

The Power Outfit:

1. A pants or skirt suit in a neutral color, such as gray, black, navy blue or beige says you are confident and professional. (Skirts should be no shorter than two inches above the knee.)
2. Wear a jacket that is the same color as your pants or skirt. This also creates a longer, leaner silhouette. (A jacket that ends at the hip will conceal a less than perfect tummy.)
3. Don't be afraid to add a pop of color with a blouse, although you should stay away from large or distracting prints. Neutral colors work well, too, for a clean, refined look.
4. Leather pumps with thicker, chunkier heels — no more than 1.5 to 2 inches — in neutral, conservative colors work best. Slight open-toe shoes are acceptable, but footwear should be secured to the foot by a back or strap to prevent flapping when you walk. Flats are OK, too. Avoid stilettos or anything with too much embellishment.
5. Neutral stockings should be worn with skirts and dresses (at least on the first interview).

The higher-ranked women will probably be the ones wearing pantyhose, if anyone is, Chambers says. "The point is, you want to impress the decision-maker. You want to play to them, not the person who has chosen to be as casual as is allowed."

Accessories:

6. Follow the seven-element rule for simplicity: Your outfit shouldn't consist of more than seven pieces total. For example: A blouse, pants and jacket = three pieces. That leaves room for four other elements: watch, earrings, belt (should compliment your shoes, which don't count as a separate element) and a ring. That's it. Less is more when it comes to jewelry.
7. Avoid wearing dangly, chandelier-type earrings or anything that will be distracting by banging or clanging.
8. One ring per finger for now. Get the job and then see what the boundaries are.
9. Always have a notepad and pen ready.
10. Bring along a pristine copy of your resume.
11. Handbags should be clean and scuff-free. Briefcases are not necessary in Hawaii.

Pull It All Together:

12. Hair should be clean, neatly styled and out of your face. Avoid heavy or outrageous colors/highlights. Unless you're applying for a highly creative position, your hair should be conservative.
13. Makeup should be natural. Neutral shades work best for eyes and lips.
14. Bad breath, unkempt fingernails and body odor are no-nos, but that doesn't mean bathe in your perfume.
15. Be positive, smile, make eye contact, sit up straight, speak clearly and slowly and practice your mission statement.

Great places to shop: Ann Taylor, Macy's, Stephanie C, Nordstrom's, Neiman Marcus and Banana Republic

Five everyday dress-for-success tips from Pam Chambers:

1) Do your research

A few days before a job interview, visit the business and sit outside near the entrance or stand in the hall to see how employees dress. Match what others are wearing, but kick it up a notch to show that the job is important to you, says Chambers. Think this might be overboard? Depends on how badly you want the job. You might also want to check the company's Web site to see what kind of brand it has created. Is it zany and creative — or formal and conservative?



2) Create an illusion

It's all about proportion. Chambers suggests watching TLC's "What Not to Wear" because it teaches the importance of proportion, lines and where things fall on your body. For example, if you're full-figured, you don't want a horizontal line at your widest point because it would accentuate that area. While a full-figured tall person can wear a longer jacket, a short, full-figured woman would do better in a short jacket that is the same color as the skirt or pants. Your jacket and



skirt or pants must be the same color if you want to look taller and thinner. It creates an optical illusion, sort of like a column. Unless you're really tall, don't cut yourself in half by wearing a white jacket and black pants. You want the eye of the beholder to travel effortlessly from your head to your toes and then back to your face.

3) Get real: Know what works for you

Some of the key elements of any look are fit, quality, condition, proportion and appropriateness. Appropriateness depends on where you're going, whom you're going to be with and your goal. Even if you think, "I can't bear to buy a size that big," you need to, Chambers says, otherwise you're going to look even worse.

Be realistic and wear the size you are — whatever it is — nobody else will know. People tend to look heavier and lumpier when their clothes are too tight. The same thing goes for oversized clothes. Your pants should hit a few inches below your ankles and your hands shouldn't be buried under your jacket sleeves.

"Hardly anyone is lucky enough to be able to take something off the rack and not have it altered in some way or another," Chambers says. Some stores, such as Macy's, can do alterations in a short time. One \$12 alteration can make the difference between always feeling like the pants are the right length and never feeling they are. Most people just have to consider the alteration as part of the price of shopping.

4) Dress for where you want to be

For the most part, people should dress for the next step they want in most office settings, Chambers says. If you start off as a bank teller and you want to become a supervisor, you should look at how a female supervisor dresses and take notes, assuming she has a style with which you agree. And it's OK to dress better than your supervisor. Not all people in management exercise professionalism and good judgment. Raise yourself up without

being showy.

Chambers' advice: When you own your own company, do whatever you want, but until then, there are people who can open the door for you or slam it shut based on what they think your image says about you. "If you're willing to take the risk of having people think that you're a hip hop, freaky, clubby kind of girl, go ahead and take that risk," she says. However, the leader of any organization has a responsibility to be a role model. If the CEO of the bank has purple streaks in her hair, everyone else will think they can, too.

That isn't to say you shouldn't develop a personal style. It could be that you always have a fresh flower in your hair or wear a scarf to dress up an outfit. Be unique and creative, but think about what your image says about you.

5) Looking sharp on a budget

"If you're on a budget but want to look the part, do what I do — shop at Goodwill," Chambers suggests. "In Hawaii, we have Waikele outlets, Ross, Savers, Goodwill, the Salvation Army. There is no way you can blame cost for not looking good," Chambers says about half her wardrobe consists of things she proudly and ecstatically found at Goodwill — "and they're beautiful," she says. Some of her finds had never been worn and still had their original tags attached, but, she warns, you have to be patient. "Sure, some people think I'm poverty stricken and they're embarrassed for me when I tell them that my outfit is from Goodwill, but I have no problem with it. I think, in this day and age, we need all the creativity we can come up with," she says. "Feel sorry for me if you want, but some of my favorite outfits are from thrift stores."

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Other wardrobe rules to remember:

Don't turn "casual Fridays" into sloppy Fridays. Look professional at all times. Employers: To avoid confusion, detail the parameters up front and maybe even ask employees to sign off on what is appropriate.



How you present yourself outside of work could impact your career. If you saw a customer or client outside of work, would you run behind the flat-screen TVs at Costco or would you be happy to walk up and say hello? If you would run, you're wearing the wrong outfit. Hawaii is a small place; you can't go anywhere without running into someone you know, including a customer or potential customer.

You can look professional and be comfortable at the same time. Invest in higher-quality fabrics and pieces that suit your body if you can afford them. Looking good doesn't have to be painful. ■

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