

Distinguishing details

PART I

GROUND FLOOR TO MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

Scarves, belts, handbags, briefcases, jewellery, watches... These are the details that make the difference between looking professionally attired - or not. Although the business 'uniform' relaxed for women in the 90s allowing for more freedom of expression, it's the accessory that determines individual style.

In the next issue of *Business Class*, Part II will cover accessories from the mid-line upwards.

THE MONEY PURSE

Purses are not born 'fat' - and if yours is 'putting on weight', clean it out. A fat money purse hauled from the dark confines of your exquisite handbag shouts "UGH!". Your purse should be made of a quality leather and when showing signs of wear, replace it.

THE HANDBAG

The more you use an investment handbag (or shoulder bag), the more it justifies the high price-tag - and it's handy to hold stuff, like lipstick, keys, money purse, comb, brush, cotton handkerchief, (okay - tissues if you must), nail varnish, tweezers, business card holder. If you don't need a briefcase, the bag must also be able to carry your diary and mobile phone. Avoid overstuffing handbags as it will distort the shape.

HOSIERY should be the same or similar colour as your shoes, and tones with your hemline. Skin-toned hosiery is always appropriate. Refer to "Leg Work" article in the June issue of *Business Class*.

THE BELT

A good quality belt literally pulls your business outfit together. Self-coloured buckles and keepers allow more versatility with jewellery, briefcase catches etc. If the buckle is metal, it should match your jewellery. (Careful! An overly ornate belt buckle will draw attention to your navel area.) Although it is not necessary to match your belt with shoes and bag, it must match your clothing.

A good fit is a finger's thickness between a tucked-in shirt and belt. Don't wear your belt too tight.

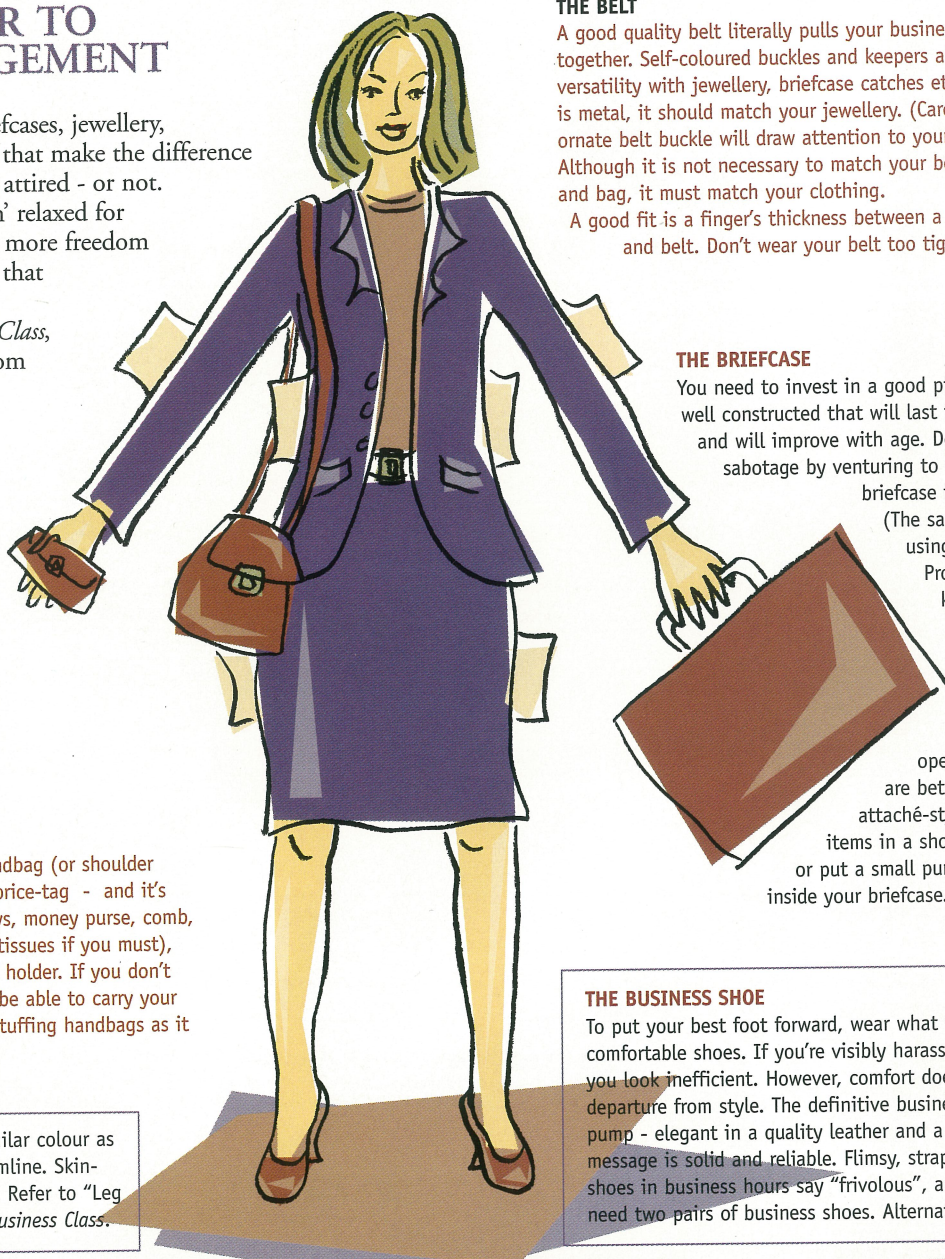
THE BRIEFCASE

You need to invest in a good piece of leather well constructed that will last for many years and will improve with age. Don't risk self sabotage by venturing to work with a briefcase in need of repair. (The same goes with using vinyl.)

Proportion is the key. Don't carry a briefcase that is not scaled to your size. For privacy's sake top-opening briefcases are better than the attaché-style. Keep personal items in a shoulder or handbag, or put a small purse for these items inside your briefcase.

THE BUSINESS SHOE

To put your best foot forward, wear what works - comfortable shoes. If you're visibly harassed by your shoes, you look inefficient. However, comfort doesn't mean a departure from style. The definitive business shoe is the pump - elegant in a quality leather and a mid-high heel, its message is solid and reliable. Flimsy, strappy or stiletto shoes in business hours say "frivolous", and "erratic". You need two pairs of business shoes. Alternate between them.



FOOT NOTE: Don't wear more than seven items of interest at any one time. When you over clutter your body, the 'visual noise' makes it difficult for others to pay attention to your verbal message.

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