

dress **2**
impress

Debut



About the campaign

In a recent study we conducted, we found out that 72 percent of career hopefuls aged 16-23 don't know what's best to wear for an interview.

We also discovered that the average cost of attending an interview is £41.

This knowledge propelled us to launch 'Dress to Impress', a campaign that will help demystify any worries that candidates have when choosing an interview outfit, whilst also making the experience affordable for everyone.

In partnership with over 650 different charity shops from across the UK, the campaign will see each host a 'Dress to Impress' section in the store, where candidates can pick up an entire interview outfit for £10.

Not only that, but the charities' sales advisors will be briefed with knowledge from fashion expert and face of the campaign, Amber Butchart, so they will be able to offer advice for all customers who are wondering what to wear for that all-important career moment.

This guide includes the same expert advice from Amber and includes a list of the charities taking part, so you too can find your local store and 'Dress to Impress'. Read on for more!

About the guide

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Behind the campaign

The initiative is a result of a collaboration between us, the Charity Retail Association and (the face of our campaign!) Amber Butchart. We hope to help students and graduates from all backgrounds and walks of life, enabling them to afford a full interview outfit, and feel more confident in their clothing choices.



Our Founder and CEO Charlie Taylor discusses how the public can get involved with 'Dress to Impress':

"Everyone in the UK, and beyond, can benefit from this campaign - candidates can pick up a great outfit on a budget and feel interview-ready, and everyone else can look in their wardrobes to see what interview attire items they can donate to their local stores to support the campaign. The footfall generated by the campaign will also support more donations for each of the charities involved too - it's a win-win."

Amber Butchart has provided the fashion advice for the campaign, armed with her knowledge from her role as a fashion historian and author working across cultural heritage, broadcasting and academia. Previously she also appeared on BBC's Great British Sewing Bee and is the presenter of the BBC's Stitch in Time programme. On the campaign, she says:

"It's supportive, promotes sustainability and gives everyone the same chance to look and feel great during an interview. The UK's charity shops are brimming with hidden gems that are waiting to go from being pre-loved to re-loved and this campaign makes it easier to find them."

The Charity Retail Association is headed up by Robin Osterley, which represents the interests of charity retailers that run more than 8,600 shops. When speaking on the charities getting involved with Dress to Impress, he comments:

"Charity shops play a vital role in every community, making them a perfect place for this campaign to impact local people who either need a conversation starter about starting to find work, a helping hand to get into employment, or those who have already secured an interview and are looking for a fantastic outfit for a good price."

Expert fashion advice from Amber

The culture of work is changing in the 21st century, and what's considered acceptable to wear at work, or to a job interview, is changing too.

It can be difficult to know what to wear to appear professional, but also approachable and adaptable in an ever-changing work environment. More people than ever are working from home, and dress codes are relaxing in industries such as tech and start-up businesses. This has had a knock-on effect, and many sectors outside of this have relaxed their codes too.

But it's a fine line between looking confidently casual, and striking an unprofessional tone, especially when attending a job interview. With the rise of social media and documenting our every move, and the possibility to Skype in to phone calls, today image is of paramount importance.

A job interview is all about first impressions, and your clothes and grooming are a key part of this. Overall it's really important to wear something you feel comfortable, confident and smart in. Your clothes can affect your body language and the way you project yourself to future employers, so it's of utmost importance that you feel like the best version of yourself!

Some sectors such as financial services still have rigid dress codes and encourage conformity in adopting these, so it's important to research the area you're going into before heading to the interview. What's appropriate in the creative industries may not be appropriate in other settings, and vice versa, so do your research.

In a competitive marketplace it's important that you stand out at a job interview, but in the right way. Don't be afraid to bring your personality into your interview wardrobe, but make sure your clothing supports your application, rather than overshadowing it. To play it safe, keep trousers or skirts dark, and if it's appropriate you can experiment a bit more with shirts, blouses or tops. There's no need to completely rule out colour and print if this is part of your everyday wardrobe, but pair it with classic, toned down separates or accessories.

Crucially, you want to feel your absolute best. 'Business casual' can be a minefield, but it also allows for more comfort than the rigid stiff suits and starched collars of the past. While it's important to leave the athleisure and sweatpants at home, it's no longer unacceptable to have a more individual approach to your interview attire.



Amber's top tips for dressing for an interview

1 Research the dress policy of the company you are applying for. This will not only allow you to turn up to the interview properly attired, but will show you've taken time and consideration before you've even arrived.

2 Don't be afraid to wear colour, but not too much. A shock of colour can help to make you stand out and make a bold statement. But avoid clashing prints or colours unless your interview is working in the arts or creative industries (while I am a huge fan of clashing colours and prints, I'm aware not everyone shares my passion!)

3 Smart separates can be better than an ill-fitting or poorly-made suit, so don't be beholden to the idea that a suit is an essential. However, a well-fitting suit in a contemporary cut is always a winner, so don't be put off by worries that you might look too formal.

4 Avoid jeans and T-shirts unless you are really sure that the company has a relaxed attitude to dress, or actively encourages casual dressing (for example, the tech industry). Even in these cases, it might not be appropriate for an interview.

5 To tie or not to tie? Ties are still the fastest route to a formal appearance. While they're no longer essential for 'business casual,' if you do opt to wear a tie make sure you keep it relatively slim, plain and tied correctly.

6 Shoes are important, but there's no need to spend a fortune to look appropriate. Avoid open-toed shoes (flip flops are absolutely out), but white, low-rise sneakers (think Stan Smiths) have become something of a fashion classic in recent years, and can add a fresh, contemporary element to your professional look. Again, research your company to find out if this is an appropriate statement to make, and make sure they are clean and not scuffed. Don't feel you have to wear high heels to an interview, but if they make you feel confident, wear them with pride!

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Everyone should avoid clothing that is too tight or too baggy or too sheer: you want to feel comfortable, presentable and professional.

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The details matter: make sure your socks match and your clothes aren't creased as otherwise this could reflect poorly on your organisational skills.

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A blazer or jacket in a dark colour is always a good re-wearable piece for smartening up an outfit.

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Remember that the interview is how you're selling yourself, so it's not unusual to dress slightly more formally than you would for the position itself.

Avoid garments with too much text such as slogans or enormous logos. While these can be great out of office looks, you don't want to compete with the words on your clothing that could detract from what you're saying.

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Fashion classics such as a crisp white shirt or a trench coat can be great for a smart and professional but stylish look.

Interview staples

- Smart trousers for men and women
- Knee length skirts
- Shirts/blouses - not formal dress shirts but smart, can include colour
- Brogues/loafers
- Smart flats and heels for women
- Blazers and jackets
- Knitwear - smart sweaters and cardigans

Charities involved

Below is a full list of the participating charities that are involved in the campaign. To find a store in your local area, please contact the charity head office directly for more information.

[Action Cancer](#)
[Age UK County Durham](#)
[Ayreshire Hospice](#)
[Ayrshire Cancer Support](#)
[Bath Cats and Dogs Home](#)
[Beechwood Cancer Care](#)
[Birmingham Hospice](#)
[Birmingham Settlement](#)
[Capability Scotland](#)
[Cornwall Hospice](#)
[Crossroads Care](#)
[Cynthia Spencer Charity](#)
[Demelza Charity](#)
[East Anglia's Children's Hospice](#)
[Havens Hospices](#)
[Hospiscare](#)
[Leonard Cheshire](#)
[Mission Care](#)
[North West Air Ambulance Charity](#)
[Oakhaven Hospice Trust](#)
[Priscilla Bacon Hospice](#)

[Queen Elizabeth Foundation \(QEF\)](#)
[Rainbows](#)
[Richard House Children's Hospice](#)
[Royal Free Charity](#)
[RSPCA Barnsley](#)
[Save the Children](#)
[Scope](#)
[SIAS](#)
[Skipton and Craven Action for Disability](#)
[St Giles Hospice Care](#)
[St Nicholas Hospice Care](#)
[St Peter & St James Hospice](#)
[St Wilfrid's Hospice \(Eastbourne\)](#)
[St Wilfrid's Hospice \(Chichester\)](#)
[Thames Hospice](#)
[The Wirral Hospice St Johns](#)
[Wakefield Hospice](#)
[Wandsworth Oasis](#)
[Wessex Cancer Trust](#)
[Willow Wood Hospice](#)