

## Wear Your Tie, Stupid!



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: [StephenSays@bellow.press](mailto:StephenSays@bellow.press)

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @stephenviscusi, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

Dear Stephen:

*I have been a reader of your column for years, and time and again I have seen both men and women ask about what they should wear to an interview.*

*While I've noticed your answers vary based on which job the questioner is trying to land, the basic answer seems to always be to stay relatively formal. I even have internalized some of your quirkier advice, like your insistence men shave and your obsession with Crest White Strips. I do want to re-ask one question I know you've answered before, though. This only applies to men, but I think the essence of the question applies more broadly, and it touches on conversations my colleagues and I have been*

*having of late: Do men still need to wear a tie on an interview?*

*I am a sales representative calling on architects and interior designers, and my father is a CEO. I have spoken to people all across the industry, but there is simply no consensus. Nothing is worse than going on an interview only to arrive at reception and see you are dressed differently from the people who work there. I get that it is an interview, and one should always dress professionally, but give me your opinion on this one single question: Tie or no tie?*

Signed,

**Tied Up**

Dear Tied Up:

I can't even count how many times candidates have called me sheepishly at the 11th hour, just before their interview, with this exact question.

My gut answer has always been that men should wear a tie.

This may not be the answer you were looking for but it is certainly the safest bet. Yes, the job title is a consideration. Yes, company culture should be a big factor when deciding on your dress for the interview. And yes, most corporate cultures no longer

# We are talking about a regular tie here. Unless you're interviewing for first violin in the New York Philharmonic, don't wear a bow tie to an interview.

require employees to wear jackets, nonetheless a tie. So, it might seem like the easy answer is you don't need to wear a tie.

Wrong! The simple fact is you do not yet work for that company, so its dress policies don't really apply to you. While you should have some understanding of culture and dress code at the company you are interviewing with, wearing a tie shows you have a level of reverence for the interview process. You want to show your potential employer you respect them and you understand you're on an interview. This isn't just any day at the office; it's a special day that calls for special accommodations.

It is worth mentioning most interview processes today require candidates to come into the office several times. I always recommend you wear a tie to the first

one and then adjust in the following rounds, if you have to. It is essential to show the prospective employer you can look clean in your formal wear, and you are excited enough about the opportunity to put it on.

The same applies to women. I've been talking about ties specifically, but it's really just a way to describe dressing up generally. When in doubt, overdress for interviews. The risk of underdressing is so high that even if someone tells you to show up in business casual attire, I'd still wear a tie. You just never know.

Of course, being a television personality, a radio host and the author of two workplace books has taught me a tremendous amount about corporate culture. But, to be honest, I am mostly speaking from my experience as a headhunter. I have sent thousands of

candidates out to interviews with my clients and not one time have I heard a complaint from the interviewer that the candidate was dressed too formally. I have, however, heard the opposite plenty of times. Even clients with very casual and chic dress codes want their interviewees to dress up for the day.

When in doubt, simply wear a tie. You can always take it off in the bathroom, if you feel uncomfortable. A shirt and tie is a simple, clean and classic look. You will look good, feel good and interview well. Be simple and clean. That's the trick

**Stephen**

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