

Editorial Eight

Dress Codes – what do they all mean?

Earlier this month we were privileged to give a presentation to the Miss Wagga Quest entrants. Image can be a very powerful and influential communication tool when you know how to dress yourself and understand the rules and appropriateness of dress codes for different occasions.

We would like to congratulate all the Miss Wagga entrants, they are all enthusiastic individuals with a lot to offer the Wagga community and we wish them all the best in the Miss Wagga Quest.

It is interesting that in today's sophisticated society it is easy to misunderstand or forget the meaning and appropriateness of dress codes. Fifty years ago it was all clearly defined but with our busy lifestyles we seem to have run out of time to learn what dress codes mean. There is no need to panic about the complexity of different dress codes or not having sufficient time as there are some simple guidelines to make dressing for any occasion easy.

Always check the dress code before an event so you don't get any surprises but generally the invitation should state what is required. If the invitation does not list the information then contact the host or event coordinator to find out. When in doubt it is always better to overdress than it is to under dress. A fabulous outfit will be remembered because you look great. Being underdressed gives people the impression that you did not make an effort. Don't feel that you need to expose excessive amounts of skin or cleavage to be sexy or noticed. It is far sexier to leave some things to the imagination. Regardless of what you are wearing make sure it is a good fit for you. Trying to fit into that smaller size will only serve to emphasis all those lumps and bumps you want to hide.

So what do all those dress codes mean?

Black Tie is gorgeous, glamorous and glitzy. Think Red Carpet. This is your chance to dress up and wear accessories and jewellery with some bling. Strapless or strappy gowns and long evening dresses are a must and your hair, jewellery, shoes and accessories must also be formal to match your dress. For gentlemen, a tuxedo is expected and if you are after a classier look try cufflinks instead of buttons. Keep your socks a dark colour and don't forget to polish those shoes!

Formal dress attire consists of long gowns but a cocktail length dress is also appropriate. Cocktail dress usually means to the knee and if you wear closed in shoes remember to wear hosiery with your outfit. Again your hair,

jewellery, shoes and accessories must be formal to match your dress and for gentlemen a tuxedo is expected at these functions.

Semi-Formal which can also be known as Cocktail is slightly less formal where the dresses tend to be more of a cocktail length and a dressy pantsuit can also be an option. Don't forget about your hair, jewellery and accessories, while this is slightly less formal, they still need to match your outfit. Gentlemen a darker coloured suit of good quality with a complimentary shirt and tie is the norm. Dark coloured socks and shoes are also a must.

Informal business or lounge suit attire generally consists of business type dresses, pant suits or a skirt with or without a jacket. Lounge suit attire is normally for functions held after 6:00pm so there is still some formality. Accessories are acceptable and you can afford to experiment with some colour. If wearing a skirt or dress with closed in shoes remember to wear appropriate hosiery. Always keep your jacket on hand in case you need it for that impromptu meeting or event. Standard business wear for gentlemen never goes wrong.

Casual business wear can often be difficult to get right as one person's meaning of casual can differ to someone else's version. If you are not sure what is suitable at your place of work, check the business policy or guidelines on acceptable dress as you still need to look professional. Casual Business wear still has some elements of smart and sophistication so often it is better to wear an outfit that is still business like. More colourful sporty look clothes are generally fine and again a shirt and jacket is recommended with a skirt or pants. Keep your jewellery appropriate to your place of work. Gentlemen you will look great in tailored pants and a shirt. Ties are optional.

Casual is definitely the comfortable look and you can get away with most things EXCEPT tracksuit pants. Keep them for behind closed doors or for the gym only. A nice pair of jeans teamed with a jacket or top will allow you to feel casual but still look smart. It takes just as much time to put on a pair of nice pants or jeans as it does tracksuit pants so next time you think about reaching for those track pants think about the look you are trying to portray to the outside world. If you don't want to look sporty or sloppy opt for something else.

At the end of the day you want to look the best that you can look so rather than thinking it is all too much of a chore, relish the opportunity to feel special, look fabulous and showcase you!

Izziana Image is dedicated to helping you look and feel your best. We will show you how to be confident with your clothing choices. More information on the services we offer can be found at www.izzianaimage.com.au

Izziana Image will be in Wagga on Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 August. Contact us before 4 August to book a consultation on 0400397500 or by email: izziana@izzianaimage.com.au

Reference Material

1. <http://www.the-etiquette-and-dress-experts.com/dress-guidelines.html>, viewed 4 July 2008
2. <http://www.parkerco.com.au/etiquette/modern> viewed 4 July 2008
3. <http://www.dresscodeguide.com/default.asp?DressCode=6&MoreCodes=0> viewed 7 July 2008

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