

Professionalism

Career Guide

Radford Career and Talent Development

PROFESSIONAL STYLE

Your appearance, along with a self-confident demeanor, friendly smile, and firm handshake, creates a positive first impression. Make sure that your appearance matches the image you want to project. Find out what clothes are appropriate for interviews in your desired industry and invest in the best that you can reasonably afford. When in doubt, err on the side of formality.

FREE PROFESSIONAL CLOTHING!

The Career Closet at Radford University offers free professional attire for students. Stop by the Center for Career & Talent Development in Russell Hall 331 anytime from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and pick out a new outfit so that you are ready for your next interview or job.

Dress for Success

One commonly asked question is, what is the difference between business professional and business casual attire in the workplace? See the table below.

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL	BUSINESS CASUAL
Job interviewing attire	Daily work attire
Matching suit jacket and pants or skirt	Nice pants/dresses/skirts
Solid, dark, or neutral colors	Ties are optional
Light colors can be worn underneath	Skirts or dresses should be knee length
No stripes, bright prints, or bright color	Flats, boots, or closed-toe shoes
Closed-toe dress shoes or low heels	Blazers or cardigans

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Professional communication, throughout the job search process and beyond, is key to telling a consistent story and creating a positive professional image. Communication occurs in many forms: face-to-face meetings, emails, video and phone conferencing, and professional social media platforms.

Communication begins at your first point of contact and creates an initial first impression. In the job search, communication continues throughout the process from application to interview to negotiating the job offer, and continues as you transition to the job. Here are a few tips regarding communicating with potential employers.

Be Responsive

- If employers reach out to you to express interest in you as a candidate, respond promptly and politely, even if you are not currently interested in being considered for the position.
- Respond or follow up within 24 hours of meeting or contact.
- Show gratitude and appreciation by saying “thank you” at every opportunity.

Be Consistent

- Use professional content and grammar in all communication, even email and text.
- Be sure your phone message is appropriate for employers to listen to.
- When leaving a phone message, speak slowly. State your first and last names, the reason for your call, and your return phone number. Then repeat your phone number slowly.
- Use an email that is professional and presents you in a professional context. Consider using your @radford.edu email on your application, though any professional-sounding email will do.