



## Interview Dress Guide

Dress requirements can vary from company to company, so it can be difficult to determine what to wear to the interview. It's your goal to make your best first impression as well as showcasing who you are through your style. Below are some helpful tips to consider when dressing for the office.

### INTERVIEW SCENARIOS

#### Business-Formal

Business-formal is the most traditional style which you can expect if you're planning for a career in finance, accounting, or business. The goal of this category is to exude confidence, polish, and sophistication the moment you step foot in the interview room.

Business-professional attire generally includes suits, button-down dress shirts, a suit dress/skirt combo, blazers, or blouses paired with dress shoes, oxfords, loafers, or heels.

#### Business-Casual

Often the most common of dress codes for companies, business-casual is combination of business-professional and casual. This category is the ideal style for interviews in client relations, business, and customer service.

Button-down shirts, polos, golf shirts, sport coats, blouses, and sweaters paired with khakis, trousers, and sometimes jeans make up the business-casual category. Finish off the look with a nice pair of sneakers, oxfords, loafers, or flats and you'll fit right in with your potential future coworkers.

#### Smart-Casual

Smart-casual dress is an ambiguous term that refers to clean, sensible style with a more relaxed presentation. This dress style is often associated with the creative industries, tech, or business start-ups, and even what you might wear in your everyday attire. Ultimately, it offers you a chance to present a heightened version of yourself and showcase elements of your personality.

V-neck sweaters, collared shirts, blouses, short- and long-sleeve shirts, or a dress are all perfectly acceptable options for the smart-casual look. With a wide array of options for the top, it's easy to pair with a nice pair of jeans, chinos, or a skirt.

### COLORS

Historically, career professionals have recommended neutral colors such as black, navy blue, brown, and gray for job interviews. While these are generally safe color choices for any interview situation, we recommend wearing colors that ultimately reflect your personality. Don't present yourself as someone different than who you are just because you want to impress your interviewer; allowing your personality to shine with your style will leave the strongest impression.

When deciding what to wear for your interview, it's important to remember that you're dressing to prove that you're the right fit for the company. How you present yourself will be a combination of your personal style presented in a professional capacity. Ultimately, if you are still unsure of what to wear, it's always a safe choice to opt for a more professional ensemble.



## Interview Prep – Describing Your Qualifications

Avenica has helped thousands of job seekers across the country connect with great companies, and one of the keys to landing a job is taking the time to properly prepare for interviews. About half of every interview involves the interviewer gathering information as to why your qualifications make you the right fit for the available position. To answer questions like these, our experts recommend the **STAR Method**.

**Practice the exercise below to familiarize yourself with the STAR Method.**

1. Make a list of all the transferable skills or attributes that make you unique (Ex. Strong Communicator, Assertive, Persuasive, Focused, Adaptable.) This requires significant self-exploration. StrengthsFinder (published by Gallup®) is an example of a resource that can help with this process.
2. Read the job description of the position for which you are interviewing and pick at least seven of your strongest attributes that, based on your research, will be most appealing to the company/hiring manager.
3. For each attribute, provide three specific examples or stories of situations in which you have clearly displayed these strengths. Keep in mind, these do not always need to be professional examples. Extracurricular activities and part-time or non-professional work can provide valuable examples, as well.

**Each example should:**

- Describe a specific **Situation**
- Identify the **Task** or objective needed to address the situation
- Highlight the **Action** you took
- Discuss the **Result** of your action in the situation (*should be a positive outcome*)
- Use the acronym **STAR** (Situation, Task, Action, Result) as a way to remember each part.

Remember, each of these stories must be true, should be concise (able to complete in a minute or less) and clearly illustrate your attribute.

**Let's look at a specific example for an account management position:**

1. **Read the job description.** Identify the transferable skills/attributes required for success in the account management position. Keep in mind that some of these skills will be unstated in the job description and will need to be implied based on the information you have.
2. **Of all the attributes listed in #1, list your seven strongest that you would like to highlight in the interview.** For an account management position, my seven strongest attributes might be goal oriented, competitive, persuasive, assertive, outgoing, strong communicator, and active listener.
3. **Prepare stories for each of these attributes, and practice responding to sample questions.**  
Example Question: Tell me about a time you had to gain commitment from a group of people for a new or unpopular idea.

For this question, I want to highlight my ability to be persuasive and communicate effectively.

**Situation:**

In college, I served on a volunteer committee for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. Our committee was charged with planning a concert fund-raiser that could produce over \$10,000 in revenue. We narrowed the options down to two well-known bands. The committee was leaning toward the less expensive band.

**Task:**

I was convinced that overall we would net more money by hiring the more expensive band because it had better name recognition with college students.

**Action:**

I put together a series of scenarios and presented them to the committee in a clear and detailed manner. My presentation showed that although it would cost more to hire a nationally recognized band, we would be able to sell more tickets at higher prices.

**Result:**

When it came time to vote, it was unanimously decided to accept my recommendation. The event was held as scheduled and netted \$375,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.

*As you can see, using the STAR method allows you to display even your extracurricular and nonprofessional work experiences in a very concise and powerful manner.*



## Selling Your Previous Work Experience and Other Activities

Over the years, the Avenica team has worked closely with our client partners and we have learned a great deal about the key characteristics of the ideal candidate they would hire. The following are the top identified characteristics identified by our client partners of what a candidate should possess to be considered for the role:

- Communication skills
- Motivation / Initiative
- Learning aptitude
- Attention to detail
- Teamwork
- Flexibility / Adaptability
- Critical thinking skills
- Self-starter

During an interview, it's important to sell your previous work experience and extracurricular activities in a manner that highlight these characteristics. The **STAR Method** section of this packet provides a detailed strategy for answering specific behavioral-interview questions, but below are two examples of how to sell your experience for more general questions.

### What are you doing currently?

"I'm currently working full-time as a server at XYZ restaurant. I pride myself on providing world-class customer service to our guests, and I've recently taken on the added responsibility of training all of our new employees. I've discovered that I really enjoy helping others, so I've also started to volunteer once/week at the local soup kitchen."

*This shows that you are an ambitious team-player with great customer service skills and a passion for helping others. Compare this answer with the standard, "I'm just working as a server and looking for a new job." The first statement displays the skills you are planning to apply to the new position and is overall a much a stronger message.*

### How do you know what you want in a position?

"Initially, I was not sure of exactly what I wanted to do, so I've tried to take on as many new experiences as possible. For the last few months, I've really tried to push myself outside of my comfort zone. Outside of my increased responsibilities at work, I've also begun volunteering at the soup kitchen, coaching a youth soccer team, starting a blog, and attending weekly networking events. What I've discovered about myself is that I am energized by working with people and passionate about helping others. A position in Human Resources aligns with these passions and interests.

*This shows that you are logical, goal-oriented, self-aware, and a high achiever. Compare this answer to, "Well, I'm not really sure yet but..." or "I'm really open..." The first statement shows that you've taken the time to consider what you're driven by and what is going to lead you to a fulfilling career.*



## Tips for Asking Engaging Questions During/After an Interview

Once an interviewer has determined a candidate is qualified for and interested in the position, it is the candidate's turn to ask questions. While the amount of time given to ask questions will vary from interview to interview, asking good questions will not only yield valuable information, but will actually help sell a candidate's qualifications and interest in the position. Your preparation and enthusiasm will impress the interviewer. You should plan on asking at least three questions per interview, and ensure you are genuinely interested in hearing the answers.

**The following are 5 categories of questions to ask in an interview:**

1. **Discovering personal experience**

- What do you like most about working at \_\_\_\_\_?
- How did you get your start in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry?
- How would you describe your management style?

2. **Understanding the position**

- There are a lot of tasks related to this position. Which is the most important?
- What are some of the more challenging aspects of the job to learn?
- What does the training process look like?

3. **Clarifying the profile**

- What are some critical success factors for this position?
- What are some qualities you look for in candidates when you're hiring for your team?
- Can you describe the culture at Company X?

4. **Visualizing accomplishment**

- Can you describe one of your most successful hires in this position?
- What metrics are used to evaluate performance?
- How does my role impact the success of the company?

5. **Closing**

- As an employee, how could I exceed your expectations?
- Explain why you are the best candidate for the job (discuss 2 or 3 of your strongest attributes that match the skills required for success in the position).
- Restate your interest in the position by asking for the job.
- I am very interested in the opportunity, when may I follow up with you about next steps?

*Example:*

- Based on what I've learned so far, I am very interested in this position. I think my experience in customer service, combined with my drive and outgoing personality seem to be key the attributes required for success as an Account Manager. What is the next step?



## **Describe Your Interest in the Position/Company**

About half of every interview involves the interviewer gathering information as to whether or not the candidate is going to be the right-fit for the position and their company. To prepare for this very important segment of questions, take the time to complete the following exercises as you research the company.

1. Write down at least two reasons why the industry appeals to you.
2. Write down at least three reasons why the company itself appeals to you.
3. Write down at least four reasons why the position you are interviewing for appeals to you.

### **Each of these reasons should:**

- Describe your interests according to specific information gathered through research
- Communicate interest on all three levels, with emphasis on the position and the company

### **Example of interests for an Account Management position with Avenica:**

#### **1. Interests in the Industry:**

- Recruiting is one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S.
- 97% of all corporations surveyed by the Dept. of Labor claim they use outside resources to fill job openings

#### **2. Interests in the Company:**

- Avenica created an Evaluation-To-Hire employment program for college graduates
- Avenica is continuously growing, with new offices opening throughout the country
- The opportunity for career growth within Avenica is promising and encouraged

#### **3. Interests in the Position:**

- Interviewing candidates will refine my interpersonal and communication skills
- The relationship building with clients and candidates offers professional networking
- The fast pace of recruiting provides new challenges and the use of many skills
- The Account Specialist position is a great entry-level position with the opportunity to move into Sales, Human Resources or Management.

*\*It is important to exhaust your resources when researching the industry, company and position. Some useful sources of information include: web sites, professional networking sites like LinkedIn®, Career Services, students who have already interviewed with the company, alumni who work for the company or in the industry and industry web sites, publications and journals.*



## **More Career Development Resources**

Check out our website and blog ([avenica.com/information/insights](https://avenica.com/information/insights)). Our experts are constantly developing valuable content aimed at making your job search more efficient and successful. On our blog, you can find articles, videos, and webinars on a variety of subjects ranging from developing a job search strategy to helpful networking tips.

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## Social Media and Your Job Search

According to CareerBuilder's annual social media recruitment survey, over 60 percent of employers use social networking sites to research job candidates. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram allow employers to get a view of a job seeker's overall profile and utilize this information to get a glimpse of who candidates are on a more candid level.

Potential employers are generally looking for information that supports their qualifications for the job, not just searching for negatives to disqualify a candidate, as many may assume. Hiring managers want to see if the candidate has a professional online character and also what other people are posting about the candidate.

### DO A SOCIAL MEDIA SELF-CHECK:

#### Google yourself

There is often not much you can do to remove search results, but it is best to be aware of what is associated with your name. Be sure to search with a variety of modifiers including your college, former employers, hometowns, etc. Also, ensure that you're going through several pages of search results and looking at the images in association with your results - you'll be surprised what may show up!

#### Log out of your social media pages, then view your page from a public view

Make sure those not associated with you are seeing what you want to share. Posts that reflect your accomplishments, ideals, passions, and hobbies are great! If you wouldn't talk about it in an interview, the public shouldn't see it either. Often, employers give precedence to job seekers with some accessible social media information over those with completely private profiles – so it isn't necessarily best practice to hide everything.

#### Ask a friend/connection to review your profile

You may not be aware you have a connection at a potential employer that can view more than your public profile – make sure you are showing your very best self! Have your friends, family, and other professional connections view the photos you have uploaded/shared and also those you are tagged in to get their opinions.

#### Know who your “friends” are

Thirty-six percent of potential employers who screen via social networks have requested to “be a friend” or follow candidates who have private accounts. Of that group, *68 percent say they've been granted permission!* Employees are never required to accept friend requests or share log in info, but a profile owner could be held accountable for information found should access be given – it is up to you to choose your contacts and their access. We recommend only connecting with those you know.

### WHAT MAKES A GOOD SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE

#### Employers want to see:

- Profiles that convey professionalism
- Good communication skills
- A well-rounded job seeker
- Information that supports job qualifications such as leadership, teamwork, and compassion



### **Employers don't want to see:**

- Provocative or socially inappropriate photos, videos, comments
- Examples of drug use
- Discriminatory comments
- Negative info regarding past employment

Depending on what hiring managers find, candidates' online information can help or hurt their odds of getting a job. Use all of the strategies provided in this article to improve your online presence and help you land the career of your dreams.