

## 6 ways to look the part

"Looking the part" is something we need to be deliberate about - especially when it comes to first impressions (and of course it's a big thing in [personal branding](#).)

The Cambridge University dictionary defines looking or dressing the part as "looking suitable for a particular situation". A few thoughts on how to do that.

1. If you don't know how to dress for something, ask in advance what the appropriate attire is. My most dramatic failure in dressing the part was the time I received a much-coveted invitation to a luncheon meeting. It was held on Halloween, so naturally I assumed it was a costume party. I arrived in my head-to-toe witch costume (black clothes, pointy hat, lace cape, and even a fake rat.) You guessed it: I was the only one wearing a costume.
2. In the professional world, overdressing is better than underdressing. When in doubt, choose a suit over khakis and a polo shirt.
3. Make sure your clothes fit. We normally worry about clothes being too tight, but clothes that are too big are also an issue. Baggy shoulders, cuffs that are too long, and clothes a few sizes too large need the help of a tailor.
4. Be conscious of what is appropriate in a region. If you're from the north and doing business in the south, it is not okay to wear white shoes in non-summer months. And ladies, if you're a southerner visiting the north during the cold, icy weather, you don't want to wear peep-toed stilettos.
5. Match your clothes and your look to your job. When my friend was a firefighter, it was acceptable that she had messy hair and wore a t-shirt to work. The same friend is now the executive director of a non-profit agency. These days, she wears high heels and tasteful jewelry.
6. Have you noticed how Lady Gaga dresses when she performs with Tony Bennett, compared to how she looks when she's on her own? Sometimes your job will require a different look, depending on where you're working that day. If I'm in rural Texas, I make sure I have a denim jacket with me. The same rule, however, doesn't apply to working in downtown Chicago.

Questions or thoughts on looking the part? I'd love to hear from you.

All the best,

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