



# A Simple Guide to Understanding Men's Business Casual

The most googled dress code for men is Business Casual. Why? Because Business Casual is the ultimate fashion paradox. It's basically saying, 'Be laid-back, but business like at the same time. 'The average man's mind goes, 'How does that work? 'How am I supposed to show that with an outfit?' The confusion about what business casual attire means, stems from the fact that it is dependent on the type of organization you work for, the climate, the culture (i.e., company culture and geography) and the age of the employees.

## What is Business Casual for men?

Business Casual is about mixing elements of formal business attire with elements of casual attire. Formal enough for a meeting but relaxed enough for drinks. To create business casual attire, start with understanding the elements of formal business attire.

## The Components of Traditional Business Casual Attire (Understand the rules then tweak)

If you want to understand the present, look to the past. This saying also holds true for fashion. Knowing how formal business attire came into being, is essential to putting together a relaxed business attire. The traditional business attire consists of a dark matching suit and jacket set, white shirt, dark tie, white pocket square and dark shoes. Removing the elements or replacing them is how we create Business Casual. The easiest way to create a Business Casual look, is to take away the tie from the formal business attire or leave the tie but swap your suit jacket for a blazer. (Hint: Blazers are less formal). The matching trousers can also be replaced with chinos, khaki or wool trousers while keeping the original suit jacket on.

### Traditional Business Attire



## Business Casual Attire



## The Evolution of the Suit

The suits' origins can be traced to the Royal court in Britain when commoners were forbidden from wearing expensive furs and velvet. Not long after this law was passed, the outbreak of the plague known as the Black Death made Charles III, the then reigning King request that the

courtiers tone down their dress to ward off disease. In response, the courtiers started wearing simple tunics and fitted breeches. Gradually, these tunics became more tailored and by the 18th century English nobility started wearing morning suits which slowly evolved from a casual hunting coat into the formal business attire that we know today.

## **Discern Your Company Culture**

Many times, the dress code of the CEO will give you an insight into the company's culture and the industry you operate in. If that doesn't work, look around you to know. When I was working in a PR agency, the key accounts we handled though in the telecommunications industry, had events focused on media and entertainment. For Fridays, blazer and jeans was good for meeting up with clients but when I switched to a strategic communications firm which handled government and corporate accounts, jeans even on Fridays was no-no. If you absolutely had to wear jeans, they had to be black and chino-like. The moral of my story? Business casual means different things for different industries.

## **Remember the Goal**

Your goal is to show social authority and mastery by properly interpreting dress codes. Clothing has always been used as a measure of class for as long as history itself. Being well dressed in tune with the codes shows you understand the unspoken language of fashion and this mastery can move you up the career ladder by distinguishing you, and allowing those in Senior Management notice you.

## **What situations call for business casual attire?**

Apart from dress-down Fridays, personal events like going to your child's end-of-school year party, reunions, and meetings; cultural events, exhibitions, fundraisers, lectures amongst others call for Business Casual attire. When in doubt, remember the rules more equals more. The more details a piece of clothing has, the more casual it becomes for men.

## **African Men Business Casual**



## **Business Casual and the African Climate**

For a long time, traditional African garments were not encouraged in the workplace, but this has changed. Today, the African men's business casual consists of matching tunic and trousers set. A very versatile outfit made from suit fabric, which is worn for various occasions and can be dressed up or dressed down. Dressing down means swapping the matching trousers for plain black trousers and dressing up means adding other elements of African clothing like hats. Also, the tropical climate of Africa means that tunics are more comfortable and flexible than blazers or suits. Are you looking to buy ready-to-wear African men's business casual? Shop Joestylee for versatile tunics and matching print sets.



**Matching Set**



**Swapped Trousers**

In conclusion, Business Casual dressing is about exhibiting good judgment, good taste and understanding your company's social orientation. Is your organization more formal or more business? Your answer should determine the tilt of your outfit. We welcome your ideas and contributions in the comments.