

Impeccable style for your day-to-day life

BLACKSOCKS explains the most important dress codes.

Not Just a Question of Taste

Dress codes are a science all of their own. Categories range from casual to informal, formal, very formal and even highly official and ceremonial. It is important to choose the right clothing for your event, circumstances, age and shape. Contrasts (black and white) generally have a more professional look than tone-in-tone combinations. It is always worth avoiding style slip-ups, whether in your professional or private life.

Ties with cartoon characters, childish batik patterns, and oversized company logos have no place in the business world. Clothing should not be too tight, too baggy, or too old-fashioned. Other taboos include visible bare calves, white socks, brown shoes with a black suit, or braces at an evening gala.

Casual Dress Code

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Casual means leisure wear – not to be confused with the well-known ‘baggy’ look. Outfits might include a shirt or polo shirt with jeans or chinos. You can definitely leave your tie in the wardrobe.

Smart Casual Dress Code

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This dress code, combining sportiness with easy elegance, offers plenty of scope for choice. It doesn’t have to mean a dark suit and a tie: you could go for slacks or corduroy trousers and a shirt or polo shirt with a jacket, for example. Dark-colored jeans would also work

Business Casual Dress Code

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‘Business casual’ is for relaxed business lunches, drinks after work, and business trips. Your jeans are left behind in the wardrobe, replaced by elegant slacks. A classic suit with a plain shirt, tie, and knee-high socks is also fine.

Business Attire Dress Code

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Business environments demand a serious and elegant appearance. Put on a dark single-breasted or double-breasted suit, a plain shirt, a tie and socks in a matching color. Only take your jacket off if it gets hot. Bare skin showing between your socks and the bottom of your trousers when you sit down is also a definite faux pas.

Black Tie Dress Code

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Formal events always call for dark clothes. Combine a black dinner jacket with a waistcoat or cummerbund, a white dress shirt, and of course, a black bow tie. With black tie, you’ll be perfectly dressed for any formal evening celebration!

White Tie Dress Code

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The more formal the event, the more elegant the dress code. ‘White tie’ calls for tails. Wear them with a white dress shirt and a hand-tied white silk bow tie – never a necktie. In this outfit, you’ll fit right in at the Vienna Opera Ball.



Casual dress code

You don't necessarily need a tie or tight suit trousers to do professional work: in the era of internet services you can also earn money from the comfort of your own home, before or after throwing on your everyday clothes. Think of Zuckerberg with his familiar hoodie, Jobs with his signature turtleneck sweater, or Musk's competent appearance. Doing work and doing it well is not about the clothes you wear. So why all this fuss about dress codes?



ent to private settings, the business of 'everything else': clinking glasses with the boss at a barbecue, watching your mother-in-law blow out the birthday candles, or an informal invitation to have a drink with some colleagues. Casual wear places the emphasis on comfort and personal style, as these are more important for the situation than formalities.

Street wear vs. casual wear

This dress code should not be confused with everyday street wear or what you would slob around in at home. On your couch there are no rules, and when meeting friends in a café or walking your dog there is no reason to tailor your appearance to your conversation partners or your environment.

A casual dress code helps to set a framework for interpretation. The word 'casual' means relaxed and informal, so clothing is correspondingly functional and comfortable. Nonetheless, grooming and a suitable amount of elegance are just as important with this dress code.

Casual at work

Informal dress codes are on the increase in business environments, replacing traditional business dress codes such as business casual or

Why do you need 'casual'?

Dress codes may have originally been created for entirely different reasons, but now they mainly exist to provide us with guidelines for what to wear when going to an important client's offices or if you are invited to an upscale event. Being smartly dressed in a dinner jacket or tails shows the event organiser that you respect them and appreciate being invited. That might be true for black tie, but what is casual wear for?

Events or places where a smart appearance is crucial are very differ-



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Delphine boxers: a perfect fit with rebellious checks

business attire, especially in small, family-run operations, young start-ups, creative professions and the fashion industry. In the fashion sector it is even desirable for staff to use the freedom offered by this dress code to highlight their own personalities. Depending on a company's philosophy and values, having uniformed employees in such companies would give outsiders the wrong impression.

Basic principles

T-shirts, jeans and trainers: all are allowed under a casual dress code. The key principle is that you should only wear clean clothing without any ragged or visibly damaged areas. Flip-flops, shorts or baggy clothing such as sweatpants or hoodies are not entirely welcome. Overly tight cuts are a recipe for discomfort, which is why 'casual wear' covers looser, airier fits (known as 'casual fit'). Fabrics such as denim, cotton, flannel, linen and polyester are regular features and can be combined with more elegant materials such as silk

and cashmere. Chiffon, brocade and velvet, on the other hand, will soon make things too elegant. When choosing your outfit, it is useful to think about who invited you, who will be coming and what the atmosphere is likely to be.

Socks for self confidence

The casual look allows you to display your personality. One popular option is colourful or patterned socks which you can combine with the colours in your outfit as you choose. Taking

socks as your base, you have plenty of options for new outfit combinations that will show off your own particular style with a healthy air of confidence and a touch of skilful flair.

In the fashion sector it is even desirable for staff to use the freedom offered by this dress code to highlight their own personalities.



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Business light:
subtle, calming stripes

*Some people might
feel the need to
follow a fashion
trend, but classic
pieces remain the
safer option.*

Casual for men

One option is jeans or chinos combined with slip-on shoes and a light shirt or knitted sweater. If you go for a T-shirt, then your outfit might work better with a simple jacket or a blazer. Ties can be left safely hanging in the wardrobe. Tennis shoes belong on the tennis court, but other elegant trainers or sneakers are an option.

Some people might feel the need to follow a fashion trend, but classic pieces remain the safer option. Trends can be misunderstood and quickly go awry, meaning that what is intended as a fashionable ensemble of trendy elements soon becomes the exact opposite. Subtlety, simplicity and restraint will mean that your outfit leaves a lasting positive impression. The best outfits are the ones where you cannot see how much thought has gone into them, as this displays nonchalance and proof of a relaxed individual style.



BLACKSOCKS recommends:
Funky FORTY-FOUR:
first snow in Burgundy

Casual for women

When the weather is warm, women could go for a summer dress, a skirt and shirt, or long trousers with a top. Make sure that the skirt's hem doesn't stretch too far over the knees. Cardigans, button-down sweaters or blazers are all good options. Women should be aware that a blazer will smarten up an outfit, meaning that fewer accessories are required. Otherwise, jewellery can easily spice up a simple outfit.



Smart casual dress code

A traditional suit with tie and heavy fabrics can be too formal and uncomfortable in some situations, whilst standard casual wear is also not quite appropriate. If neither casual nor business casual is appropriate or if you do not want to look over- or underdressed, smart casual is the best choice. Smart casual is the dress code for offices in many sectors, meetings, drinks and dinner after work, or business trips



Smart casual for men

Some people define this dress code as casual and informal but still elegant with high-quality materials, tailored to the relevant occasion. Others see it less as a question of available outfits than of good taste and an understanding of fashion. Sporty elegance leaves lots of room for manoeuvre and interpretation, making it difficult to find the right balance. A suit without a tie and with an open shirt collar can be as much smart casual as trousers with a jacket or sports coat. You don't have to do away with a suit to fit this look – you just ensure

a more laid-back appearance by replacing a tie with a breast pocket handkerchief in a contrasting colour to your suit, and don't button your shirt up to the collar.

Shirts, T-shirts and jackets

Long-sleeved shirts are perfect with one of the basics – a jacket, sports coat or blazer. Outerwear alternatives are limited. Opinions differ on T-shirts and polo shirts. However, on hot summer days a jacket and long-sleeved short may become rather warm, so you can weigh up the particular occasion to decide what would be appropriate.



In colder months, you can wear a simple turtleneck or pullover made from fine materials. A round-neck or V-neck pullover over a shirt is another option depending on what you prefer.

Jeans or trousers?

Fabric, corduroy or chino trousers in muted colours could all be considered. Don't forget an inconspicuous belt, even if your trousers fit like a glove. Jeans are best left in the wardrobe unless they are an even dark blue or black. For a professional appearance, it is



BLACKSOCKS recommends:
classic calf socks in
powder blue: soft and sure

For a professional appearance, it is also important to ensure that your clothes are not too baggy.

also important to ensure that your clothes are not too baggy, wrinkled or faded. This excludes standard denim jeans from this particular dress code.

Socks and shoes

Don't underestimate socks, which, even if unassuming, can immediately ruin a carefully composed outfit if you make an unfortunate choice. They should serve to link your shoes and your trousers by offering a colour that sits in-between, thus rounding off your entire outfit with a harmonious touch.

The best shoes are closed-toe options such as loafers, classy sneakers or moccasins, and you also can't go wrong with lace-up shoes. Trainers or leather boots are not recommended for this dress code.



Since the smart casual dress code is rather reserved, you should go for inconspicuous patterns or unshowy colours.

Colour choices

Since the smart casual dress code is rather reserved, you should go for inconspicuous patterns or unshowy colours such as browns, blues or greys. If you want to add a stronger touch, try a discreetly patterned shirt or coloured socks – the latter have made a comeback in recent years and are no longer taboo if you want something a bit more striking. However, don't overdo the colourful touches; just make sure that they always fit harmoniously within the outfit as a whole.

The comfort factor also plays a key role, and you should think seriously about the event to make sure that your choice is the right one. If you aren't sure if your choice is elegant or smart enough, you are better off going for a style which leaves you feeling comfortable and confident.

BLACKSOCKS recommends:
Delphine boxers:
comfortable fit in navy stripes



BLACKSOCKS recommends:
Business light: surprise
stripes in your shoe

Closed shoes with no more than a small heel, such as ballerinas or pumps, are always a good choice.

Smart casual for women

Although this dress code is less strict for women because they have a much wider range of combinations to choose from, this does not make it any less complicated. You cannot go wrong with a trouser or skirt suit, but skirts can also be combined with a pullover or blouse if you prefer. Closed shoes with no more than a small heel, such as ballerinas or pumps, are always a good choice. In terms of colour, the same advice goes as for men: dark colours and subtle patterns ensure that your outfit sits in the happy medium between casual and elegant.



Business casual dress code

In business life, first (and all subsequent) impressions play a vital role. In the morning, therefore, it is important that you choose an outfit which matches your company's dress code. This section offers information and tips on the business casual dress code.

Where do you wear business casual?

Business casual is normally everyday office clothing, and is also fine for going out and meeting customers.

Some industries will still use formal dress codes such as business attire. In back-office areas or in manufacturing or trading companies, comfort has become more important and business casual has become the standard code.

Famous high-tech entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs or Bill Gates have consciously opted not to wear formal business outfits, and represent the majority of the working population. As well as being more comfortable, this more informal clothing also automatically creates a more relaxed, cooperative atmosphere.

The week ends with 'casual Friday',

which as the name suggests allows for a little relaxation and more laid-back outfits on the final working day. In companies with formal dress codes, this means that staff can come to work wearing a business casual look.

If an invitation gives the dress code as being 'come as you are', this should be taken literally if your outfit is business casual, smart casual or business attire. A less presentable, casual look on the other hand will stand out from the crowd of business wear in a negative way. In this event, you are better off getting something smarter out of the wardrobe.

Simple and stylish

A professional appearance is always a must in the world of business. In this dress code, the word 'casual' means that the clothing is more comfortable and less formal than traditional business attire.

Just like the design as a whole, staff should also represent a company's culture and brand. This is expressed in areas such as clothing, with business wear mischievously now described by some as a uniform. This style is characterised by clear, classic cuts which have been cleanly and carefully put together. The aim is to show that an outfit has been thought





BLACKSOCKS recommends:
Suzette T-shirt:
entices with its great neckline

through – quietly elegant by conviction, professional yet relaxed.

What does this actually mean?

Business casual for men

A suit without a tie is always a good option. This is the easiest but not necessarily the first choice if you do not want to spend your life in a suit. You have more scope than with business attire and can counter monotony by trying some different combinations.

Given the lack of alternatives (other than an elegant pullover in the winter), shirts are a virtual must for men. Jackets, sports coats and outerwear can (but do not have to) be left at home.

The smart casual dress code allows you to wear various different kinds of trousers. Suit or fabric trousers such as dockers, slacks, chinos or cargo pants are fine for anyone who knows what these terms mean. Dark jeans are increasingly making an appearance, but are not part of a business casual dress code.

On your feet you should be wearing dark socks which match the rest of your wardrobe. The best colour is one which falls between your trousers and your shoes. Said shoes could be classic Oxfords, elegant loafers or discreet, brand-new sports shoes

(although this description does not include tennis shoes).

Keep an eye for detail

Like education, high-quality clothing is an investment in the future. A stylish appearance using selected materials will be a successful one and will last longer than cheap alternatives. When you look in the mirror, make sure you keep an eye for detail: the



material should be ironed and smooth without any open seams, and garments with prints are best left for a casual look. Company, sports, university or fashion brand logos

are usually acceptable provided that they are not oversized. Colours tend to be kept discreet and conservative. If you have a beard, make sure that you keep it trimmed. Piercings and tattoos should be hidden.

Business casual for women

Selected individual parts of business wear can be combined with more informal elements: trousers with a blouse or light top, a dress with dark stockings, or a skirt with a cardigan or pullover. Women have lots of categories and clothing styles to choo-



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Business light: delicate stripes, not tiny checks

The boundaries between smart casual and business casual are blurred and not clearly defined.

se from, which leaves greater scope to play with. Shoes should be closed and have a maximum heel of six centimetres, such as pumps, loafers or ballerinas.

Difference from smart casual

One means wearing a business outfit and replacing a few items with something less formal, the other a casual outfit plus a few more formal pieces. Isn't that the same thing?

Dress codes are less strict than they used to be and may therefore be viewed differently by different people. As well as leaving room for interpretation, these standards vary both in society and from one company to another, with individual ideas about what clothing is appropriate.

The boundaries between smart casual



BLACKSOCKS recommends:
Josephine boxers in navy:
fantastic comfort

*The boundaries
between smart casual
and business casual
are blurred and not
clearly defined.*

and business casual are blurred and not clearly defined. Normally, it is shoes and a blazer which set the smart casual look apart. It also allows for more playful use of colour and emphasis. Individuality and personal style do not outbalance representing the company. In creative industries, a smart dress code is often preferred so that women can wear frills, lace or tassels and men can opt for other small, colourful features.

Watch and learn

With a healthy dose of common sense and a bit of attention, you can take direction from your colleagues' clothing whilst also thinking about your own impact and the impression you want to make. Still unsure if your choice is suitable? If in doubt, go for a more conservative outfit until you have a better handle on the established norms for this dress code. Being underdressed leaves a worse impression than wearing something more elegant. You also always have the option of removing an item of clothing, even if it is just your tie, to immediately give the whole outfit a less formal look. You could also ask your HR department or the event organiser for advice.



Business attire dress code

Business attire does what it says on the tin, and sits one level higher than business casual on the formality scale. Also known as ‘day informal’, ‘business formal’ or ‘tenue de ville’, this dress code is worn in the business world or for business events.

Where is business attire worn?

A dark suit and tie, light shirt, black socks and high-quality shoes: the traditional suit is the everyday outfit for conservative professions that have contact with customers, such as finance, engineering or law. Customer relationships are the focus, so staff need to generate confidence and represent the company. This dress code is mandatory for middle and senior management and is recommended for anyone wanting to be promoted to this level or invited to interview. Regardless of the usual dress code, prospective employees of such companies should always wear a business suit for interviews.



Colour palette

Many dress codes call for reticence when it comes to colour. As many elements as there are to think about when wearing black tie, colour is not

one of them. Business formal offers more leeway, which makes it harder to choose the right thing. Dark grey, anthracite, dark blue or black – pick up to two for your outfit. Brown can be discounted as an option for formal clothing.

As a good rule of thumb, the more upscale the event, the darker the clothing. The same goes in the business world, the higher up the hierarchy you go. As long as you do not opt for more than two colours or patterns, you can step out with confidence. Less is more – the aim of this dress code is not to confuse or attract attention.

Businessmen

The shirt should be either classic white or light blue, and paired with a tie darker in colour than the shirt. Dark red or light blue are possible options, depending on your choice. Dark, simple lace-up shoes with leather soles are welcome: brogues, derbys or Oxfords. Sneakers which were once still acceptable for a business casual look are no longer a viable option. Loafers, jeans, chinos and T-shirts are often combined into an informal ensemble for casual wear, which is why they no longer form a part of more formal work wear.



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Augustine briefs:
athletic briefs

The perfect fit

The cut should be individually tailored to ensure that it does not pinch or sag anywhere. You should be able to comfortably fit two fingers between your neck and shirt collar, and the sleeves should reach to your wrists when your arms are at your sides. 'Slim fit' describes a cut which is fitted without being restrictive. Keep an eye on the fabric in the shoulder area: Is it sitting pleasingly on your shoulders or is there a kink spoiling the straight line? The buttons should close effortlessly without causing any creases. Baggy trouser pockets destroy the clear cut and shape of trousers. Your keys and wallet are better off in the inside pocket of your jacket; this also makes it easier to sit. Calf socks ensure that no bare skin is exposed, since as little as possible should be on show with this dress code. Your trousers should not require a belt, and there should be a small fold at the bottom of your trousers where the material is resting on your shoes. A wrinkle-free suit and a good fit is something which everyone notices, whether consciously or unconsciously. To avoid wrinkles, we recommend removing your jacket when sitting in a car or on a train.

Armed with the right materials

For business attire, it is not the cut but the materials which make the key difference when the temperature tips. If it becomes warmer or you have an upcoming meeting which is likely to make you sweat, you will be glad for light, heat-regulating materials. Cotton, mohair, linen or silk are all suitable.



Open-pored yarns are breathable and also let light through.

New wool or cashmere are suitable for the winter. To ensure that your

professional appearance is not tainted by low-quality synthetic fibres, we recommend looking at the label. The proportion of such fibres should be as low as possible (below 5%) to ensure a high-quality material. These materials are not stiff and scratchy but rather perceptibly softer, speaking to their quality.



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Business Light socks in red: powerful strides

Tried-and-tested details

As well as colours and patterns, fashion-conscious men can also opt for additional accessories and details to add a personal touch to a dark suit. Discreet cufflinks can enhance a suit, as can a flat watch. A breast pocket handkerchief can add a highlight that matches your tie. Leather belts and briefcases depend on the shoes you have chosen and leave less scope for individual style, but complete the image nicely. Products such as scent should only be sparingly used to remain natural and ensure that the smell is not obtrusive.

A breast pocket handkerchief can add a highlight that matches your tie.

Businesswomen

A trouser or skirt suit with a light blouse or top is the classic choice for a woman in the business world. Modern garments or cocktail dresses which are at least knee length and not particularly unusual can be used as everyday professional outfits with a little skill. Pair these with tights and closed shoes that have a heel no more than seven centimetres high. You would normally wear long sleeves, unless you keep your blazer on in the office.



Black tie dress code

The term ‘black tie’ is a deceptive one, as this dress code has no tie at all – ‘bow tie’ would be more suitable, as that is part of the basic equipment required. Guests at upscale events are asked to wear outfits which look like something more than an important day at the office. Use this guide to make sure that you are suitably elegant when attending a sought-after evening do.

Glamorous events

Toasting the bride and groom at a sophisticated wedding breakfast, enjoying a theatre premier with honoured guests, or adjusting a bow tie before the gala begins: the typical black tie dress code of a dinner jacket and bow tie is for official and celebratory events. Originally all evening events would automatically fall into this category once the church clock had tolled six, but this has since branched off into numerous variants ranging from ‘red carpet black tie’ to ‘festive black tie’ to the less formal ‘black tie optional’. Today, guests are explicitly informed of the relevant dress code so that they are correctly dressed for the type of event.

Black tie is a dress code with significantly more rules to follow than business attire or smart casual. Given the official, celebratory charac-

ter of the events they are used for, proper implementation of black tie and white tie dress codes is expected. For a traditional black tie event, a tailored dinner jacket (if you are British, a tux for the Americans) is a must.

Basic getup

The basic outfit includes the following:

- A black self-tie bow tie
- A dinner jacket in black or midnight blue
- A white shirt with a wing collar
- A waistcoat or cummerbund with a single-row jacket
- Black patent-leather lace-up shoes or smooth leather shoes



However, formal dress codes such as black tie would not be part of etiquette if the things to remember could be counted on one hand. Small, yet powerful – the bow tie sets the tone of the entire dress code. If tied carelessly, then not only will the bow tie look bad, it will also have a negative impact on the entire outfit and result in the wearer immediately giving the initial impression of being absent-minded. There is no problem with allowing a few unpre-



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Delphine boxer shorts:
a perfect fit all day long

dictable deformations and wearing a bow tie with a little more composure and lack of concern. Perfection is not expected, but a pinch of such nonchalance is enough for black tie events. Use your eyes or the outside edge of your face as a width guideline for your bow tie, with your shirt collar being the maximum.

Trim and cummerbund

A jacket with one row of buttons is known as single-breasted, one with two is double-breasted. If you go for a double-breasted jacket, it should generally be kept buttoned up and worn without a waistcoat or cummerbund. Otherwise you can dig out either a cummerbund or a low-cut waistcoat in the same colour as the black bow tie. Cummer...

what now? A cummerbund is a wide silk sash which men wear around the stomach to cover the point where their shirt meets the waistband. Worn correctly, it has several upward-facing pleats. In higher-quality models, the deepest pleat contains a hidden embroidered pocket so that you can keep your opera tickets easily to hand. Dress trousers do not have any loops for a belt, as this is replaced with braces. The seam down

the side of the leg has a silk stripe trim. Trousers with turn-ups (folds at the ends of the legs) or flaps on pockets (piping) are also dispensed with. Double fabrics are too sporty for an elegant evening. Instead, allow the smooth material to gather slightly on your black patent-leather lace-up shoes, and reach just as far as the top of the heel. Smooth leather shoes are a viable alternative, provided that they are polished to a shine.

It's collar time

Shirts seem so simple, but there are countless variants: Kent collars, cut-away collars, pointed collars or up-turned collars, to say nothing of buttons. Only wing collars and standard turn-down collars are relevant to

Only wing collars and standard turn-down collars are relevant to black tie.

black tie. A wing collar is stiff with ends that point forward, making it the more modern version of the upturned collar. A rising lapel in the same material as the silk or

satin trim ensures a coherent overall picture.

Some of the few visible buttons or connections are cufflinks, as the strip of buttons on the shirt should be covered. If there are others on the outfit, they must be covered with fabric to avoid compromising



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Knee socks:
simply gentlemanlike

the elegance of the harmoniously rounded combination of shapes and colours.

A love of detail

Perfect evening attire demonstrates considered style choices if close attention is also paid to individual details.

The fit is right if there are no creases on the back, the jacket can be buttoned up easily, and the trousers sit comfortably without a belt. A back pocket bulge that betrays a thick wallet affects the cut and aesthetic. A money clip should be all you need to carry important cards and any necessary money.

How you feel under all this gear will determine how you come across. By this we mean literally under: for example, your vest should not be visible through your shirt. White, finely woven underwear and black knee-high socks will keep you comfortable beneath your outfit.

The opportunity to add a personal touch comes with a scarf, breast pocket handkerchief or cufflinks. Cufflinks in gold, silver, stainless steel or black pick up the colour of a wristwatch and add the necessary gleam. A pocket watch is even better, as you would not normally wear any jewelle-

ry with a dinner jacket.

A classic option is a breast pocket handkerchief made from fine silk, often white or alternatively in a colour designed to match a dress scarf. It should sit one centimetre out of the breast pocket parallel to the pocket edge or folded into a more modern triangle or crest.

Ladies' choice

Women and men show that they are together by presenting a consistent image. If the man is wearing a black dinner jacket, the woman will be clad



in a long evening dress. However, a more modern midnight-blue dinner jacket can stand next to an elegant cocktail dress that is at least knee length. Women can use accessories such as jewellery and bags to enhance or simplify their appearance. What is important is the balance between sumptuous or showy elements and discreet touches.



BLACKSOCKS recommends:

The classic Babette:
T-shirt in dark navy blue

Black tie optional

If guests are being afforded more freedom in their appearance, the invitation will display the wording 'black tie optional' or 'alternative black tie'. This does not mean that you can decide to leave your dinner jacket in the wardrobe, but it does mean that you can make a few individual changes – a tie instead of a bow tie, a pattern instead of black, a belt instead of braces. All in all, however, you are best off sticking to the intended elements and using muted colours except for the possible accent.

More expansive freedom of interpretation is offered by 'festive black tie' or 'creative black tie'. For example, it can be more flamboyant for the groom or witnesses at a wedding, or more festive for Christmas events. Creativity is the order of the day if the season or region are key elements. A white jacket, a cowboy hat, a flower on your lapel, or a coloured shirt can make a good impression depending on the theme.

White tie dress code

If an invitation comes through your door that gives the dress code as white tie, then this is going to be an auspicious, exceptional event. Nowadays tails are often ousted in favour of a dinner jacket, meaning that white tie generally remains the preserve of royal ceremonies or similar events.

Eminent and unique

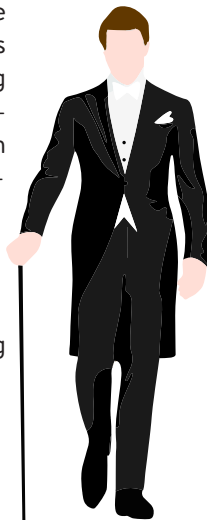
White tie is the most formal and elegant of all forms of dress. Unless you happen to be a conductor or are participating in a ballroom dancing competition, the likelihood of you ever having to wear tails is not very high. The hosts of all prestigious, up-scale events after 6 p.m. like to welcome guests with a white tie dress code. At major balls like the Vienna Opera Ball, state banquets, or Nobel prize ceremonies, guests will be dressed in tails.

Basic setup

All of the following elements are required for white tie:

- White self-tie bow tie
- White shirt with wing collar
- White waistcoat
- Black tailcoat
- Black trousers with two trim stripes
- Braces

All guests at events like these are superbly dressed, without exception. A black bow tie distinguishes the waiters from the guests, making a white bow tie a vital element – and one which you should be able to expertly tie yourself (as for black tie). The shirt collar is not the only thing which requires attention. As well as a small wing





BLACKSOCKS recommends:

Colette T-shirt:
the classic tank top

collar, the shirt has a strengthened breast area made of cotton piqué, a specially woven material. The shirt sleeves should be two finger widths longer than the tailcoat sleeves, but should not reach below the wrists.

Tailcoat and waistcoat

A tailcoat is characterised by two swallowtails on the back and a front that stops at the man's waist. The lapel, front button and sleeve buttons are decorated with satin. Rather than a cummerbund, which is only acceptable for musicians, men wear a white waistcoat underneath. This offers more freedom of movement



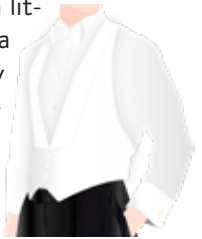
than it would seem at first glance, as it is held in place with a satin waist strap round the back so can be individually adjusted. Like the tailcoat, the waistcoat has a lapel, waistcoat pockets and elegant buttons

Braces and opera pumps

The trousers are made of the same material as the tailcoat. The legs are straight, not too tight and have no turn-ups or pleats. The side seam has not one but two trim stripes. This dress code does not include a belt, if for no other reason than the

trousers should sit properly without the need for one. The white tie look instead uses braces.

Most men find the proper shoes for this dress code to be a little too feminine with a higher heel than they find comfortable. Opera pumps sound more like something that women would go for, but they are actually designed for men. Although these no longer appeal to a mass audience, there is no clear replacement. In any event, if you do not want to wear opera pumps you should put on slim, elegant patent-leather shoes such as Oxford lace-ups.



Accessories

Bare skin should be covered as far as possible, so knee-high socks are a must. You can accessorise with white kid gloves. If you want to wear something on your head, a black top hat is always the way to go. Like a coat or a silk scarf (should you choose to wear one), this is only worn outside. An opera hat is a collapsible version of a top hat which allows for easy, space-saving storage during the event. A wristwatch does not go with conventional tails, so the recommended option is a gold pocket watch. Men can wear jewellery in the form of cufflinks or a lapel pin. For those



BLACKSOCKS recommends:
Business Light socks:
light-footed in the office

who want to truly complete the elegant white tie look, a cane is the perfect option. This has a chrome knob and a piano lacquer finish.

Ladies' choice

For women this dress code means an elegant, floor-length evening dress, or a ball gown if the event includes dancing. Any colour is permitted provided that it is not gaudy, crazily patterned or white, as the latter is the preserve of debutantes. Arms and shoulders are generally covered by long gloves, or by an evening cape or stole when outside. The dress also should not be too tight-fitting or

low-cut. Dressy high-heeled sandals, a clutch bag and discreet jewellery complete the ensemble.



People need goals. And discipline. And sometimes, a moment of leaving both behind.

Sometimes we're sad. Sometimes we're happy. Sometimes we just want to be alone. Sometimes we want to hug everyone. Life is light and dark, and that's what makes it great.

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