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Jill Haney

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On 'casual Friday,' leave the T-shirts, Crocs in the closet

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Since more companies are going to a "jeans Friday," what are the appropriate jeans, top/shirt, and shoes for a corporate environment?

Business casual and "jeans Friday" have certainly added to the conundrum of appropriate workplace attire. It is important to remember the messages that are sent in the way we choose to dress for work.

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I recommend, for men and women, a dark wash denim with little or no distressing - holes, fading or whiskers.

For women, I recommend a flare-leg or a trouser-leg denim, as this is dressier and more professional. Tops should be in high-quality fabrics, with an excellent fit, as "jeans Friday" is not the time for sloppy or rumpled dressing.

For men, I recommend a long-sleeved woven or knit shirt topped with a blazer or sport coat.

Women have a little more leeway with the sleeve length, but a fitted jacket adds an element of professionalism and sophistication. It is not necessary to wear a blazer or jacket, but it adds a professional look that will not go unnoticed.

Shirts with writing are not appropriate in the workplace unless specifically promoting the company or a special event.

Shoes should match the outfit and should be polished and in excellent condition. I suggest women wear a slight heel to pull the outfit together. Men should wear a black or brown loafer or slip-on but should not wear a dress shoe with the jeans. There are many options of dress-down styles of classic dress shoes for men.

Athletic shoes are not appropriate for casual days.

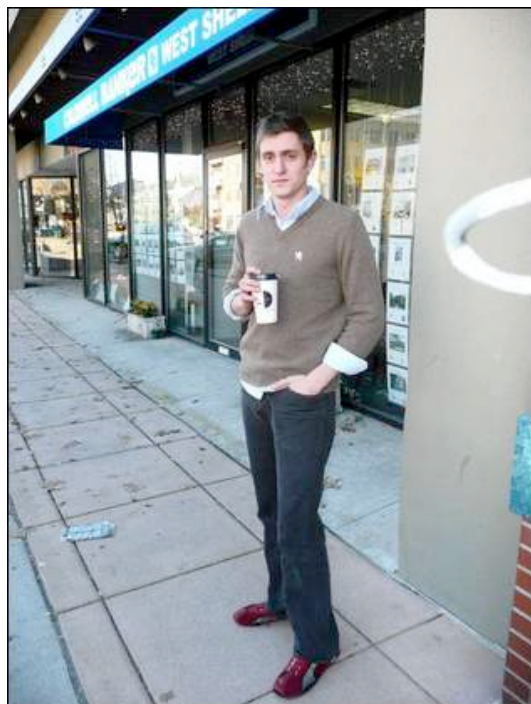
A few thoughts on business casual in general, and good rules to follow:

Clothes should be clean and the wearer should be well-groomed. Business casual is not the time to try a sloppy look.

Always look to the managers and superiors in the office to determine what is appropriate, and never dress more casually than your subordinates. Remember, dress for the job you want, not the job you have.

Finally, when in doubt, opt for a dressier look, as it is easier to dress down than to dress up an outfit.

Jill Haney's Cincinnati-based business, JH Image Consulting, conducts individual and corporate group training on appearance, behavior and communication. She is a certified image consultant with the Association of Image Consultants International. Reach her at 513-505-2732 ihill@ihimage.net or www.ihimage.net



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Business casual and "jeans Friday" can be a challenge for an office worker, but in general, workers should be sure their clothes are clean and they are well-groomed.

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