



Instructor's Guide

BUILDING THE RIGHT WARDROBE

Every outfit sends a message. This video shows how to send the right one at the appropriate time — without breaking the budget. Topics include the functional and social characteristics of clothes; the concepts of style and fashion; planning a wardrobe that accommodates work, school, and leisure; and shopping for value and price.

This program correlates to all applicable National and State Educational Standards, including the NCLB Act.

Building the Right Wardrobe is part of the series *On Your Own: Independent Living Skills*. The series includes:

- Finding an Apartment
- Managing Your Money
- Practical, Healthy Cooking
- Shopping Smart
- Housekeeping How-Tos
- Building the Right Wardrobe

Program Overview

Chapter 1: WHAT TO WEAR

Chapter 2: STYLE AND FASHION

Chapter 3: BUILDING YOUR WARDROBE

Chapter 4: SHOPPING FOR CLOTHES

Chapter 5: THE ESSENTIALS

Chapter 6: KEEP BUILDING YOUR WARDROBE



4. What are some guidelines for people who wear uniforms to work?

5. What is "business casual"?

6. How casual is "casual Friday"?

Review — Instructor's Key

1. What are some wardrobe basics for your first job?

- For women working in offices that require dressier attire, start with a classic dark suit (brown, black, navy, or gray) that comes with both a skirt and pants. Dress it up with a scarf or a bright shell; mix and match suit jackets and sweaters with different skirts and pants; a crisp white button-down blouse is always important. Buy two pairs of good, quality shoes — a black pair and a brown pair.
- For men working in offices that require dressier attire, buy a good suit, and have a salesperson make sure it fits properly. A gray suit, white dress shirts, and black dress pants are staple. In a more relaxed office, a navy blazer, oxford-cloth shirt, khakis, and even polos are acceptable.
- For men and women, it's better to invest in a few high-quality pieces in a basic style rather than several cheaper (or trendy) outfits.

2. What if you can't afford to buy expensive clothes before getting your first paycheck?

- Women can put together suit look-alikes from separates
- Men can get by with a blazer and khakis
- If you're an office worker, get a suit as soon as you can — even if the dress code is business casual

3. How can you determine what is appropriate for your new job?

- Take dress code cues from top people in the office
- If there is no written dress code, you can follow the lead of the person who interviews you, and other workers, to see how formal or relaxed they dress
- Even in a more relaxed office, you'll probably need a dressier outfit for meeting with clients or your company's top executives
- Dress for the job you want — if you accept an entry-level job and are not expected to dress up, but are aiming for a more professional spot, dress as those professionals do

4. What are some guidelines for people who wear uniforms to work?

- Make sure your outfit is clean, neat, and wrinkle-free
- If you're expected to wear a uniform (or a white top with black pants), make sure you have multiple quantities on hand. Your clothes will last longer, and you'll always have something clean to wear.

5. What is "business casual"?

- For men: khakis and a polo shirt; olive drab or black slacks with long or short-sleeved shirts; loafers or lace-ups ... with socks!!
- For women: khakis with a nice sweater; avoid anything that "shows too much personality" (shiny fabrics, glitter, sparkly beading); avoid low-cut or midriff-revealing tops; avoid faddish styles

6. How casual is "casual Friday"?

- It's best not to stray too far from your regular professional wardrobe
- No jeans, tee-shirts, or sneakers
- Follow "business casual" guidelines
- Check your schedule to make sure you don't have a meeting that requires a dressier look, even if it is Friday

7. Can you dress professionally and still express your individual style?

- Men or women can wear dress shirts and blouses in different colors
- Women can pair a patterned jacket with a plain skirt
- Shoes can be more "fashion-forward" than the rest of your wardrobe
- Whether you are preppy, artsy, or all business, check your current wardrobe for pieces that can be incorporated into your new professional look

8. What are some guidelines for assessing your current wardrobe?

- Discard or donate anything you haven't worn in the past year
- Discard anything that shows wear and tear
- Discard or donate anything that doesn't fit properly

9. What are some guidelines for shopping?

- Stay within your budget
- Invest in classics that won't go out of style next year
- Shop sales, especially end-of-season sales
- Shop online or from a catalog
- Shop at specialty stores where staff will help you with fit and style
- Try to buy items that work on their own (such as a dress), or that can be worn with something already in your wardrobe; don't count on being able to match up an unusual item later
- Unless you're planning to use a tailor, don't buy anything that doesn't fit

10. What's the best way to shop on a tight budget?

- Invest in classics that won't go out of style next year
- Shop sales (especially end-of-season sales) and discount outlets
- Thrift and consignment shops often have new, clean clothes that are appropriate for the office
- Thrift shops are also a good place to look for accessories (handbags, scarves, jewelry, men's ties)
- Men can buy different ties to wear with the same suit
- Women can change the look of the same basic suit by adding accessories, and sweaters and blouses of different colors
- Purchase versatile colors and styles, and easy-care fabrics
- Always buy the best you can afford

11. What are some guidelines for outerwear?

- Trench coats are always in style for both men and women (over a skirt or pants). Buy one with a removable lining so you'll be able to wear it for most of the year.
- Add personal style to a classic coat via hat, gloves, and scarf
- If it's really cold out, it's okay to wear a big parka or other cold weather weekend wear

12. What are some guidelines for commuters?

- Consider foot comfort and safety, especially if you'll be walking a lot
- Wear a good pair of walking shoes for your commute, but keep a pair of dress shoes at the office to change into

13. What are some guidelines for men's suits and shirts?

- You need 2 or 3 good suits if you work in a conservative office
- Choose a suit that fits well in the shoulders; other parts of the garment (such as too-long sleeves) can be altered by a tailor (usually at the place where you buy the suit)
- Have a salesperson help with fit and style; let them know how formal your workplace is, then they can advise you on width of lapels, double-versus single-breasted, 2- versus 3-button, cuffs, etc.
- A black belt and black lace up shoes are staples
- Have a variety of well-made ties (look for strong stripes or small patterns)

15. What are some guidelines for women's suits?

- Purchase black, brown, navy, and/or gray suits
- Match suits with different colored shells and accessories

16. Is it okay to wear separates?

- For women: a black skirt or pants can be worn for a wide variety of occasions, and can be mixed and matched with a great jacket or tops
- For men: black or dark gray trousers can pair with a sweater and tweed or cotton jacket

17. Is it okay to use accessories?

- The right accessories can brighten up and individualize the basic dark suit
- Choose good shoes, handbags, scarves, and jewelry to accessorize suits
- Don't overdo it — remember that an understated look is a professional look

18. Is it ever okay to wear jeans to work?

- Jeans are acceptable in some offices and some professions. If you're not sure, ask a coworker.
- If your workplace allows jeans, make sure the jeans look "professional" (no rips or faddish embellishments); dress them up with nice separates and accessories

19. Wardrobe checklist for men:

- Gray suit
- Navy blazer
- Black dress pants
- White dress shirts; two dress shirts in different colors (or muted stripes) for every suit you own
- Polos
- Khakis
- Ties (a strong stripe or small pattern)
- Socks, belts, and black or brown shoes
- Classic outerwear, such as a trench coat

20. Wardrobe checklist for women:

- A dark-colored suit
- Skirts
- Slacks
- Sweaters
- Blouses (including a white button-down blouse)
- Shells in different colors
- Jackets, coats
- Black shoes, brown shoes (moderate heels, slip-ons); boots
- Accessories
- Classic outerwear, such as a trench coat

21. List some additional ways to keep your wardrobe looking professional.

- Never wear anything that is wrinkled, stained, or missing buttons
- Use a dry cleaning service (it's not as expensive as you may think!)
- Keep a lint brush handy
- Check yourself in a full-length mirror before leaving for work to make sure items match, you haven't overdone accessories, etc.

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