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Career Coach: What Not to Wear to a Presentation or Review

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By Clare Trapasso

Career Coach: What Not to Wear to a Presentation or Meeting. Responses have been edited for clarity and concision.



Connie Thanasoulis-Cerrachio is a co-founder and partner at SixFigureStart, a career coaching company in New York, and a former [Merrill Lynch](#) recruiter.

Everyone is looking at you when you're speaking or when you're presenting.

You have to invest the time to find a killer outfit. Something professional [that] fits you like a glove, not too tight, not too loose.

You [should be able to] move comfortably in it and your shoes have to be impeccable.

If you think about the best presenters, they have a darker suit. Something that really catches people's attention is a splash of red. Another power color is deep blue.

For men, ties that are red or a deep blue command attention. Business loves a clean-shaven man. Shave if [you're] interviewing and get a nice haircut that looks like you're well taken care of. Shoes have to be polished and they have to have a shine.

For women, a dark suit with an accent of red or blue really commands attention. [But] what trumps any color is the fit. It shouldn't be baggy but it shouldn't be skintight either.

Sometimes people who like to shop don't know how. You should go for a professional fitting appointment with a [personal shopper].

Stop by one of the makeup counters if you're a woman. Say, "I'm giving a big presentation. I want some ideas for makeup."



Suzanne Muusers is the owner of Prosperity Coaching in Scottsdale, Ariz., which focuses on financial services.

How you present is very important. People form an opinion about you in the first three seconds they meet you. If you dress sloppy, [clients are] going to think you're going to do a sloppy job of managing their money.

Dress for the position you want. You want to give the impression that you're very capable. And when a position comes open, you can easily transition because you already look the part.

Men should wear pressed pants, a pressed shirt and a tie. If [he's] speaking to those who are senior to him, then [wear] a jacket. If he's speaking to his peers, a jacket is optional.

Facial hair obscures the facial features, and subconsciously the [audience] could think you're hiding something. Nicely trimmed mustaches and goatees are OK if they're close-cut.

Women should be wearing a suit. Some people say [they] shouldn't wear a pantsuit. They say women should still wear skirts with jackets. But I disagree.

High heels are OK, but no more than two and half to three inches. No red lipstick. That calls attention straight to your face, to your lips. You want them to be listening to your message.



Melissa Llarena is a career coach and owner of Career Outcomes Matter in New York. She specializes in financial services and formerly worked in human resources and marketing at [JPMorgan Chase](#).

The focal point should be the content of what you have to say, not what you decided to wear that day.

Avoid anything that deviates too much from the norm. If most of the professionals wear something in the gray or blue hues, then stick with that. Don't go off and select a salmon-toned suit.

Avoid something that is brand-new because it might be uncomfortable. You haven't broken it in. You should [also] avoid getting a brand-new haircut the day before. What if the stylist makes a mistake?

Definitely avoid strong cologne or very overpowering perfumes. You don't want to distract the audience. You want them to listen to what you're saying, not focus on how you smell.

Men should make sure that their shoes have been polished and their belt matches the shoes they're wearing.

Sometimes professionals ... might think about wearing the same outfit over and over. But what I would suggest is variety because a lot times presentations are recorded.

If you have the propensity to put your hands in your pockets, do not wear a jacket or a sweater with big pockets. You want to be animated. You want to use your hands to accentuate what you're saying.

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