

## Dress Like a Pro on a Budget

### Building a Career Wardrobe for Little to No Cash



If you're just starting out in your career or beginning a new job, don't let the worries of buying a new wardrobe stress you out. For little to no cash, you can dress professionally – and stylishly – by getting creative and using the resources you have. So, whether you don't have a lot of cash to spend or simply don't want to spend a lot of money on clothes, you can easily and inexpensively outfit yourself by using these simple and creative ideas.

**Shop Thrifty** – You might not consider a second-hand store as your top pick for the place to buy your clothing, but you can get a lot of nice things for a little money, so don't dismiss the idea right away. When shopping in thrift stores or consignment shops, it isn't always easy to find what you're looking for or find it in the right size, but it's worth the time if you don't want to spend a lot of money. Consignment shops are the best places to start, because they typically have a better selection of professional work attire than thrift stores. You can find a lot of nearly

new clothing – from jeans to business suits to jewelry to ties – for a small fraction of the original price. By shopping thrifty, you can look like a million bucks without spending that much.

**Swap & Borrow** – One of the simplest ways to jumpstart your professional wardrobe is by borrowing clothes from friends. If a friend wears the same size clothing as you, ask if you can borrow or swap clothing. You might be able to borrow a few of their clothing items, piece them with yours, and come up with several new outfits. Swapping is free and can benefit both of you. While their clothing probably won't be brand new, it'll be new to you, and yours will be new to them. If you select wisely, borrowing will provide options to create the look you need for work. Consider borrowing plain slacks, professional shirts, a nice blazer, solid color shirts, or even dress shoes. You can add your own style by adding your own accessories and show up to work wearing professional, yet stylish, attire.

**Mix & Match** – If you've already started your wardrobe, take a look at the clothes in your closet and make a mental note of the outfits you usually put together. Then, pick out one of those outfits and replace one or two of its pieces with something else in your wardrobe. For example, if you usually wear your black pants with the same button-down shirt, try pairing a different shirt or different shoes with the outfit for a new look. Men can easily switch out ties and shirts to mix and match for a new look. Women can change the look of their outfit by accessorizing with a scarf, belt, shoes, or jewelry.

Building a new career wardrobe doesn't have to be difficult or expensive. By using the resources you have and a little time and creativity, you can design a professional wardrobe without spending a lot of money. So, use these ideas to build the work wardrobe you need to start your new job, and you'll be dressed to impress.

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## Dress to Impress

### Top 10 Must-Haves for a Professional Wardrobe

Building a professional wardrobe can be overwhelming if you don't know where to start. So, here's a list of the top 10 basic items every professional wardrobe needs. These allow you to dress simply and professionally, while providing you with a strong foundation for an impressive wardrobe.

- 1 – Black dress pants, or skirts for women
- 2 – Neutral-colored dress pants, such as brown, grey, navy, or tan
- 3 – A full suit in black, grey, or navy
- 4 – Five solid-colored dress shirts
- 5 – A blazer or nice jacket in black, brown, grey, or navy
- 6 – A pair of black dress shoes
- 7 – Several pairs of dress socks
- 8 – Dress belt to wear with slacks or suit
- 9 – Scarves (for women) and ties (for men) to add variety
- 10 – Outerwear in a basic color and fabric, such as a black wool coat

