

Workplace Dress Code Considerations



Some companies feel a dress code policy can come across as too restrictive. However, a company without a written dress policy will have difficulty reinforcing its dress standards. The key thing to remember when developing a policy is to focus on the business reasons for the standards.

In general, employers define their business environment as either “professional,” “business casual,” or “casual.”

Professional Attire	Business-Casual Attire	Casual Attire
<p>Typically means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits • Shirts with ties and/or blazers • Skirts • Dresses • Dress shoes 	<p>Incorporates professional attire, but may also include more casual clothing such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khakis, capri-style pants • Sweaters • Polo shirts • Loafer-style shoes or sandals. 	<p>The most relaxed and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeans • T-shirts • Sweatshirts • Tennis shoes



Once you’ve defined your business environment and have given examples of appropriate attire, remember to address clothing choices that are clearly inappropriate. First, include anything that may be prohibited due to safety concerns, such as loose fitting clothing, shorts, sandals, or open-toed shoes.

Providing parameters and examples of what is considered appropriate for your business will ensure the policy’s success.

In developing guidelines, you may want input from managers or employees to determine what is acceptable or unacceptable based on your company’s work environment. Eliminate the potential for discrimination by considering ethnic and religious dress requirements and remember to use consistency in enforcing dress codes to minimize the possibility that employees may feel singled out.

HR professionals should consider the following when writing a dress policy:

- Obtain management's support and approval before making a change in policy.
- Clearly communicate your guidelines and give examples.
- Encourage senior management to participate and set the example.
- Make your dress code gender neutral. Avoid stereotypes such as requiring men to wear pants and women to wear dresses.
- Modify as necessary based on changing circumstances.
- Allow for variations based on type of position and amount of customer contact.
- Consider exceptions to the policy during summer months or low customer contact days, such as Fridays.
- Deal with problems and complaints quickly and consistently and, most importantly, focus on business and/or job reasons.

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Your policy should provide guidelines to allow employees to understand the boundaries you feel enhance safety, productivity, and a pleasant work environment. Encourage employees to talk with their supervisors or Human Resources should there be any question as to whether something is appropriate within the scope of the policy. Hold supervisors accountable for addressing, in a prompt and direct manner, employees who are in violation of the policy.

Need help developing or reviewing your company dress code policy? MRA's [HR Advisors](#) can help you!

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