

How to decipher the dress code dilemma

Have you ever received an invitation that indicated a certain dress code and you didn't have a clue as to what that particular dress code really meant? So not understanding what your host expected you to wear, you call up a few of your friends hoping they could shed some light on the situation, only to become more confused as they all had a different interpretation of the code. Well you're not alone.

The tips below are designed to help bring clarity to the situation and to ensure that during this festive season you not only arrive at your function in style, but in the proper attire.

White Tie also known as Ultra Formal or Full Dress:

Is the most formal of evening attire. Men wear long black dinner jackets, white pique vest over a formal white shirt with a **white** pique bow tie, formal black shoe are a must but white gloves are optional. Ladies wear long formal evening dresses, ultra sheer hosiery (if wearing hosiery) and don't forget to carry a small clutch or a small metal evening bag. If your gown is strapless or short sleeve you may elect to wear long white gloves.

Black Tie also known as Formal:

Men wear traditional black tuxedo with a formal white shirt with a **black** bow tie (hence the name) and cummerbund. (colored cummerbunds are for weddings and proms). Ladies may opt to wear a short or long gown. Bear in mind that black is not the only evening color reds, silver, gold and plum are also quite stunning.

Semiformal or After Five:

Daytime: Suit for the men appropriate short dress or dressy suit for the ladies

Evenings: A dark suit with a button down shirt for men, cocktail dresses for the ladies

Business Attire or Business Formal:

Refers to the traditional business attire of dark suits, light shirt and a dark tie for men and a classic suit with a light blouse for the ladies

Cocktail Attire:

Short elegant cocktail dress for the ladies, along with a clutch bag. An evening wrap adds a nice touch of elegance. Men wear dark suits with a button down shirt .

Informal:

Often confused with Casual

Men may opt for a sport coat with a casual shirt and slacks, no tie if before 6pm

After 6pm a sport coat, dress shirt slacks and a tie. Ladies may wear a nice pants suit, nice dress, skirt set or a sweater and skirt ensemble.

Dressy Casual: Also known as Business Casual, Sharp Casual, Elegant Casual, Smart Casual:

Quality fabric is key. For men dress slacks, button down or knit shirts, leather loafers. For the ladies dress slacks, knit ensembles, casual dresses. Flat pumps are fine but no jeans, shorts or exposing the skin in any way.

Casual:

In the business world casual does not mean “whatever”. Think informal or dressy casual; its better to err on the side of too much clothes than not enough. Remember you are still trying to dress to impress and maintain the look of a polished professional.

Now go out and have some fun, being confident in the fact that you are appropriately dress for the occasion!

For more great tips or advice on Image Management, Etiquette & International Protocol you may contact Stacia D. Williams @ 242-325-5992 or stacia@totalimagemanagement.com
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