

## Fashion or distraction? Dress your best at work this summer

Written by Julie Desmond  
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The recent string of perfect summer days has many people trying on flipflops and short shorts. Who doesn't want to be comfortable? When dressing for work success this summer, remember that the most common and most often overlooked fashion rules apply whether you work indoors or out, in a professional office or a casual art studio: cover your backside... and your shoulders and your toes.

At work, always cover your back. When planning office outfits, ladies, that means no elephant ears where your waistline falls below your thong; wear a long-enough shirt and tuck it in or pull it down in back. And men, you've heard it before, pants on the ground is a good song, but a bad look for anyone hoping to keep a job through the summer.

Cover your shoulders, too. A sleeveless top is fine, as long as you put a sweater or jacket over it when working inside. If your office isn't air conditioned, find shirts with short sleeves or cap sleeves that have a rounded neck or collar. The point is to stay cool without looking hot during the workday. Save the really interesting necklines and strapless sundresses for weekends and afternoon happy hours.

The "no toes" rule has changed over the years. Socks or nylons are not always a requirement in the workplace now, but they are a good option if you want to project a smart, pulled-together, professional image. Sling back heels or peep-toe shoes are okay, too. For interviews and big presentations, however, go old school and wear something that covers your feet on both ends. This applies to men and women both. Save your sandals for the beach.

Every workplace has a dress code, whether it is published or just understood, and breaking the rules can be inconvenient, at best. Kenesha was sent home from work recently because she wore shorts. Other people's skirts were shorter than her khaki walking shorts, but the no-shorts rule meant she had to go home and change. Embarrassing.

If your employer does not give you a uniform or a dress code, look at your co-workers for clues. The person with the shortest skirt or wildest tee shirt could be the best worker in the place, but the boss is probably noticing clothes instead of capabilities. Don't let your fashion be a distraction to the people working around you.

Fashion evolves. There was probably a career counselor somewhere millions of years ago who advised cave-people to wear the appropriate animal skin over their mid-section during the hunting season. These days, it pays to keep your fashion statement subtle. When you own the

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place, your style can reflect more of your personality. Until then, let people focus on your job performance, not your wardrobe.

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