

De-Coding: DRESS CODES 101

Quick Guide To Dress Codes And What They Mean For Him & Her

If your invitation says...

CASUAL

Casual is basically a non-dress code, and you can wear comfortable clothing.

FOR HIM:

Think Homer Simpson. Tee shirt, jeans and sneakers are appropriate. You may also opt to step it up a notch with khakis, cargos, a polo shirt or henley and still fit in just fine.

Tip: Avoid inflammatory or otherwise offensive graphic tees!



FOR HER:

Pull out your favorite jeans! You can opt for a comfortable tee or dress things up a bit with a stylish top, jewelry or even a blazer. Depending on the nature of the event, your footwear can range safely from sneakers to heels to boots.

Tip: For outdoor events, sneakers are better as heels can sink into soft ground!

BUSINESS CASUAL

Business Casual is what many people would typically wear to work at the office.

Wear a pair of nice khakis paired with a polo shirt or other collared shirt. Dress shoes or loafers are appropriate.



Tip: Avoid the wrinkles; iron your shirt and pants! Patterned collared shirts are a nice option for a less dressy feel than their solid counterparts.

Dress pants or khakis with a fashionable top is appropriate. A casual skirt is also an option. Feel free to dress up your outfit with heels, jewelry and/or accessories if desired.



Tip: Wear your hair in your everyday style, and avoid overdoing it with makeup or perfume.

SMART CASUAL

Smart Casual (or dressy casual) is basically a combination of casual, business casual, and business dress codes, where you can combine them into a "smart" ensemble.

This is your opportunity to pair denim with a sport coat. Khakis, trousers, vests and ties are other great options to bring into the mix.

Tip: If opting for jeans, your denim should look somewhat dressy, fresh and sharp with no wear or holes.



It's safest to go with nice slacks or a skirt, though you could also wear a nice pair of dark jeans dressed up with a collared or otherwise dressy top. Throw on a blazer for an extra touch of class.

Tip: For Smart Casual, you should look sharp, stylish and neatly put together.

BUSINESS/INFORMAL

Informal attire may be a misnomer as it does call for a bit of formality (not to be confused with Casual attire). Business and Informal attire is more sophisticated than Smart Casual, often signaling the need for suits, ties and dresses.



Wear a business suit with tie. You may also opt for nice slacks with a sports jacket and tie.

Wear a business suit or business style dress with heels (high or low).



Tip: For Business and Informal dress codes, stick to business colors: black, navy blue, gray or brown.

SEMI-FORMAL

Semi-formal attire is more fancy than business attire but just a notch below formal tuxedos and fancy gowns.

Wear a dark suit with long tie.

Tip: The more formal the dress code, the less expression you are allowed in determining your attire options; this is particularly true for men.



This is the perfect time to break out that little black dress. Most women will wear a classy short evening dress, though you may also opt for dressy separates.

Tip: Ladies should avoid very short dresses and skirts that are shorter than 1 inch above the knee.

FORMAL / BLACK TIE / BLACK TIE OPTIONAL

Formal, Black Tie and Black Tie Optional events are among the most fancy of all dress codes, and you will likely be surrounded by a crowd full of tuxedos and floor-length gowns.

Wear a tuxedo with all the frills (vest/cummerbund, cufflinks, etc.). For Black Tie Optional, you may also opt to wear a black suit with white shirt and conservative tie.

Tip: A Black Tie dress code does not necessarily limit you to only "black" ties, but you may opt for a black tux with any matching tie/cummerbund color of your choosing.



You are safest wearing a long, floor-length evening dress. A very fancy dress that is not floor-length may also be appropriate.

Tip: Wear your hair in an elegant updo or partial updo, and put on fancy jewelry for this occasion.

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