

When Business Meets Casual...

What two words stop corporate workers in their tracks? Business casual.

While you may love the flexibility of not having to wear a suit every day, you still find yourself dumbfounded by what is and isn't appropriate office wear.

Because there aren't any hard and fast rules for business casual, you have to understand the subtleties of looking relaxed yet professional to make it work.

So put those suits in the back of your closet and get ready to get dressed!

Here are some of our tips on how to do it well:

No jacket "required"

Now that you're no longer constrained by a business suit, having a jacket on hand can still be a lifesaver. If you have an unexpected meeting or simply need to assert yourself at a staff meeting, adding a tailored jacket to your knit top can give you the added confidence you want.

There's no sloppy in success

The biggest misconception about business casual dressing is that it means the same thing as casual dressing. You're not hanging out on a Saturday afternoon, you're at work so you still need to dress the part. This means no wrinkled shirts or torn pants, no clingy, short skirts.

While most companies don't have a specific "do" list when it comes to appropriate attire, there are always plenty of known don'ts. Make your biggest fashion "do" common sense when it comes to dressing for work. You still want to be perceived as a professional, and that's next to impossible when you come to the office in ripped jeans and a midriff top.

Power in the details.

Just like when you're planning your outfit for a night out, it's important to pay attention to the details when dressing for the office.

One of the easiest ways to "dress up" a casual ensemble is to add some accessories-think pins, scarves, hair accessories and tasteful jewellery. And never forget how easily the right shoes, belt or a sensible handbag can pull it all together.

Don't bring the street into the office.

You've been eyeing that trendy see-through blouse for weeks and now it's finally yours. You can't wait to wear it to work. Stop right there. Even if an item of clothing sparkles on the rack it doesn't mean it will shine in the workplace.

There are loads of clothes out there that are great for a Friday night-micro-mini-skirts, see-through anything, glittery anything, bold patterns-but all wrong for casual Friday. Unless you want your new nickname to be Erin Brockovich, keep your low-cut, see-through, shiny, tight, and leopard print clothes on hand for dates instead of morning meetings.

Pushing the limit

While it's always a good idea to take things to the next level in business, the opposite is true when it comes to pushing the envelope in what's appropriate for business casual. When you're at work, you want to present a professional appearance.

If you're wondering whether or not you can "get away" with wearing something, you probably can't. Even if your office is casual, it's best to stay conservative at work so that you're taken seriously.

