

# Business dresscodes abroad

With the current trends of globalization and internationalization, one would think that business dresscodes around the world would be more or less the same. Think again. Truth is that local standards regarding clothes are still very much intact.

There are a few common rules that will definitely come in handy on your next business trip abroad. Generally, most countries prefer a neat and conservative dresscode. However, a lot of times the devil is in the details. In this article, we will give you a short overview of the most remarkable dresscodes we have come across thus far.

## Doing business in China is all about simplicity and class, except for Hong Kong

In China, business clothing evolves around simplicity and style, just as in most Asian countries. You can generally find this simplicity in the use of colors: dark grey, black or marine blue. Furthermore, you could describe the Chinese dresscodes as 'conservative but comfortable'.

As a woman, it is absolutely prohibited to wear high heels or a blouse with low cleavage. Men are generally expected to show up in 'business casual'. Don't even think about wearing a t-shirt, jeans or slim-fit pants, since the Chinese regard this as highly unacceptable.

In Hong Kong however, you will find absolutely no restrictions when it comes to business fashion. Matter of fact, wear a red tie or shirt to impress your peers, since the color symbolized good luck. On the other hand, wearing a lot of white is not recommended, since the color is often associated with death. Instead, go for something neutral, like light grey.

## Never wear shorts in Spain

Even though Spain can get unbearably hot during the summer, most Spaniards are not big fans of shorts. You will almost never see a businessman walking the streets in shorts. Also, Spaniards appreciate a classic, conservative choice of fashion with little to no bright colors.

## Going to Japan? Buy new socks first

In Japan, your style of clothing is strongly connected with the status you have within a company. Therefore, it is important to not stand out of the crowd, but to dress according to your position.

As the Japanese like to say: 'the nail that sticks out gets hit by the hammer'. Casual clothing simply doesn't exist in the Japanese business world. One thing you should consider, is the fact that you will be taking off your shoes a lot more than back home. Make sure to buy a few pairs of flawless socks, and check them for any possible damage before you leave the house.

Women in Japan dress themselves ultra conservatively and wear little to no jewelry. Also, don't wear pants as a woman, even if they are very formal. Women in pants are still considered highly offensive in Japan. Also, avoid wearing high heels, because it will increase the risk of being the largest person amongst your male business partners.

One last tip: in case you want to wear a kimono, close it with the right side up. Left is generally associated with death. Good luck!

## **Don't wear a three-piece suit in Brazil**

In Brazil, a three-piece suit is only reserved for the higher ranks within a company. The 'normal' office workers usually wear a two-piece suit. Furthermore, wearing a tie is obligatory when attending meetings and gatherings.

Brazilians tend to pay extra attention to their appearance, the women in particular. Therefore, be a bit more cautious about your looks, especially your nails (hands and feet). Also, make-up is usually applied very minimally.

## **Going to Mexico? Wear something white**

Mexicans appreciate white clothing the most during gatherings. In case white is just not your style, you can choose neutral colors such as marine blue, dark grey or ivory colors.

## **Doing business in Africa? Don't try to look too African**

In some countries, a lot of business is still conducted while wearing traditional clothing. It can also occur that a country has certain customs or events, which require traditional outfits.

However, if you think about indulging yourself in local customs, find out first if these customs are not solely reserved for the locals. In Africa for example, people don't take it kindly when you show up to a business gathering wearing traditional clothing.

## **Doing business in the Middle East and Saudi-Arabia**

In the Middle East, or Saudi-Arabia for that matter, you might want to avoid showing shoulders, belly and lower legs at all times. Women are dressed very conservatively and restrained. Along those lines, it's very common for women to wear a headscarf. Jewelry however, is kept to an absolute minimum.

## **Never take off your jacket in Russia**

In Russia, a suit is considered a fine example of professionalism. Suit jackets have to be kept on at all times, also during negotiations and meetings. Also, the average outfit has a dark color, such as grey, and Russians tend to make sure their shoes are perfectly polished. Don't forget to shave before the meeting either. Women generally dress very elegantly and slightly conservative.

## All women wear heels in Chili and Argentina

In Chili and Argentina, women are expected to wear heels during business meetings. In South America, your choice of fashion says a lot about your personality, so it doesn't hurt to invest some extra time in choosing the right outfit. Black and white are generally received well on any occasion.

## Go all out in India

India is probably the only country where the use of bright of colors is not only tolerated, it is encouraged in the business environment. Even women can choose to dress as bright and extravagant as they want. Of course, do make sure to keep it classy.