Q: Do I have to wear a suit for a job interview? I have heard that for some library jobs a suit is too formal and a friend of mine got hired and she didn’t wear a suit to her interview.

A: This is another question that has been coming up frequently lately; it must be the time of year. I do recommend a suit, for all job interviews. There are interviewers who don’t care whether you are wearing a suit, to be sure, but as an applicant you won’t know ahead of time how your interviewer(s) feel about that. It is a risk either way, of dressing too casually or too formally. I recommend erring on the side of “too formal”; the suit indicates that you are taking the interview seriously and that’s better than possibly indicating you are not taking it seriously enough. Even if the dress code at that library/workplace is a relaxed one and you would not be required to wear a suit each day if hired, you should still wear a suit to the interview.

Another reason to wear the suit is that you feel and carry yourself differently when wearing a suit; it can help you to feel more confident as an interviewee if you are dressing the part.

Regarding interview attire in general, you want the interviewer to note upon greeting you that you are dressed appropriately, and after that not give a thought to what you are wearing. I like black suits, but many people feel they are too severe and prefer other dark colors, which are fine also. Choosing a lighter color is a way of making a suit less formal but still professional, and is appropriate for spring and summer. I would avoid pastels, and bright colors can be distracting. Men should wear a tie (nothing too bright or eye-catching) and re: skirt suit vs. pantsuit for women, either one is fine.

Thank you and good luck!

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