

## Contracts of employment

### The chat show

#### Purpose of activity

To recognise and understand why there are different requirements in different industries and the attitudes people have about what they wear to work. What is appropriate or suitable?

Different workplaces require different dress codes, some have uniforms, some require smartness, some have to meet health and safety regulations, others can be much more relaxed. It is important, whichever is appropriate for your work place, that you get it right.

#### The chat show brief

You have accepted an invitation to attend a recording of a TV chat show, on the subject of Dressing for success.

You will either be a member of the audience or you will be involved in the presentation as a host, stage manager or a guest.

As a group you must decide and agree on the room layout and some general rules about how the discussion should run. Remember, you will be acting a part and you must represent the views of your character even if they are not your own views during the discussion. You will be given your role secretly, so keep this to yourself.

The discussion will last for 20-25 minutes. The host and stage manager must make sure that the discussion keeps to time.

There will be one host, one stage manager and two guests who will sit on the 'stage'. Everyone else will be members of the audience. Remember to keep in character!

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#### Character briefs

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#### Host

You are happy to challenge people if you don't agree with their point of view. You ask direct questions and do not accept yes/no answers. It is up to you to get the discussion going and keep it going for about 20-25 minutes. Think of yourself as a Jeremy Kyle or Trisha Goddard type of person!

You will begin by introducing the topic. Talk about what people wear for work, why they should wear certain types of clothing and what the different views are about this.

You could even give your own view on this topic. After that you should introduce the two guests – either one by one or together.

#### The background to your guests

One guest was sacked for not performing adequately at their job. Part of the problem was that they would not wear appropriate clothes, and had to meet the public, although this part of their job was not made clear in the original advert. The job they were originally employed to do was in a call-centre but because they were so good it was decided they should move to the front desk where they would be meeting people face-to-face and be the first point of contact for members of the public and visitors calling into the company.

There is no uniform as such, but there are certain types of dress which are considered acceptable. Unfortunately the management of the company doesn't think that your guest is keeping to this and they don't think it gives a good impression to visitors.

The second guest is the employer who sacked guest one. Despite formal warnings, guest one did not change what they wore for work because they felt that it was boring and old-fashioned. They also thought that it wasn't fair to be made to wear clothes they didn't like.

What this situation shows is the emphasis lots of companies put on dress code and how important it is in the workplace. It also highlights the need for employers to be specific and clear about what is required for different jobs.

You are only to get the discussion going – **do not take sides**.

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#### Stage manager

You are the 'right arm' of the host. It is vital that you keep him/her up to date with any changes or information that he/she needs. You need to make sure that you fully understand what the discussion is about, what the views of the different guests are and what the host thinks about the topic of a dress code at work.

Make sure that you chat with the host before the show so that you are clear about what's going to happen. You also need to make sure that the discussion keeps strictly to time with everyone getting their say.

You must make sure that everyone in the audience has their chance to contribute, and point the host to the next speaker. If anyone seems to be taking up too much time, stop them and encourage the host to go to the next person.

You should keep notes of the main points which come up, so that you can summarise briefly after the show has finished – it might be helpful to put these on a flip chart so they can be easily read by the you or the host.

You are the time-keeper and must make sure things finish on time.

You must also introduce the discussion and the host. You will be asked to sum up after the end of the show, so make sure you have notes.

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#### Guest 1

You are very angry about the fact that you have lost your job at the company you recently joined. You are a computer whiz and were employed as a help-line advisor which meant phone work a lot of the time. The company thought that you were so good at your job they moved you to the front desk to interact with customers face-to-face BUT you continued to dress in the same way and this was what caused you to be sacked. You were given a number of formal warnings but didn't do anything about your dress code.

You think the only reason someone should be employed is because of their skills, not because of how they look. It does not matter to you that everyone else follows a formal dress code for work – you have principles which you are not prepared to change.

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#### Guest 2

You have been a manager with the same company for a long time and believe they are very good employers. Everyone understands what is expected of a company member and everyone works together as part of one big happy family.

There is always someone who doesn't fit in, of course, and Guest 1 is it. Although clearly very good at their job, guest 1 just would not co-operate with company life in the same way as everyone else, and despite a series of warnings wouldn't wear the sorts of clothes that the managers of the company thought suitable for a front desk position.

They always looked so scruffy and casual, so un-business-like and inappropriate, and eventually were dismissed.

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#### Graduate trainee

On a very good scheme with Deloitte, training to be an accountant and looking to the future. A real company person who believes dressing correctly is part of being professional.

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#### Nurse

You have been qualified and on the wards for years. You wear the uniform happily, as you believe it helps patients identify you and represents the hospital. You would not want to wear your own clothes at work and to bring germs into your ward.

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#### Parent 1

You can't see the point of smart clothes, especially if your child does not want to wear them. Let them be young and enjoy it. You think uniforms are just a con – who cares what you wear? It's your brain that counts.

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#### University student

Studying Personal Protective Equipment, you see dressing-up as part of a government plot to make us all conform. You think that people in suits all look the same, and individuality is thrown out of the window.

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#### Teacher

You believe it is down to the individual and no-one should be forced to do anything unreasonable. Wearing formal clothes might not be necessary for every job, so why bother? Most children have to wear school uniform and hate it.

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#### Parent 2

You believe that part of growing up is taking on responsibility. Working is the first step and wearing the right clothes matters. It makes the distinction between work and play. Wearing professional clothes makes you think professionally – you think that has to make you perform better at work.

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#### School pupil

You have never worn uniform or had to conform. You are quite looking forward to having to follow a dress code at work.

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#### Bank manager

You believe it is important to set standards in every aspect of life. How you dress is one of these. An important part of your job is dealing with the public and how you look has an impact on how you are treated. You expect all your staff to be the same and to all wear smart, professional clothes.

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#### Customer

You like seeing staff in uniform so you can identify them quickly. If not uniform then smart clothes, because taking a pride in your appearance means you also take pride in what you do. If you look good people treat you with respect.

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#### Doctor/GP

You worry about the pressure people put on their image today. You see patients who have many illnesses caused by obsessions with how they look. You believe that getting too bothered about how you dress might put too much pressure on some people. However, you do take some care in how you look as you think your patients notice that sort of thing.

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#### Teacher who left teaching and went to work in an office

You realised when you started work in an office environment that you needed to wear a shirt and trousers/ knee or below length skirt and shoes. You did this happily because you felt you gained far more than you lost. You called it 'joining the grown-ups' and haven't looked back.

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#### Administrator in large company

Dressing for work is something that you do. It is part of working and important because it shows you care. You wear very different clothes at home – it means you really enjoy dressing both for work and relaxation. It gives you something to spend your money on, although all those suits are a bit expensive.

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#### Small high street shop worker

You like not having to wear anything special for work. That way you can blend into the background and no-one really bothers you much. You would hate to wear uniform or have to do anything which smacked of company image. You are an individual and want to stay that way.

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#### School pupil

You have worn uniform all your life and can't wait to get out of it. You see suits and smart clothes as another uniform and you want to avoid that. If possible, you are going to work somewhere where looks don't matter, so you are not forced into presenting an image which isn't you.

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### Student in FE

Give your own view!