

Professional Dress and Appearance

Importance of a Professional Appearance

As representatives of UT Extension and the University of Tennessee, employees are expected to always present a professional image. The following is a general overview with suggested examples of appropriate attire for the office, events, and in-person and virtual meetings.

These suggested guidelines cannot cover all contingencies, so employees must exercise a certain amount of judgement in their choice of clothing to wear to work. If uncertain about acceptable professional business casual attire for work, please ask your county director, regional director, or department head. If in doubt, always dress a step better than you think is necessary.

Dressing Appropriately for the Office, Client Visits and Meetings

Dressing appropriately for the office, client visits and meetings will depend on the nature of the work and environment. Dress should align with client expectations and the responsibilities of the day. The following suggested guidelines will help the employee make appropriate clothing decisions.

Extension Employee Attire

In general, employees are expected to dress in attire appropriate for the day's tasks and responsibilities. Employees should dress in a manner that is consistent with their client's expectations. Articles of clothing should fit properly, be clean and neat, while respecting a diversity of styles, opinions, and interpretations regarding dress.

Dress appropriately for your audience and for specific tasks. For example, appropriate attire for working in the field putting out demonstration plots, athletic apparel for teaching an exercise class, attire for teaching a youth outdoor day camp, or professional attire for a banquet, awards ceremony, etc., may be different than usual office attire. Upon return to the office, employees should change back into appropriate office attire.

Summer camps have their own dress code, for questions on clothing for summer camp, please refer to your camp's dress code.

Below are some Examples of Business Casual, Professional Business, and Casual Attire:

- Collared Polo shirts, golf-type shirts, and buttoned shirts. Shirts with UT and/or TSU Extension logos are appropriate and encouraged.
- Chinos, khaki-type pants, or similar dress pants, jeans and cargo pants.
- Collarless, shirts with pants, skirts, or cropped pants.
- Collared dress shirts and pants with or without ties and jackets.
- If leggings are worn, a tunic, sweater, dress, or cover up of some sort not shorter than 4 inches above the knee must be worn.
- Dress shoes, heels, dress sandals, walking shoes, loafers, boots, and other Professional Business Attire

Professional business attire is appropriate when meeting with donors, elected officials, county government officials, during banquets and award ceremonies, etc.

Professional attire includes:

- professional pants, or dress skirts
- long-sleeved dress shirts or business tops
- Business jackets, sport coats, and ties as appropriate, or business-like dresses.

Casual Attire

Casual attire may be appropriate in certain circumstances such as casual Friday, Big Orange Friday, etc.

Casual attire is defined as jeans, capris, university tee shirts, sweatshirts, casual skirts/dresses, athletic shoes, and sandals. [Personal Appearance](#)

- For all employees, professional appearance also means that you are expected to maintain good hygiene and grooming while working- both virtually and in person
- Facial hair should be neat and well-trimmed.
- Tattoos, piercings, and body art with wording, or images that are inappropriate in a professional work environment must be covered or removed while working.
- Employees should not engage in tobacco use, i.e., dipping, spitting, etc. during work, virtual meetings, and in-person Extension programs.
- Employees should present a professional background for all zoom or virtual meetings and programs. If not using a virtual background, camera background should be clear of clutter and present a professional image.

Supervisors who deem an employee's dress or appearance is not appropriate may ask that employee to leave the work area and not return until the inappropriate dress or appearance is corrected.