

Staying Cool When The Heat Is On

How to stay cool and professional this summer

When temperatures rise maintaining a professional image gets a bit more complicated. It's not unusual to go from a hot city street



to a frigid office. Tack on relaxed a work environment and summer hours and it's easy to let that personal reputation you've been working on slowly melt away.

So what's a woman to do? To help with this dilemma I asked several sources to weigh in on how to stay cool and still look professional in the summer heat. While everyone had their own take on the subject, our experts agreed that flip-flops (or any variation on the flip-flop), shorts (most particularly thigh-baring short-shorts) and showing your cleavage are definite no's for the office. But that's just the start.



When it comes to summer dressing it's not only about keeping cool. "Bring a cardigan or wrap to work and leave it there. Even though it is sweltering outside the air conditioning might be BLASTING in your office," says Kaarin Vembar, fashion consultant and owner [Closet Caucus](#). She recommends choosing a cover-up in a neutral color which will go with any outfit.

Mallory Sills, consultant, [Image Success by Mallory](#), agrees, "Opt for lightweight fabrics and layer with accessories and jackets. Refrain from wearing all black – it feels heavy in the summer heat." She suggests using accessories to make your summer outfits look unique and professional.

"Don't confuse business casual with beach casual," cautions Kim Zoller and Kerry Preston, owners, [Image Dynamics](#) and coauthors of *Enhancing Your Executive Edge: How to Develop the Skills to Lead and Succeed*. To keep from slipping from casual to sloppy, they advise being careful with sleeveless blouses and dresses, and fabrics like linen which wrinkle easily.

Being too sexy can hurt your image as much as being sloppy. "If it's appropriate to wear open-toed shoes in your office, opt for wider straps which appear to be more conservative than thinner, sexier, skin-bearing strapped shoes," says April Masini, relationship and etiquette expert at [Ask April](#). If your toes are on view, Masini recommends getting regular pedicures and sticking to red toenail polish.

Even the little things count when it comes to your professional image. For this reason Masini suggests using unscented sunscreen to avoid making the office smell like the beach. Vembar adds, "Don't wear sunglasses on top of your head when you're in the office. It's a very small detail that can make you look unprofessional."

Summer Dressing Do's

- Choose cotton which is a durable, breathable fabric
- Opt for beiges and pastels, or wear bright colors in classic cuts
- Keep cool in professional dresses and skirts
- Be careful with perfume which can get stronger when we sweat
- Wear camisoles under blouses and low-cut dresses

Summer Dressing Don'ts

- Tops that show a bare midriff or are cut too low under the arms

- Anything that suggests cocktail attire like spaghetti straps or see-through clothing
- Bathing suits worn under your clothing (pack your suit in a great beach bag instead)
- Wear hats to the office (save them for the weekends)
- Too bright nail polish which can make you look like you're heading to the beach

Summer Dressing for Men

Zoller and Preston also provided a few suggestions for men:

- Don't wear golf shirts that are wrinkled and faded
- Don't wear too much cologne as it gets stronger when we sweat
- Don't wear shoes without socks if your feet sweat a lot and produce an odor

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