in the handbag safety pins alcohol rubs/wet wipes,

Band-aids, a mirror, an extra pair of tights and emergency money.

The Western Professional Look Basic Wardrobe Should Have :

- Two skirts (straight and flared)
- Two classic pairs of trousers in dark colours
- Two solid colour blouses (one pastel and one bright)
- One pin striped blouse.
- One white shirt (Crisp, clean, fresh.)
- Two simple shirts
- One solid colour blazer
- Shoes and accessories like scarves, jewellery, belts, handbags etc.

The Indian Professional Basic Wardrobe Should Have :

Salwar Suits :

For all occasions-informal, formal or grand. These garments are feminine, elegant and professional too.

Duppattas should be compact, draped smartly and neat.

Saris :

Cotton saris, well starched and neatly pinned, gives an elegant and businesslike look to a woman.

A plain crepe or a basic silk sari is an absolute necessity for any wardrobe. You'll be neither under-dressed nor over-dressed in a crepe sari.

Some Don'ts

- Don't wear skirts with slits higher than the knees.
- Don't wear clothing and short skirts.
- Don't wear tight sweaters or skirts.
- Don't wear see-through, wrinkled or dirty clothes.
- Don't wear clothes that are fading.
- Don't wear large chunky jewellery.
- Don't wear bindis with western outfits.
- Don't wear salwar suits with big duppattas.
- Don't wear scuffed shoes.
- Don't wear torn stockings.
- Don't wear clothes in need of repair.
- Don't wear deep necklines.
- Don't wear very high heels.

Your silk sari could be heavy or basic depending on the occasion.

Kurtis:

These can be in cotton or crepe. Should be worn over formal pants.

Wear small prints and sophisticated colours.

Corrective figure dressing for women

SMALL FIGURE:

To appear taller, focus on an elongated upper body.

Cuts like Empire lines, Princess and A- lines along with necklines such as Deep V's, Horse shoe and Scoops work well.

Single colour co-ordinates in neutral shades like black, white, beige, etc., in pastel shades, small all over prints and linear patterns.

Soft flowing fabrics like Crepe. Chiffon and Voile.

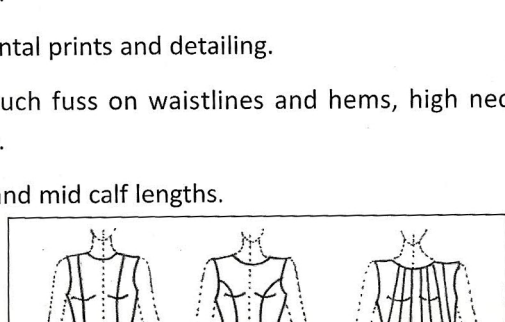
Vertical detailing such as embroidery or buttons from neck to hem create an illusion of height.

AVOID:

Horizontal prints and detailing.

Too much fuss on waistlines and hems, high necks and collars.

Knee and mid calf lengths.



TALL FIGURE :

To make upper body look proportionate to long legs, choose a plain bodice and details like embroidery / braiding, etc. to break the skirt area.

Low waist lines, pleats, tiers, trumpets, flares and pockets break the skirt area.

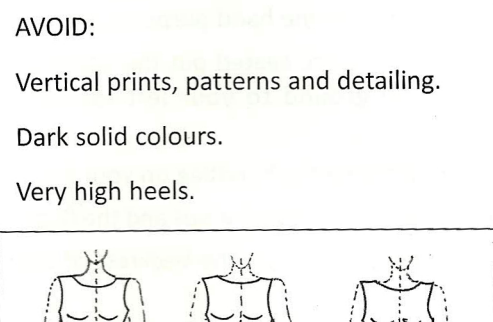
Contrast in solid colours, horizontal patterns, prints and neck details like off-shoulder, broad collars and wide necklines.

AVOID:

Vertical prints, patterns and detailing.

Dark solid colours.

Very high heels.



ANGULAR FIGURE :

This figure type is normally what could be regarded as "Thin" or "Skinny". It is also the type of figure that is perfect for "High Fashion".

Opt for curved lines, cowls and drapes in soft drape fabrics.

Light and bright colours, bold prints.

High necks like Chinese as well as rounded

necks.

Layered clothing (i.e. 3 or more pieces.)

AVOID :

Very structured and tailored garments with sharp cuts.

Bare / square necklines.

Geometrical prints.

Clingy fabrics.

FULLER FIGURE :

Y-SHAPED (Broad shouldered. Fuller busted also known as the continental figure.)

PEAR SHAPED (This is the most common figure type. Hips are wide and heavy.)

Select clothes which flow away from the body.

Subtle vertical stripes / patterns as well as vertical detailing like Princess seams, front opening create longer lines.

To disguise :

- BIG BUST : Loose straight cuts which fall straight from bust down. (A- Line.)

- BROAD WAIST : Keep front of the garment smooth (without details and not pinched in at the sides.)

- WIDE HIP : Wear dark narrow bottoms. Loose long tops which fall below the hip-line.

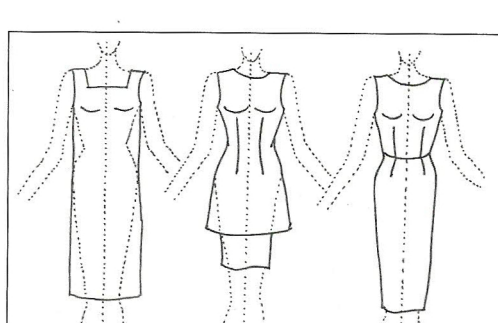
AVOID :

Fitted looks in clinging fabric, satin and lame, which highlight the body lumps.

Excess detailing and big bold prints.

Frills and gathers.

Broad belts.



Dressing for the occasion :

FOR AN EVENING FUNCTION :

Dark and "Jewel" colours like aquamarine, maroon, black, blue, etc. look elegant. Colours like beige and off white also look sophisticated.

Fabrics should be silks, chiffons, crepes, georgettes, lurex, stretch knits often with a slight sheen.

The right accessories are very important.

FOR A DAY FUNCTION :

Light colours like pastel shades, muted greys, sand, mint green, etc. are appropriate.

Fabrics like silks, crepes and even high quality cottons and cotton blends, linen, etc. are appropriately embellished and textured.

The surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that it has never tried to contact us.

-Bill Watterson, Calvin and Hobbes