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### "Look the Part: What to Wear, from Head to Toe"

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Wasn't dressing for law school easy? If it was moderately clean, you wore it. It didn't matter if you were wearing sweats or shorts, T-shirts or tank tops. You weren't trying to impress anybody with anything but your brain.

Now you're officially a grown-up, with a job, a paycheck and a student loan note weighing down on you every month. Among the more confounding things about entering the workplace is what the heck you're supposed to wear, particularly since your wardrobe for the past seven years (including undergrad) has consisted mostly of denim and fleece. Tragically, those staples aren't going to get you far at the firm.

Fortunately for men, the world of business fashion has given them a pass. Dark suit, light shirt, silk tie. It's only when they try to comply with "business casual" that they start fumbling.

But what we're concerned about here is the womenfolk, for whom work attire represents a veritable minefield. Do you wear a skirt suit or pantsuit? Heels or flats? It's enough to make you go back for your LL.M.

If you haven't already given your closet a close inspection, now is the time to do it. You may not yet have the skills and years under your belt to exude genuine confidence, but if you can look the part, you're halfway there.

Although I am most certainly not a badge-carrying officer for the fashion police, I'm asked wardrobe questions frequently enough that it seems worth passing on some simple suggestions:

- **Think classic.** Unless you have Anna Wintour for a client, save the couture for after-hours. You want your work attire to walk that fine line between impressive and so impressive it distracts.
- **Dress just a bit nicer than you have to.** If the dress in your office is "business casual" and you'd be laughed at if you showed up in a suit, make sure your duds are "spiffy" business casual, not "casual" business casual. Remember, you haven't been around for 20 years and you don't (yet) have any war stories about that time you closed a \$360 million deal that almost fell through but for your tenacity and creative genius. You're still trying to convince those who assign you work that you mean business and can be taken seriously, so dress like it.
- **Opt for quality over quantity.** Expensive clothes cost a lot for a reason—they fit better and evoke a more professional appearance than their cheaper counterparts. When you're shopping, take your time and eye each piece for the details: high-quality fabrics, in the garments themselves and the lining; well-made buttonholes; meticulous hems (which should be invisible from the outside of the garment); securely sewed-on buttons, snaps and hooks; and smooth seams. If you can't afford to shop at the higher-end stores, browse them to learn the earmarks of well-made clothes. You can then take that trained eye to bargain stores or consignment shops.
- **Be colorfully conservative.** If you're unsure of what colors you can get away with, start out with the basics: navy, black and charcoal. Taupes are also nice. You might want to wait a while before you break out the emerald green pantsuit or the fire-engine-red dress.
- **Make sure the shoe fits.** It's funny. Some women don't care what they're told to wear on the top 90 percent of their bodies, as long as nobody dictates what they have to put on their feet. If you're the Carrie Bradshaw of the Southwest and nothing stops you in your tracks like a pair of \$600 Manolo Blahniks, go ahead and wear what makes you happy. Just make sure your toes look nice (although something tells me you already spend a meaningful percentage of your

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income on pedicures). If you're not a shoe fetishist, though, and you just want to look professional, you might try a loafer pump, which is a snazzled-up, higher-heel version of the penny loafer.

- ***Sweat the small stuff.*** A bang-up wardrobe will go unnoticed if the rest of the package is grungy. Get an expensive haircut by somebody who knows what he's doing. If you wear jewelry, buy the good kind. Invest in a high-end briefcase. And keep your fingernails manicured and not so long that they would be confiscated by security.

Presenting a professional image is as much for you as it is for those you're trying to impress. And—short of actually knowing what you're doing—nothing instills confidence in others like exuding it yourself.