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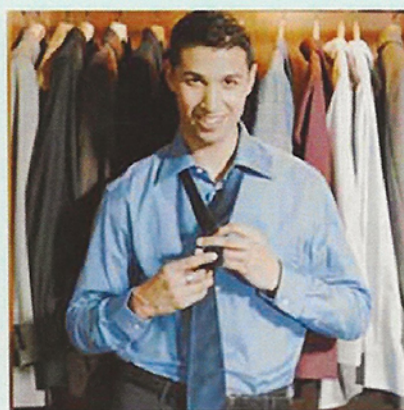
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F fashion

Party Planning

What to wear to your office holiday party.



A chance to get ahead, or a chance to indulge in too much eggnog? The holiday office party could be your big break—or your big mistake. We asked the nation's top experts for their list of do's and don't-you-dare's.

It's still work

"It's pretty safe to say, if you would not wear it in the office, you should not wear it to the office holiday party!" says **Steve Kemble, US Weekly's Fashion Police Top Cop.**

"Keep in mind that this is still 'work,'"

says Costance Hoffman, President of Social and Business Graces (www.learnsocialgraces.com). "How you present yourself in manner and dress will determine how you are remembered."

Stay traditional

"You're partying with your boss, not your crazy pals, so avoid anything too tight, casual or sloppy," explains Lesley Scott, Editor in Chief of Fashiontribes.com.

Want to push the envelope? Scott advises you to balance your look.

"If you insist on living dangerously, a good rule of thumb is that if you're showing off a lot of leg, cover up on top, and vice versa - balance off cleavage with a prim, knee-length pencil skirt."

Find out the dress code

When the invite says semi-formal, "men should wear a dark suit, white shirt, tie, belt, and leather bottom shoes. Women should plan for cocktail dresses, tuxedo pants, jewelry, a small purse and a heeled shoe," said Gerialin Thomas, Owner of Metropolitan Organizing.

Just say no to florals, cottons, linens and the ultimate no-no, pantyhose over toes. Also, look to your boss for dress-code clues.

"If your boss favors designer labels, don't drape yourself in them to copy her," says Rachel C. Weingarten, the author of *Career and Corporate Cool* (www.careerandcorporatecool.com), "but rather choose one well placed piece that gives her a non-verbal clue that you have similar tastes and outlooks."

Add standout colors or accessories

Magee Johnson, a certified image consultant, suggests adding "a sparkling cocktail ring, bracelet, and earrings/necklace. Think big, but wear only one piece at a time! Add a rhinestone hair comb, barrette, or clip."

"Ladies, dress up a day time suit with fun jewelry, and a shiny sophisticated clutch," says Hoffman. "Men, add an interesting tie but keep it classy. Even a pocket square will add some fun color to your suit. The key is to keep in simple but chic. This is a time you can be a little bolder as long as you are tasteful."

Plan for comfort & be smart about drinking

"Always try the outfit on in advance," advises Hoffman. "This is not the time to slip into brand new shoes when you may be standing most of the evening."

And of course, the biggest caution of all: "No drinking on an empty stomach!" says Scott. "For every drink, pace yourself by switching off with a glass of water. Your dignity and career path will thank you."

And so will your coworkers!