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Make a lasting impression

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Everyday we make a routine yet quite important fashion decision: what shoe to wear.

I've recently received a number of e-mails for guidance on shoes, from men and women. It is interesting that shoes are a reflection of our social status. There is no other piece of clothing that can make or break an ensemble like a shoe.

George Frazier, the fashion columnist for Esquire Magazine in the 1960s, said it best: "Wanna know if a guy is well dressed? Look down." The same can be said for women.

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When it comes to men's business shoes, I recommend owning four pairs of shoes. If the workplace dress code is business attire, I recommend three pairs of dress shoes and one pair of casual shoes. I would suggest a pair each of black and brown lace-up shoes such as an oxford shoe.

Black shoes will always be the dressiest and look great with any navy or grey suit. Dark brown shoes are also a wardrobe staple and look equally great with navy and grey. Yes, brown shoes look classic and, yet modern with a grey suit. Also, I am favoring dark brown shoes with navy suits. It is a fresher, more modern feel than the traditional black shoes.

For those who favor classic looks, continue to wear black shoes. For those who want to shake things up a bit, try a brown lace-up shoe with your blue and grey suits. Another great dress shoe is a slip-on. Slip-ons are typically thought of as casual shoes, but there are many great-looking dress slip-on shoes

Conversely, if the office is casual, I recommend three pairs of casual shoes and one pair of dress shoes. Again, I would recommend buying black and brown casual shoes. If you are only going to have one pair of dress shoes, I suggest a black oxford. If you are looking for an elegant loafer, one can never go wrong with the classic Gucci loafers, which are the most elegant and have the highest social status.

Women have much more flexibility when it comes to work shoes. Of course, black and brown shoes will be a staple in any wardrobe. But now, it is easier to add a punch of color to traditional business dress. For example, a beautiful burgundy patent shoe will add some personality to the look of a black, grey, or blue suit. The well-dressed woman will always have a fabulous pair of animal-print heels in her wardrobe. Yes, animal-print heels. A word of caution for those of you new to animal-print shoes: They need to be of the highest quality you can afford because inexpensive animal-print shoes look very tacky.

Always keep shoes clean, well heeled, and polished. Find a good shoe repair shop.

MANNERS THAT WORK

I have begun offering small-group sessions to provide a solid foundation on the fundamentals of dining etiquette, "Manners that Work: Dining Etiquette for the Business Professional." The sessions for 10 people cover everything from the moment you arrive until your meal is finished.

The next session is 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 3 at The Bankers Club downtown. The cost of the lunch and the 1½-hour session is \$75. Reservations: 513-505-2732.

Jill Haney's Cincinnati-based business, JH Image Consulting, conducts individual and corporate group training on appearance, behavior, and communication. She is a certified image consultant with the Association of Image Consultants International. Reach her at 513-505-2732, jill@jhimage.net, or www.jhimage.net.

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