

DRESS CODE GUIDELINES

The purpose of our national dress guidelines is to create solidarity amongst our chapters and raise the bar on professionalism. Furthermore, it will serve you as you prepare to enter the agricultural workforce after graduation. We are the leading ladies in agriculture, and we must dress the part, act the part, and be ready to represent ourselves in the upmost positive fashion when needs arise.

FORMAL TO SEMI-FORMAL AFFAIRS (HOW TO DRESS FOR “AFTER FIVE” EVENTS)

Formal or semi-formal will be required for special evening events, including the Emerald Banquet and all ceremonies.

Cocktail Dresses

The appropriate length for a cocktail dress is no more than 2.5” above the knee. Strapless and one-shouldered dresses are acceptable.

- Pairing a dressy cardigan, shawl or blazer/jacket is smart, especially on chilly nights.
- Avoid see-through fabrics, bodice cut-outs, plunging necklines and backless dresses. Choose a different size or have the dress tailored if the armholes show your undergarment(s).
- There should be very little to no cleavage showing.

Formal (Long) Dresses

The appropriate length for formal dresses is to the ground. Strapless and one-shouldered dresses are acceptable.

- Pairing a dressy cardigan, shawl or blazer/jacket is smart, especially on chilly nights.
- Avoid see-through fabrics, bodice cut-outs, plunging necklines and backless dresses. Choose a different size or have the dress tailored if the armholes show your undergarment(s).
- There should be very little to no cleavage showing.

Cocktail and Formal Skirts with Blouses

Cocktail and formal skirts come as separates or as two-piece sets.

- The style and fabric are dressy and mirror that of a formal or cocktail style dress.
- Cocktail skirts are no more than 2.5” above the knee.
- Blouses and jackets are made of dressy fabrics, not t-shirt or casual materials.
- Avoid see-through fabrics, plunging necklines or backless garments and bodice cut-outs.
- Tailor the armholes if your undergarments are visible.

Evening Suits

Evening suits are generally sold as two-piece sets, although you can mix and match formal wear to create a semi-to-formal evening suit.

- Avoid leggings, skinny pants, cords, or cropped/capri pants.
- The hem of the pants should touch the instep of your foot while wearing shoes, and slope down to cover half your heel.

Shoes for 'After Five' Events

- Dress heels, dressy flats, or strappy heels.
- Dress shoes can be open-toed, sling-back or closed toed.
- Heels should not exceed 4 inches.
- Consider not wearing super trendy platforms or extreme high-heeled shoes. A trendy style doesn't always exude class.
- Wearing winter boots or knee-high dress boots to and from 'After Five' events is acceptable, but slip on your dress shoes upon arrival.

PROFESSIONAL DRESS STYLES

Professional or Smart Professional Dress attire is worn during Nationals Visits, professional development events, and special campus and community engagements.

There are two styles of professional dress, and either one is acceptable to wear when professional dress is required. No matter which one you choose, always remember that professional dress always requires a jacket. Please note that short suits, capri or cropped pant suits, and tuxedo-inspired evening suits are not considered formal or smart professional dress.

Formal Professional

Formal professional is your classic dress, skirt or pant suit. Generally, it is monochromatic in color, which gives an unbroken, polished look, and usually comes in, but are not limited to, dark shades of color. In simpler terms, the tops and bottoms match in color, style, fabric, etc.

Smart Professional

Smart professional attire is bought as 'separates', and includes professional dresses, skirts, blouses and suit jackets. Never be afraid to mix color, keeping in mind that too much color may overpower your presence.

PROFESSIONAL DRESS ITEMS

The Business Jacket

Professional Dress requires a suit jacket; it means you are 'armed to conduct business.' A business jacket or blazer adds polish to any look.

- The shoulder line of a jacket should rest at or just beyond the curve of your shoulder, usually $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch outside the shoulder.
- There should be no pulling or tugging near buttons or elsewhere, and it should

taper slightly at your waistline.

- Make sure you can lift your arms over your head and reach around you while wearing the jacket.
- Sleeves should never feel or appear snug.
- Jacket sleeves should be long enough to cover your wrist bones when your hands hang down at your sides.
- Smart Professional Dress allows room to experiment with color, design and fabrics to help draw out your fashion personality. However, maintaining a professional look is crucial.

Shawls, Wraps and Cardigans

These separate pieces are especially handy if you are in a meeting and decide to remove your jacket. Room temperatures fluctuate; therefore, having one of these items in your bag is always smart. They maintain the professional look you are striving for when the jacket becomes too unbearable or not enough.

Tops

Paired with skirts and under jackets, tops are an important element to your professional look. A top is supposed to help draw a person's eye to your face. The right style enhances your image, draws attention upward and adds color or chic to an outfit.

- Capped, short, $\frac{3}{4}$ or long-sleeved tailored button-up tops and pull over styles are acceptable.
- V-neck sweaters, sweater sets and turtle necks (winter only) are excellent staples as well.
- Blouses should be of ample length to be tucked in if the outfit requires.
- Avoid sheer fabrics or wear a camisole underneath your blouses.
- Avoid denim tops and tank tops (unless worn under a blouse).
- Button-up tops that pucker, and deep armholes exposing undergarment(s) need tailoring or require a different size.
- Blouses should not reveal cleavage or bra straps.
- Avoid sleeveless if possible.

Business Pants

Pants can be a classic fit, straight legged or slightly flared. If you see the outline of a back or front pocket, be advised that the pant is too tight.

- The hem of the pants should touch the instep of your foot while wearing shoes, and slope down to cover half your heel.
- Pants are pressed and clean, free of stains and not tattered.
- Avoid cargo style pants, capri's, pencil pants, and jeans.

Skirts and Dresses

From shift to fit and flares, there are many options when it comes to skirts and dresses. Smart over trendy is your best choice for professional dress occasions.

- Dresses and skirts should be pressed, clean and match your business jacket.
- Skirts and dresses more than two inches above the knee are not permitted.

- No mini-skirts. Avoid jersey, cotton, natural fibers, or metallic fabrics.
- If you choose a tapered skirt, don't let it compromise your ability to walk, sit and bend.
- Invest in and wear (when needed) nude, black and white slips.

Nylons

Nylons are recommended for Formal and Smart Professional Events. This might be your first time having to shop for and wear nylons. A formal or smart professional suit always requires nylons. If you are wearing a pant suit, you have the choice of wearing knee-high nylons or dress socks.

- Sheer and nude hose are best.
- Black opaque or sheer nylons are best worn in the fall and winter. They are considered 'trendy', so watch the style reports if you are interested.
- Use appropriate discretion with "animal" prints or colors.
- There should be no visible tears, runs, dirt marks, sagging or excessive snags.
- Purchase and pack extra nylons.
- A dab of clear nail polish or a few spritzes of hair spray can help stop an occurring run in its tracks.

Shoes

Closed-toe pumps and sling-back heels, dressy flats and pretty wedges will compliment your professional look.

- Shoes must have a backing and be less than 3 inches in height.
- No sandals, flip-flops or strappy special occasion heels, tennis shoes, crocs or cowgirl, work boot or UGG boots.
- Only pair knee-high dress boots and booties with pant suits.
- Tall dress boots/knee-high boots are weather-permitted (blizzard, snow, ice, below freezing temperatures) with dresses and skirts.

SMART BUSINESS CASUAL

Smart Business Attire will be worn for recruitment events, chapter meetings and some campus and community events. Also known as 'business casual', 'smart' defines your style as something very close to professional looks, but usually sprinkled with a bit of your fashion personality.

Pants

Pants should still resemble a professional slack. You have room to show your personality by wearing an assortment of colors and styles, but fit should be classic, straight leg, slightly flared or boot cut.

- Khakis or colored pants are allowed, but not loud in color. Darker shade khakis are for the colder months and light Khakis are worn during warmer months.
- Professional colors such as blue, dark browns, blacks, grays etc. are your safest choices.

- Slightly patterned pants will work, but use your judgement when deciding what is attractive vs. distracting.
- No jeans, cords, capri pants, shorts, cargo pants of any length or denim materials.

Tops

It's wise to have a wide variety of tops in an array of styles, including every day and formal. A top is supposed to help draw a person's eye to your face. The right style enhances your image, draws attention upward to your face and adds pop to an outfit.

- Shirts with collars, including polos, button-ups, wraps and sleeveless styles are acceptable, and they can transition easily from day to night.
- Business casual sweaters and sweater sets are great choices.
- Sleeveless are allowed if the straps are one inch thick or wider with no bra straps showing.
- Always wear or bring along a cardigan, blazer, dressy business sweater, or shawl to wear over a top to maintain a polished look.

Skirts

There's no better way to feminize your style or dress up your look than with skirts. From straight to full, choose a skirt style that flatters your figure and one to two styles will become your signature pieces.

- A well-styled skirt length is between the top of the kneecap and about an inch below.
- Allow yourself room to move in your skirts. A rule of thumb is that if you can fit your thumb between you and the waist band, it's a good fit.
- Clean, unwrinkled and dressier versions of skirts are best for a smart casual style.
- Avoid cotton, jersey, natural fibers or metallic fabric skirts.
- Invest in and wear (when needed) nude, black and white slips.
- The minimum hem length is 2 inches above the knee.

Shoes

Shoe choices expand in the smart business casual wardrobe.

- Dressy sandals, dress cowboy boots, loafers, peep-toes, flats, pumps, sling-back heels, and wedges make for excellent choices.
- A variety of colors (minus metallic and overly loud colors) can add pops of colors to outfits.
- Take caution when wearing tall boots. Follow the guidelines for, "Professional and Smart Professional" on page 4 of this guide.
- No flip flops, sneakers, UGGS, cros, Birkenstocks or similar foot-wear.
- No more than a 3-inch heel.
- Clean, buffed and scratch free shoes. Avoid wearing shoes with heels that are 'peeling', scratched and scuffed.

CASUAL DRESS ATTIRE

Casual Dress Attire will be worn for Recruitment Events and chapter retreats. As our country moves towards even more casual styles, it doesn't mean Sigma Alpha Sorority is following the trend. Though we are trend setters, we are professional leading ladies in agriculture; therefore, follow the rule, "Would my best dressed relative approve my casual look?"

Bottoms

The events where you get to wear jeans, capris, cargos, fun pants or shorts are fun! Be smart about your choices. There are still many workplaces, venues, restaurants, etc. that don't allow jeans and ultra-causal clothing.

- No sweat pants or sleep-wear inspired pants.
- Not too tight! Keep your look polished.
- Add some color and invest in a pair of dark denim pants that can be easily dressed up.
- No rips, tears, or holes.
- If your underwear show when bending, twisting, or kneeling, your pants are too low. Wear a belt if you need to constantly pull your pants up, or choose to wear a higher waist pant style.

Tops

A top is supposed to help draw a person's eye to your face. The right style enhances your image, draws attention upward and adds color or chic to an outfit.

- A t-shirt or collared shirt is acceptable. Bra straps and mid-drifts should not be showing, as you are still representing the sorority.
- Σ A issued polo or shirt.
- Σ A sweatshirts are acceptable.

Shoes

Shoes that are comfortable and appropriate for your surroundings can include flip flops, clogs, boots, tennis shoes, etc.

MOST IMPORTANT DRESS GUIDELINES

- ✓ Be cognitive of where you will be, and what activities you will be participating in. Make sure your dress is suitable for those environments and events.
- ✓ Hair should be done appropriately and made presentable for the occasion. No bed-head or similar "messy" styles.
- ✓ Avoid revealing clothing. You shouldn't be able to see anything defined as under-garments. No leggings, jeggings, or any other spandex inspired "pants".
- ✓ Cover all visible tattoos and remove nose, lip, chin, brow piercing's and discs. Avoid wearing more than two sets of earrings at sorority events.
- ✓ No sports apparel: Jersey's, running or yoga tops, spandex tops, etc.

- ✓ Clothing should be free of dust, pet hair, dander, wrinkles, tears (purposely or not), and stains. Wearing clothes obviously picked up from the floor or plucked from a laundry basket is obvious and unacceptable.
- ✓ No sunglasses inside or on any part of your head during events.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, use good judgment. What would your mother, grandmother, Professional Development chair or future boss say or think about your outfit? To get the most out of our national dress code guidelines, we recommend you input the dates and dress guidelines into your planner for all upcoming events. By taking action now, you will allow yourself time to build a wardrobe for all Sigma Alpha events. It may require a few style improvements on your part to be in good standing with the new guidelines, but each improvement will raise your confidence and esteem while enhancing Sigma Alpha's stellar brand.