



MOTHERHOOD HONES JOB SKILLS

Good news for moms who are returning to work or changing careers: Being a parent can actually enhance work-related skills, according to Wynn McClenahan Burkett, a mother and author of *Life After Baby: From Professional Woman to Beginner Parent* (Wildcat Canyon Press, 2000). Here are three areas in which your newfound expertise will shine.

1. **Juggling.** Being a parent, a spouse, and a professional requires a tremendous amount of organizational skill. You'll have become an expert at multitasking.
2. **Creative thinking.** Caring for a small baby in addition to handling your everyday responsibilities requires some seriously creative problem-solving skills, an essential for any occupation.
3. **Management.** Mothers learn to be experts at listening carefully, being patient, and retaining a sense of humor through all kinds of crises. These are qualities every good manager needs. —L.O.



THE CASUAL OFFICE

Is every day dress-down day at your job? Here, five wardrobe musts from Ann Marie Sabath, author of *Beyond Business Casual* (Career Press, 2000). —Jennifer Job

MESSY DESK= CLEAR MIND

Contrary to popular belief, a sloppy work area does not necessarily reflect incompetence. "It's actually a good sign," says Ellen Keable, a researcher at the Buffalo Organization for Social and Technological Innovation. Here's what your habits might really mean:

- **You don't procrastinate.** The fact that your work is always reliable means you're more likely to do it right away.
- **You're a very busy person.** Lots of piles mean lots of projects. You may simply need more work space.
- **You have an efficient filing system.** The multiple piles of paper are probably organized by subject, project, or due date. —Katy Love-Johnson

CLASSIC BLAZER
Keep it at work to help your outfit up a notch when you have a meeting or need to see a client. Opt for a multiseason fabric, such as gabardine, in a versatile neutral, such as navy or black.

ONE GREAT ACCESSORY
A structured bag, a belt bracelet, or an understated necklace pulls the whole look together.

FITTED BLOUSE
Try one in French silk or white cotton with a bit of stretch to keep the look crisp.

BLACK TROUSERS
Choose pants in a year-round material, like a gabardine blend or a high-quality rayon blend. Keep the look current with a flat-front or a bootleg cut.

LEATHER LOAFERS
A sleek black pair with a sole or a white sole works with pants, chinos, and casual skirts.

GET A GRIP

Is your handshake on the limp side? If so, there's a good reason to firm it up, particularly if you're a woman. "Research indicates that women with strong, steady handshakes are more likely to be perceived as extroverted and open to new experiences," notes William F. Chaplin, Ph.D., a psychology professor at the University of Alabama, in Tuscaloosa. He recommends practicing your new shake on your spouse. The reason? You want to make sure you don't squeeze too tightly. "Women who are bone crushers may be seen as too aggressive." —Laura Olson

WORKING 9 TO 9?
If you feel as though you're running on empty, your job is probably the culprit. A report in *American Demographics* says that married couples today log in 26 percent more time on the job than their forebears 30 years ago. Not surprisingly, 41 percent of American workers say they come home from work exhausted.

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