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The Cultured Pearl

Deciphering the Dress Code for the Biz Trip.

By [Sonya](#) on March 21, 2013 3:11 PM | [No Comments](#)

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Once in a while I have a business trip to attend....and it's those times where I look at my wardrobe and go running to the mall looking for a refresh! Whether it's a business trip for yourself or to accompany your partner some of us get a little stressed about what to wear especially when there are guidelines like business, business casual, casual and formal. I don't really want to pack more than one suitcase!



But what do all these categories mean? It's not always so obvious.

Recently I spent a morning with **Erin Nadler**, founder of **Better Styled** in search of some helpful packing tips and together we discussed what's appropriate for the corporate business traveller. Although not written in stone by any means, this is commonly acceptable in the corporate world. Obviously if you're in a more creative industry you could get away with more!

BUSINESS: Think clean lines and classic like blazers, pant suits (if you want to be on trend go for slim ankle length pants) Add an interesting top under the blazer works nicely. Avoid sheer or blingy tops. Small patterns are nice too. Keep accessories simple. Keep shoulders covered.

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Sonya is a "soft tiger mom" of two boys, an artist, and sometimes trophy wife (no not really). She's our a Lifestyle &

Events writer reporting interesting people, places and objects of desire that takes her breathe away! Sonya also reports on Arts & Culture openings for UrbanMoms.ca. She'll give you the best of city living. "It's all about the experience" BTW, she's also our Social Media Manager. Follow along @urbanmomscas AND @theculturepearl Contact: [sonya@urbanmoms\(dot\)ca](mailto:sonya@urbanmoms(dot)ca)

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BUSINESS CASUAL: Skirts, pants are fine. Separates are great as are flowy spring dresses. This is where you can bring in a little bling with the accessories. Try a pop of colour with your handbag. Emerald Green is the hot colour of this year. See that bag? I want.



CASUAL: Coloured jeans are fun in classic colours like khaki, taupe, royal blue, navy, white, or red on these corporate trips. Printed jeans are harder to pull off depending on the print. If you're jeans are printed stick with a solid coloured top. Your look shouldn't be too busy. Again, stick with straight legged or a slim crop...you want the pants to be fitted and not tight. Avoid capris all together. Flowy tops over jeans give a nice look and finish off with a clean spring leather jacket to complete the look.

FORMAL: always best to check with the events team at the company to see just how formal the setting will be. I've had friend who accompanied her husband to Prague and the formal dinner was very formal...ballgown as they were dining in a palace with dignitaries. But if the trip is within North America or the tropics a cocktail dress is usually good enough. If in doubt, that LBD will get you through anything. You can always get snazzy with a nice statement necklace. Bring a small clutch purse for evenings. You shouldn't be carrying a tote bag in this situation. You're going for dinner not to the office.

STAY CLASSY

"Think Audrey Hepburn," says Erin. "She's timeless and sophisticated in her style and she's always referred to as classic and timeless." Pencil style skirts are complimentary for many shapes and sizes. General rule: if you're wearing a skirt, do the sit down test. If you can sit down easily without the skirt hiking up that you have to tug down then you're good. Also do the getting out of the car test too, cause you don't want to pull a Britney especially at events.

SHOES

Peep toes are acceptable for dinner events but leave the strappy gladiators at home. Thinner strappy shoes are ok. Always safe with a pair of nice pumps. Nude colour pumps elongate the leg line and if you're travelling in spring/summer flats are fine too. Try to freshen up with some of the sherbet colours this season or stay with neutrals. Avoid the overly platformed shoes with stilettos in a corporate setting. They're fine for clubbing at night or to the bar but who wants to be standing in those all night anyway? Make sure heels are kept up and not worn down and have them nicely polished and not scuffy. Also, keep the flip flops for the pool area only.

LEGS

It use to be that hosiery was a must in all corporate wear. However, if you're on a trip where it's warm and you're wearing a peep-toed shoes you can pass on the hosiery. Just make sure you're well groomed with clean legs. Otherwise, stick with sheers or nudes when it comes to hosiery.

TOPS

Keep the cleavage in check. Erin says it's always a good idea to bring a couple camisoles with you that can easily be worn underneath sheer sweaters or low cut tops.

UNDERGARMENTS

Make sure you have the proper under garments and try everything on before you pack. Invest in proper fitting bras and undies. You don't want to be constantly adjusting bra straps or pulling on panty lines. Erin's favourite spot for bras is a spot in Toronto called Melmira's. Their staff are trained to fit women properly with high quality bras and swimsuits and she says they are worth the investment.

MIX & MATCH

If you're freshen up your wardrobe this spring invest in easy to pack and travel items like a sweater set but go for some detailing. Linen knits like this can easily translate from day to night by wearing together or separate. Throw the cardigan over your dress at night plus you don't have to worry about ironing! Bring basics like the slim cropped pants (slightly longer than capris) that can be worn with everything and jazzed up with the change of shoes. And that LBD is always safe and can easily made to look different at the change of accessories.

Overall, Erin says, "think about what you already have in your closet. We all have those "go to" pieces that we are comfortable with. Chances are they are classics. So, just step it up a notch and invest in pieces that will carry you through the business trip as well as at home. They don't need to be separate wardrobes!"



Thanks for the tips Erin!

Erin Nadler knows first-hand the frustrations of shopping as a curvy woman in a size 0 world. She comes from a clothing manufacturing family with three generations of experience and was taught at an early age to appreciate and understand how fashion works on real people. Her company **BetterStyled**, a personal and private consultation company complete with her own on-site warehouse, helps hundreds of women from the corporate world to stay at home moms to overcome negative body image and find clothes that make them look and feel fabulous. For more information visit www.betterstyled.com

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Better Styled With Erin Nadler