

# What To Wear When You Speak? – David Price

---

You have an important presentation to make and you just don't know what to wear. It's a question that is as important for men as it is for women.

In his book "You are the message", Roger Ailes, titles the first chapter "The First Seven Seconds" and you can guess what it says – first impressions are more important than anything. The famous persuasion speaker Joel Bauer calls it "wrapping your package".

Most people think that you should wear what the audience is wearing. This can be a fatal mistake. The question to ask yourself is "What is the audience **expecting** you to look like?". If you dress according to the audience expectations, then you are more likely to connect with the audience more effectively. For instance, if you are a city stockbroker going to speak to a group of farmers in a remote town, they would think you were patronizing them if you wore moleskins. They may not expect a tie and jacket in the bush, but they will expect "appropriate business attire".



## What works and what doesn't?

Clothing needs to be appropriate for your audience and for the topic you are presenting but there are some "golden rules". For men, the two most significant things that women in your audience will notice and about 20% of the men, is whether your shoes are clean, and, if your trousers have belt loops, whether you are wearing a belt. They'll also notice if your clothes are not well pressed. If, in the first seven seconds you have anyone in your audience having a conversation with themselves about your unpolished shoes or your creased shirt, you've lost them at exactly the time you *don't* want to lose them!

For women, the obvious (but sometimes overlooked) factors are short skirt and low cut top. These will have the men **and** the women having a conversation with themselves you **do not** want them to be having. The next highest risk factor for women is distractions from jewelry. Dangly ear-rings and any other large or obtrusive jewelry will work *against* you - not *for* you, as will lots of rings on your fingers.

## Skirt or Trousers? – The question men never have to ask? (Thankfully)

Research has shown that in a selling or persuasion situation, women in skirts (which are around knee length), outsell women in trousers many times over regardless of the gender of the buyer.

So what do you wear? I always believe it is better to be safe especially if the presentation is important. So, men – you cannot go wrong with a good fitting suit with a white or light coloured shirt with clean shoes and a tasteful tie. For women, surprise, surprise – the same. A well tailored suit, with a pastel coloured blouse, small jewelry and you can't go wrong.

## Don't shoot me – I'm only the messenger!

Is this my opinion? Absolutely not! It's all based on research but by the way, my own experience in the field for over 25 years supports it. So don't shoot me – I'm only the messenger!

David Julian Price is the "Master of Speaking". He coaches entrepreneurs, business leaders, managers and executives to engineer their message and speak with influence and persuasion. Contact David at [david@davidprice.com](mailto:david@davidprice.com)