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From the interview to the office



In order to be taken seriously in the business world, women took to dressing like men a few years ago, wearing dark suits, high collars and ties, said fashion expert Susan Wortley.

But those days are over, she said. Today, female executives can dress in brighter colors with more accessories and greater comfort and still be taken seriously, she said.

Wortley, who manages the alterations department of Seattle's Place Two, a retail clothing store, was on campus earlier this month to present a fashion show for "Career Week '86." She explained the "dos and don'ts" of dressing for success.



"Individual companies have their own dress codes. Employees of financial institutions must wear more conventional outfits, while fashion consultants and graphic designers have more leeway," she said. "A new employee should ask about a dress code."

But in any career, the most important aspect of creating a successful business wardrobe is investing in quality suits and separates, Wortley said.

"Inexpensive clothes will not wear long and will cost more to replace in the long run than quality clothes," she said.

A businesswoman should begin her wardrobe by purchasing one navy-blue suit and one gray suit, she said. She also should have two or three separate skirts and blazers in basic colors such as tan, rust, taupe, black, burgundy or cream, she said.

"When buying these more expensive core items, a woman should select a style that flatters her body and won't be dated quickly. Comfortable wool or cotton gabardine suits can be worn fashionably for seven to eight years," she said.

The idea behind building a wardrobe is to establish a firm foundation and continually expand and update it with brightly colored blouses and accessories, she said.

Blouses, which are cheaper and are replaced every two or three years, can be bright and trendy, Wortley said. Yellow and fuchsia are this year's fad colors, she said.

Women should be prepared to spend about \$1,500 on clothes their first year if they are just beginning a business wardrobe, Wortley said, which would include two suits, 10 blouses, three skirts, two blazers and two pairs of shoes.

Men should begin a career wardrobe with a navy blue blazer, which can be combined with a variety of slacks, she said.

"A blue blazer, gray slacks, a solid-colored shirt and a red tie (with a diagonal stripe pattern) is an appropriate combination for almost any situation, from an interview... to a dinner party," she said.

A man also should have a solid gray suit, a pin-striped navy blue suit, and tweed and herringbone sports coats, she said.

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Story by Joan Wildermuth
Photos by James Marks

Clothes provided by Steven J and Ellen's at Steven J

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