



an editor at Save the Student

Want to dress to impress at your next interview - but don't have money for fancy clothes? These 7 tips reveal how to look the part without blowing your student budget.

One of the frustrating things about life is that buying **work clothes on a budget** is easier when you've already got a job (because: money). But where does that leave skint students facing their first formal interviews?

If the thought of finding £100s (or even £20s) to attend interviews has you sweating - don't panic! There are ways to get a wardrobe makeover for less money if you know where to look.

1. Plan early

The more time you give yourself, the more chance you have of finding cheap **but classy** interview clothes. Ideally, give it some thought as soon as you start applying for jobs:

- Make a shopping list. New suit? Shoes? Accessories? Hair cut?
- Decide your budget and start squirrelling away a bit extra (if you can) for interview gear and travel expenses.

2. Get funding

It's possible to claim cash for interview costs if you know where to look! If you've left or are about to leave uni, keep an eye out for schemes like Barclays' Graduate Fund, which offers up to £550 for interview clothes, travel, accommodation etc. If you get Jobseekers' Allowance, ask about the '**Flexible Support Fund**'. They don't shout about it, but you can claim cash for interview expenses. There may be similar funds for those who get other types of State support – ask your adviser or case worker.

3. Find your style

Expensive shops and designer names may be out of your budget but it's still worth eyeballing their window displays before you start shopping. Look for outfits that ooze class or which are effortlessly professional, make a note of how they've been styled and accessorized, then get to work finding your own combinations for a fraction of the price.

4. Avoid poor quality

Most students know how to track down unbelievably cheap clothes online and in the high street: it's time to use your powers for good. That said, items which are ridiculously cheap because they're **low quality** can backfire if they're super uncomfortable or fall apart after one wear (or while you're wearing them...). Be warned, especially if you're buying online and haven't already seen things up-close.

5. Borrow or trade

Take the same size as a well-dressed mate or family member? Ask nicely if you can borrow an outfit or accessories (just make sure you look after them!). Clothing app Depop is best known for buying and selling clothes, but it has a swap option, too. If that's your bag, check out [Freecycle](#) and [Gumtree Swap Shop](#) as well.

6. Buy pre-loved

Buying second-hand is a great strategy all-year-round: it's possible to get expensive or designer gear for a fraction of the price. Start with charity shops (some, including [Oxfam](#), are online now too) along with eBay, Facebook Marketplace, and bootsale apps such as Vinted.

7. Consider renting

While renting isn't super cheap, it can still work out cheaper, so may be worth checking out if you have interviews with very style- or image-conscious brands. There's a growing number of subscription-based services online (mostly aimed at women); alternatively some high street and department stores have a rentals service for formal outfits. Snapping up just one suit or smart outfit in the sales is likely to be cheapest if you're on a tight budget, though, so **think ahead**.

It's easy to feel pressured into blowing cash you can't afford, so take a step back before you get in a stew. Go through your wardrobe – ideally with an honest but helpful friend – and check you don't already have something that does the job. If you do, spend time rather than cash on getting it clean and in good condition, and then wear it with pride.

Guest blog by Ruth Bushi, an editor at [Save the Student](#) – the UK's largest student money advice site.