Determine Proper Business Workplace Attire

Unit: World of Work Skills

Problem Area: Demonstrate Employability Skills

Lesson: Determine Proper Business Workplace Attire

■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1 Describe stated and/or unstated company dress code policies.

2 Explain how to dress appropriately for a professional business environment.

3 Explain how to dress appropriately for a business casual environment.

■ **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

"Casual Dress Code," *The Business Research Lab.* Accessed July 30, 2008. <http://www.busreslab.com/policies/goodpol2.htm>.

Cullen, Lisa Takeuchi. "What (Not) to Wear to Work," *Time*, May 29, 2008. Accessed July 30, 2008. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1810301,00.html>.

"Fashion Challenge Quiz," *What Not to Wear, TLC*. Accessed July 30, 2008. <http://tlc.discovery.com/fansites/whatnottowear/cotton-quiz/savvy-shopper-quiz.html>.

"Dress for Work Success: A Business Casual Dress Code," *About.com: Human Resources*. Accessed July 29, 2008. <http://humanresources.about.com/od/workrelationships/a/dress_code.htm>.

Fox, Sue. *Business Etiquette for Dummies*, 2nd ed. Wiley, 2008.

"NBA Player Dress Code," *NBA.com*. Accessed July 29, 2008.
   <http://www.nba.com/news/player_dress_code_051017.html>.

"What Not to Wear to an Interview," *CareerBuilder.com*. Accessed July 30,
   2008. <http://www.careerbuilder.com/JobSeeker/careerbytes/
   CBArticle.aspx?articleID=462&cbRecursionCnt=1&cbsid=
   ae7a61c6768e48d9841ea1fd2e4620e6-272496402-
   ww-6&ns_siteid=ns_us_g_what_not_to_wear>.

■ List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ➤ business casual clothing
- ➤ company culture
- ➤ corporate casual clothing
- ➤ dress code
- ➤ professional attire

■ Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

Gather six to eight magazine cutouts of people dressed for work in a variety of attire (e.g., business attire, business casual attire, and casual attire). If using a projector, prepare a slide show with the same idea. Show each image, and have students record their thoughts about the each person based on dress. For example: Where does this person work? What job or occupation might this person have? What position does this person hold in the organization? Is the dress professional, business casual, or casual?

When all images have been shown, debrief as a class. Show each image one more time, and ask each student to relate thoughts about each image. Ask students who have jobs to share the dress code policies they adhere to at their places of work. Allow the discussion of images to lead into the lesson.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Describe stated and/or unstated company dress code policies.

Anticipated Problem: How can people recognize and comply with company dress code policies?

I. Company dress code

    A. Companies differ in their expectations and requirements for employee attire. A **dress code** is a set of guidelines provided to employees that outlines appropriate work attire and is usually sensitive to the amount of contact employees have with customers. Therefore, lots of customer contact equals formal work attire. Dress down days ("Casual Friday") may include jeans and other more casual clothing but nothing that would be potentially offensive to colleagues and clients. Dress codes are generally of three types:

        1. Professional work attire (formal business dress)

        2. Business/corporate casual (comfortable but professional)

        3. Casual (informal)

    B. Sources of company dress code policy

        1. Employee handbooks usually include a section on employee dress code with examples.

        2. Interview discussions with managers usually include specific company dress code policies. When no company dress code is addressed during the hiring discussion, new employees are encouraged to ask about any stated and/or unstated policies.

    C. Dress like the boss/supervisor and/or colleagues

        1. In the absence of an explicitly stated (written) dress code policy, employees should dress like their boss/supervisor.

        2. New employees can get a good sense of dress by observing the **company culture** (the standard and acceptable behavior, including dress, within a particular company). Asking other employees or superiors specifically how to dress for the environment shows care and concern for the newly acquired position.

        3. Regardless of the dress code, employees should always be well groomed (e.g., clean hair, hands, nails, teeth, and no body odor—especially when working directly with customers).

    D. Partial or full uniform

        1. Some companies supply full employee uniforms.

2. Other companies provide guidelines for specific clothing to be worn on the job. For example:

   a. Different uniforms may be given for different occasions, as for the military.

   b. The company may provide a polo shirt with the company logo, and the employees may be responsible for the purchase of dark slacks.

   c. A restaurant may provide front-of-the-house aprons, but the dining room employees must provide their own white shirts and black slacks.

> *Use LS–A to review dress codes and to reflect on an existing dress code for the National Basketball Association. The instructor may also choose to have students review two Web sites that discuss what not to wear to work: <http://www.careerbuilder.com/JobSeeker/careerbytes/CBArticle.aspx?articleID= 462&cbRecursionCnt=1&cbsid=ae7a61c6768e48d9841ea1fd2e4620e6- 272496402-ww-6&ns_siteid=ns_us_g_what_not_to_wear> and/or <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1810301,00.html>.*

Objective 2: Explain how to dress appropriately for a professional business environment.

Anticipated Problem: What is appropriate professional business dress?

II. Professional business attire

   A. ***Professional attire*** generally means that men and women wear suits. The same general rules for professional office wear apply to men and to women. A solid business wardrobe is an investment in the future, and the following guidelines are based on professional business attire recommendations from a consultant.

   B. General color guidelines associated with a professional image

     1. Gray (conservative)

     2. Black (polished and chic)

     3. Navy (trustworthy)

     4. Red (assertive)

     5. Women should complement these professional color choices with pastels and ivory and avoid loud or shocking prints.

     6. Men should complement these professional color choices with unique ties, pocket squares, and belts.

   C. General hygiene guidelines

     1. Excellent personal hygiene is essential.

     2. Men are encouraged to use after-shave after hours only.

     3. Women may wear light fragrances.

     4. Details are important.

       a. Well-groomed and manicured nails

       b. Neat hair

      c. Polished shoes

      d. Well-fitting clothing

      e. Appropriate hosiery (for women no runs; for men, the color and weight should complement the suit or slack)

      f. No heavily logoed clothing in the business workplace (tends to appear cluttered)

D. Men's guidelines

  1. Men should wear a conservative navy, gray, or black suit (solid or pinstripe). The quality of the material is important to a professional look, and the jackets should be large enough to button.

  2. Solid white or blue long-sleeve shirts (silk or silk-like fabric) should be worn. The more color and pattern on a shirt, the more the focus is on the person rather than the person's professionalism.

  3. Ties of silk or silk-like fabric are preferred. Cartoons and animated characters should be avoided on business ties.

  4. Men should wear socks at calf-length or above, and the socks should match the suit.

  5. Shoes should be conservative, clean, and polished. Laced shoes are preferred over slip-ons in corporate settings. Flip-flops and sandals are not acceptable.

  6. Belts should coordinate closely with shoes.

  7. Jewelry should be kept to a minimum: watch, wedding band, and perhaps a college ring.

  8. Acceptable accessories include a briefcase and a fine pen. Ballpoint pens from area businesses should not be used.

E. Women's guidelines

  1. A skirted suit or a pants suit is the most conservative look. Women may opt for a professional dress in lieu of a suit, but most dresses should be topped by a jacket. Jackets should be able to be buttoned.

  2. Skirts should be knee-length or slightly above or below the knee. Skirts that are too short or too long should be avoided.

  3. Slacks should break at the top of the foot or shoe, but Capri pants may be appropriate in some work settings.

  4. Blouses and sweaters should complement the suit or pants and should have appropriate necklines and waistlines for business settings.

  5. Neutral or flesh-tone hosiery should be worn in business settings. Keeping an extra pair of hose at the office is recommended.

  6. Shoes should be low heel and conservative, not flats or high heels. Open-toed and backless shoes are not business attire, and sandals are not acceptable.

  7. Jewelry should be minimal: one ring per hand and one earring per ear. Jewelry that clinks or makes noise (e.g., multiple bangle bracelets and long, chandelier earrings) should not be worn.

  8. Accessories should be structured. For example, a woman may use a small to medium-size briefcase, a handbag, and a conservative pen.

Objective 3: Explain how to dress appropriately for a business casual environment.

Anticipated Problem: What is appropriate business casual dress?

III. Business and corporate casual

A. ***Business casual clothing*** is a dress code that typically allows for slacks, skirts, or dresses with a button-down or collared-top. Jackets and ties are usually optional with a business casual dress code.
   1. Men wear collared shirts (or turtlenecks) and slacks without jackets or ties.
   2. Women wear slacks or skirts with blouses or sweaters and without jackets. Typically, no jeans or T-shirts are worn in a business casual environment.
   3. Clothing should be neat and clean without any frays or tears.
   4. Shoes should be closed-toe, unless the business specifically allows the wearing of dressy sandals.
   5. Revealing clothing (including back, stomach, and chest) in any workplace situation is unacceptable.
   6. Jewelry should be tasteful and minimal.

B. ***Corporate casual clothing*** usually implies elements of both the professional and the business casual attire in a dressy context.
   1. More jersey, silk, and synthetics replace cotton and wool.
   2. A typical outfit would be a dressy shirt or a blouse and dressy, tailored slacks.

Use VM–B to review appropriate business casual dress. You may also use the "Cotton Quiz" as a review of business casual dress at http://tlc.discovery.com/ fansites/whatnottowear/cotton-quiz/savvy-shopper-quiz.html.

■ **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle.

■ **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheet to apply the information presented in the lesson.

■ **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

■ Answers to Sample Test:

Part One: True/False

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. T

Part Two: Short Answer

1. Answers will vary but should resemble the following response: When no stated (written) dress code policy is available, a new employee could ask a manager or other employees how to dress for work; dress like the boss; or observe the company culture and model the attire worn in the specific environment.
2. Answers will vary but should include a response similar to the following: To be well groomed at work, an employee should have clean hair, hands, nails, and teeth and no body odor.

Part Three: Completion

1. company culture
2. uniform
3. well groomed
4. business casual
5. professional attire

Name _____

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▶ Part One: True/False

Instructions: **Write T for true or F for false.**

_____1. Companies have a stated or an unstated dress code.

_____2. A business casual dress code allows employees to wear jeans.

_____3. Studying company culture is one way to determine how to dress appropriately in the workplace.

_____4. Brushing your teeth before going to work is optional.

_____5. In a professional business setting, men usually wear ties.

▶ Part Two: Short Answer

Instructions: **Complete the following.**

1. In the absence of a dress code policy, how might an employee determine how best to dress for work?

2. Describe an employee who is well groomed.

▶ Part Three: Completion

Instructions: **Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.**

1. The standard and acceptable behavior in a company, including dress, is called _____.

2. A company may supply or require a partial or full _____ that is required work wear.

3. Having clean hair, hands, nails, and teeth (and being free of body odor) are indicators that an employee is _____.

4. A(n) _____ dress code typically allows for slacks, skirts, or dresses and button-down or collared-tops without jackets and ties.

5. Typically _____ means that both men and women wear suits; men should wear a tie.

PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS ATTIRE REVIEW

General	
Color guidelines	Essential hygiene guidelines
Gray	Men's fragrances
Black	Women's fragrances
Navy	Hair
Red	Shoes
Women's complements	Clothing
Men's complements	Hose
	Heavily logoed clothing

Men's guidelines	Women's guidelines
Suit	Skirted suit or pants suit/dresses
Shirt	Skirts
Ties	Slacks
Socks	Blouses and sweaters
Shoes	Hose
Belts	Shoes
Jewelry	Jewelry
Accessories	Accessories

SAMPLE COMPANY DRESS CODE: BUSINESS CASUAL

The goal of business casual clothing is to create comfortable at-work clothing choices for employees while projecting a professional company image to clients.

Appropriate work choices	Inappropriate work choices
Slacks and pants (similar to Dockers®) made of natural fabrics (e.g., cotton or wool)	Sweat pants, spandex exercise or bike shorts, bib overalls, leggings, or short-shorts
Dresses and skirts in which you can sit comfortably in public (slightly above, at, or below the knee)	Mini-skirts, sun-dresses, and spaghetti straps
Casual, dress, and polo shirts, sweaters, and turtlenecks	Tank, halter, backless, and midriff tops; sweatshirts
Most suit or sport jackets	Hooded sweatshirts or windbreakers
T-shirts worn under a blouse, shirt, jacket, or dress	Shirts with words, slogans, or images potentially offensive to colleagues and clients
Company-logo, team, fashion-brand, or university clothing	Beach, yard, exercise, or sport-event clothing
Pressed, clean, and tidy clothing	Wrinkled, dirty, or torn clothing
Conservative athletic, loafers, dress heels, closed-toed, boots, flats, walking shoes (Closed-heeled shoes may be required in some manufacturing settings.)	Bedroom slippers, flip-flops, or open-toed shoes
Jewelry, perfumes, and colognes in good taste; limited visible piercings	Overuse of jewelry, perfumes, colognes; extreme and visible piercings and tattoos
No hats or head covers in the professional workplace (other than those worn for religious or cultural purposes)	

Note: In general, clothing that is too revealing (back, chest, feet, stomach, or underwear) should not be worn in a place of business.

Disclaimer: This is a sample policy only and is intended for the purpose of guidance and discussion only. Please seek additional guidance and input from local, state, government, and federal sources.

Name _____

NBA Players Have Dress Codes, Too

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to examine the dress code policy for NBA players and to generate an individual reaction based on the information.

Objectives

1. Examine the dress code policy for NBA players.

2. Utilize writing skills to convey the information learned as well as your personal reaction.

Materials

♦ lab sheet

♦ writing utensil

♦ paper

♦ copy of the NBA dress code policy at:
   <http://www.nba.com/news/player_dress_code_051017.html>

Procedure

1. Read the NBA dress code policy.

2. Highlight the requirements and exclusions that are most interesting to you.

3. Write a five-paragraph essay, using the following guidelines:

   ♦ Paragraph 1: Write an introduction to the essay.
   ♦ Paragraph 2: Discuss the NBA dress code requirements, highlighting those you find most interesting.
   ♦ Paragraph 3: Discuss the NBA dress code exclusions, highlighting those you find most interesting.

♦ Paragraph 4: Give your personal opinion of the NBA dress code policy in general. Is it good? Is it fair? What, if anything, would you change? Be specific about the changes you would implement.

♦ Paragraph 5: Give a brief summary of the essay, touching on points from each paragraph. Conclude with a statement that describes why you believe the NBA has this dress code policy.

4. Discuss your essay with the class.

5. Turn your essay in to your instructor.