



## NOTES:

# SECTION TWO: MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION

## WHAT TO WEAR

If you get specific instructions from the interviewer, organization, or program on what to wear for an interview, follow those instructions. Otherwise, use the information below as a helpful guide. Note: If your jacket or skirt has long thread in an X shape holding a slit or vent together, that should be cut and removed before wearing. If the jacket has a tag on the sleeve remove it carefully.

### For Men

A dark colored business suit is traditional menswear for interviewing. Pair with a light or neutral-colored long-sleeved shirt and coordinating tie. Depending on the formality of the organization/program a full suit may not be necessary; dress pants, dress shirt, and tie could be acceptable. Your clothes should fit you and be clean and pressed. If you need to borrow a suit, try to find someone who is close to your size.

- Wear dark coordinating dress shoes (not casual or athletic).
- Hair, whether short or long, should be clean and neat and facial hair should be trimmed.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- Avoid using any products that are heavily scented. Some organizations may be scent free or you may encounter those with sensitivities or allergies to strong scents.
- If using a bag, choose a professional looking bag to hold items you might need.

### For Women

For most interviews, a dark colored business suit (pants or skirt) should be worn. Suits should be paired with a solid colored or small print top with a conservative neckline. If you are not wearing a jacket with your suit or expect to take off your suit jacket during an interview, avoid sleeveless tops. If choosing to wear a skirt, it's length should be around the knee or below and the slit should be minimal. Your clothes should fit you and be clean and pressed. If you need to borrow a suit, try to find someone who is close to your size.

- Shoes should be business appropriate (i.e. no sparkles, no sandals, not strappy, etc.). Wear shoes that you will be comfortable walking in; it is recommended to wear flats or shoes with a low heel.
- If wearing a skirt, pair with neutral or black nylons.
- Hair can be worn up or down as long as it is clean and neat.
- If you choose to wear makeup, keep it simple and natural-looking.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- Avoid using any products that are heavily scented. Some organizations may be scent free or you may encounter those with sensitivities or allergies to strong scents.
- Choose a professional looking purse or bag to hold items you might need.

### Notes on Garments Worn for Cultural or Religious Purposes

If a garment is worn for cultural or religious reasons there is no need to change that practice for an interview setting. Organizations in the United States are not able to discriminate against candidates based on nationality or religion.

### Self-Expression and Interviews

Self-expression is important. Tattoos, body piercings, hairstyle, and clothing are all ways we express our individuality. When interviewing, it may be best to be conservative, but this is why research before an interview is important to understand cultural expectations at an organization or in a program, so as to understand what may or may not be appropriate in an interview.



## NOTES:

### INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

- Have a professional voicemail set up on your phone. Setting up an interview will likely start with a phone call. Respond to emails professionally - avoid short, text-like responses.
- When scheduling an interview, be sure to confirm when and where the interview will be conducted.
- Leave early for the interview. Be prepared for potential traffic and plan for parking. Wait to enter the interview location if you arrive more than 15 minutes early. Allow time to review your notes, practice what you plan to say and straighten your clothing or hair.
- Make sure to turn your phone off (not set to vibrate) before you enter the location.
- Shake hands with those you meet - not too firm of a grip, but not loose.
- Wait to sit until you are directed to where you will be interviewed. Place any bags next to or under your chair.
- As interviewers introduce themselves, when possible write down names and titles or ask for business cards at the conclusion of the interview. This will make following up with thank you notes easier.
- Focus not only on what you will say, but also be aware of your nonverbal communication. Pay attention to your posture. Be sure to make eye contact with those interviewing you. If you are not sure who to look at, make eye contact with the person asking you the question, trying to stay engaged with the rest of the group.
- If someone new enters the room during the interview, stand and shake their hand when introduced.
- Show enthusiasm for the organization/graduate school and the position/program. If your nervousness shows in your voice try to control your breathing and tone.

### PREPARE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

Even if you think the position or program is a perfect fit, you will want to ask questions to make sure that your perception matches the reality. So, what should you ask? Prior to the interview, conduct research (see *Researching for the Interview* within **Section One**). From this research you will have a basic understanding of the organization or program, so think about what else you would want to know.

Have a list of questions written and prepared with you during the interview. If you think of any questions during the interview, be sure to note them so you can ask at the appropriate time. There are some general questions you can ask, but try to create individualized questions that are more geared toward your situation and the position/program.

- **What are you looking for in a candidate?**
  - A Different Version: **What would make someone successful in this position/program?**
- **What types of research projects are current students pursuing?**
- **What's the most rewarding thing about working/studying here?**
- **What challenges do you see for someone in this position/program?**
- **What would you hope the person in this role would achieve in the first 6 months?**
- **How are mentoring and advising relationships established?**
- **What's the company/department/program culture?**
- **Are there things I haven't talked about that you want to know about?**
- **What are the next steps in this process?**
  - A Different Version: **What is your timeline for making a decision?**

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will likely ask if you have any questions. This is a great time to ask your questions, but feel free to ask at other times during the interview as appropriate.