

Making friends with dress code

You may try to escape it but in the end you may fall a victim of the appearance craze. Appearance does matter, whether you agree with that statement or not.

Text: **Monika Jurczyk**

"I try to convince people whom I am surrounded with and whom I train in the biggest Polish companies that the appearance is extremely important in their work. It can serve as a trust-awakening tool to make our interlocutors less timid, it can help us build our own authority, express respect towards others and make a good first impression, which can only be done once. And you never know when you will need to face a new challenge or an opportunity at work – be ready for it not only with your brains, but also with your looks".

Rules not meant to be broken
People who care about their own individual style may say that a dress code is nothing else but a set of rigid rules which infringe on their individuality. Needless to say, dress code rules are not meant to be broken, yet it doesn't mean that they cannot go hand in hand with our individual style and help us stick out from the crowd. While in Poland we are only getting to know dress code rules, in other places in the world their redefinition already takes place and such aspects as color are being highlighted. However, before we start redefining dress code, we need to get to know it and take a fancy to it.



Women:
your skirt should be mid-knee long

It has not been until recently that women have started pursuing professional jobs. In terms of their work clothes, they have borrowed many

aspects of men's dress, e.g. they wear shirts to work, choose cravats instead of ties and in the most demanding situations they rely on suits.

Fortunately, women do not need to dress up as men. What then do they need to know in order to follow dress code rules?

1. Your skirt should be mid-knee long, though 5 centimeters tolerance is allowed. Dress code doesn't allow for bare legs. Choose tights 15 DEN in summer and 40 DEN in winter.
2. When you are wearing a jacket, your hair should be tied.
3. Avoid see-through materials and very tight-fitting clothes.
4. Too colorful nails send a message to the world that your level of concentration on work is low.
5. Don't mix trends. Match your classic clothes with one, not very gaudy, style.

Once we embrace the above mentioned rules, people will start to notice us and our clothing will highlight our best assets. Additionally, it is worth remembering that our cloths should always be neat, ironed and clean. It is also good to invest in perfumes that will be associated only with us. After all, constant dropping wears away a stone – by choosing the same perfumes as well as doing our make-up and hair in a consistent way we make our image seem carefully thought-over and coherent.



**Men:
Never fasten all buttons**

Different dress code rules apply to men and often they relate to the length or texture of clothes. There are many factors that can potentially ruin men's professional image; hence it is useful to know a few dress code rules:

1. If you decide to wear jewelry, choose a wedding ring and a watch as a maximum.
2. Always wear long-sleeved shirts with your suit.
3. When wearing a single-breasted jacket, never fasten all buttons.
4. A tie you are wearing should always be mid-belt-buckle long and cover the upper part of the collar.
5. Ensure that the pattern on your tie doesn't overpower the pattern on your shirt.

Men tend to buy pieces of clothes that are too large for them. Thus, take your time in the fitting room to ensure that the jacket you're buying is of the right size – if you can see vertical wrinkled lines on it, it means that it is too large; if there are horizontal ones, it is a sign of it being too small. Additionally, always choose a jacket that is long enough to allow you to put your hands in the pockets (though you mustn't do it anyway). As far as trousers are concerned, ensure that the pant leg is resting gently on the lacing of your shoes and is finishing on the top of the heel. However, sometimes instead of looking in vain for an ideal trousers' length, I recommend making friends with a skillful tailor.

**4 steps
to professional image at work**

While writing my book entitled "Szefowa swojej szafy. Będę boska i elegancka w pracy" (The Head of Her Wardrobe. Be Divine and Elegant at Work), I was focusing on messages our attire conveys. Together with my friend who works as a coach we were wondering how our clothing reflects our personality and how our attire can help us develop some qualities, whenever we think we lack them. As a result I have created an original program that encompasses four steps to look professional at work. Master of Business Image (MBI) is based on the belief that you can learn about people's personality by simply looking at their clothes. Everyone has got their own "software", that is a distinctive way of being and dressing. By getting the hang of this "software" you will know what to do in order to

feel better at work and to build a consistent and credible image. What's more, your attire can boost your confidence as long as you know how to use it.

1. Workasonality

The first step to gain the MBI title is to get to know your "workasonality", that is personality at work. I have distinguished four types of workasonality: the Green Executer, focused on relations; the Blue Analyst, always dressed according to the rules; the Yellow Inspirer, who enjoys sticking out from the crowd, and the Red Warrior – a leader who matches her attire with goals she/he wants to achieve. Being able to identify all workasonality types is crucial not only

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to build your own coherent image, but also to communicate with people. Once you are able to tell the "yellow" from the "green", you will talk differently with each one of them. You may also choose your attire to match theirs, in order to evoke trust and to form better relations.

2. Body type

In my work I draw on the famous female and male body type classification system. The system is based on well-known proportion principles. For clothes to look good on you, they should create a balanced hourglass figure. Once it is achieved, the size will not matter. The system encompasses nine female and six male body types.



Photo: Joanna Czaczkowska

Everyone should know one's own body type in order to learn to select suitable styles and, consequently, to build up one's own figure proportions correctly. For example, the female "Y" body shape, which features shoulders that are wider than hips, is best clad in print trousers or skirts as well as in flared dresses that add more dimensions to the lower body. By contrast, women with the "A" body shape (featuring hips wider than shoulders) should try styles with ruffles or bold necklaces which will draw attention away from the lower body and balance the proportions.

3. Skin tone

Once you know whether you are a warm or cool skin type, you will know

what colors to choose. To do so, it will suffice to use two scarves – a silver and a golden one, and to assess which one suits you best: the silver scarf will suit the cool skin tone better, whereas the golden scarf will look best on people with the warm skin type. In general, cool skin tones are characterized by ivory complexion, cool deep dark eye colors (greyish and bluish) as well as by ashen hair colors (very dark or blond). By contrast, people with warm skin tones usually have light swarthy complexion with shades of olive and gold, green, brown or blue eyes as well as brown, ginger or blond hair with golden undertones. Why is this classification so important? When applying correct colors, our skin looks healthy, the

eye color is more distinctive and our hair gains a brilliant luster. Cool skin tones look best against hues of dark deep blue, pink, graphite, emerald, white and turquoise. By contrast, if you have a warm skin tone, look for colors of spring and summer, such as violet, berry, green as well as chestnut, mustard or ginger.

4. Your brand

The fourth step to look professional at work is extremely important if you consider clothing as your logo. It is linked to the idea of seeking one's own style's distinguishing feature. The idea behind it is based on the consistency and credibility – it is about image features that will be associated solely with you and will be a proof of your credibility. What can it be? It can be a pocket square or some original color of your shoes. Some details, such as ruffles, bows or eyeglass frames may come in handy as well. Rolled-up sleeves or certain fashions that you wear often

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and which you enjoy wearing can be your distinguishing features as well.

To sum up, I would like to emphasize once more that we shouldn't be appalled at the mere mention of a dress code. A dress code is a set of rules that should help us and which we can tame with a view to achieving one's own goals. It is also worth remembering that it is hard to build up your authority

cheaply. Quality is very important because it is visible. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to invest in things that you should change when the seasons change. However, to build a credible and consistent image, we don't need to have many pieces of clothing in our wardrobe. I would like us to learn that we don't need to have many things in our wardrobe to look good. The most important thing is to know how to manage your wardrobe, to buy things in matching sets, to choose quality clothing and last but not least, to ensure we need all the things that we buy. ●



Photo: Joanna Czaczowska

Monika Jurczyk

The owner of "Osa Osobista Stylistka" (Osa Personal Stylist), the first Polish personal shopper, the owner of all the wardrobes. She is also the author of "Bądź boska. Osobista stylistka radzi" as well as "Szefowa swojej szafy. Bądź boska i elegancka w pracy".

For eight years now Monika has been advising on shopping, managing wardrobes and training personal shoppers-to-be at Akademia Wizerunku ("Academy of Image"). She is also a business image specialist – she has been teaching dress code to employees of the biggest Polish companies. For years, in her work she is drawing on the body type system whose underlying principle assumes that the style is the question of proportions and once the proportions are balanced, the size doesn't matter.

Monika has been also a host to many events and a guest in such programs as "Dzień dobry TVN" ("Good Morning TVN") and "Pytanie na Śniadanie" ("Question At Breakfast") as well as on RMF FM radio and in "Newsweek" magazine, where she has appeared as a media image expert. For her work as a service designer, Monika has been granted a lifetime achievement award from the Institute of Industrial Design as well as "Dobry Wzór" ("Good Design") 2010 award from the Ministry of Economy.