

>> Jennifer Shike

GOT WHAT IT TAKES?

So, you think you've got what it takes to win showmanship?

The next time you step into the ring, take another look at yourself. Are you dressed your best or does your attire leave something to be desired?

Low-rise jeans and belly-baring shirts have their place on the fashion pages, just as old shorts and tank tops have their place at the wash rack. However, top judges say neither look works in the ring. The well-dressed showman combines practicality, comfort and style into a winning look in the show ring.

"What is so difficult about choosing clothes for showmanship is that many times what is in fashion socially, outside of the show ring, is different than what is appropriate for the show ring," says judge and Black Hawk East instructor Dan Hoge of Cambridge, Ill.

While many criteria come to mind when selecting a winning showman, appearance is a factor that subconsciously plays a role.

"I don't intentionally evaluate any exhibitor's clothing," says Danna Goss, a judge, elementary teacher and NJSA parent from Canute, Okla. "But when it's a close decision, it does come into consideration. When an exhibitor is well dressed, it shows they want to do their best."

Judge and auctioneer Kevin Wendt of Columbus, Ohio, says first impressions matter.

"Appropriate clothing in showmanship makes quite an impression on a judge," Wendt says. "It shows that you not only take pride in your animal, but also in yourself by dressing sharp and looking the part. It's like you are saying, 'I'm going to go the extra step to look nice and present myself, my club, my family and my pig to the best of my ability.'"

Because showmanship is an extension of what has already happened that day or in a several-day period, Hoge believes there is no reason for kids to change into "special" clothes for showmanship.

HAIR—Style your hair so it is neat and not a distraction.

JEWELRY—If you wear jewelry, don't let it dangle or get in the way.

SHIRT—Wear a collared, button-down shirt that is not too loose, not too tight, not too low-cut and not revealing your midriff. A three-button, knit shirt also works well. Make sure your shirt is ironed and tucked in!

BELT—Wear a belt in the ring. Buckles are fine, but not necessary.

PANTS—Wear ironed, dark denim jeans. Khakis are acceptable, as well.

SHOES—Wear leather shoes such as boots or chukkas to prevent injury in the ring. Sandals and tennis shoes are not appropriate.



Photographs >> Christy Couch Lee



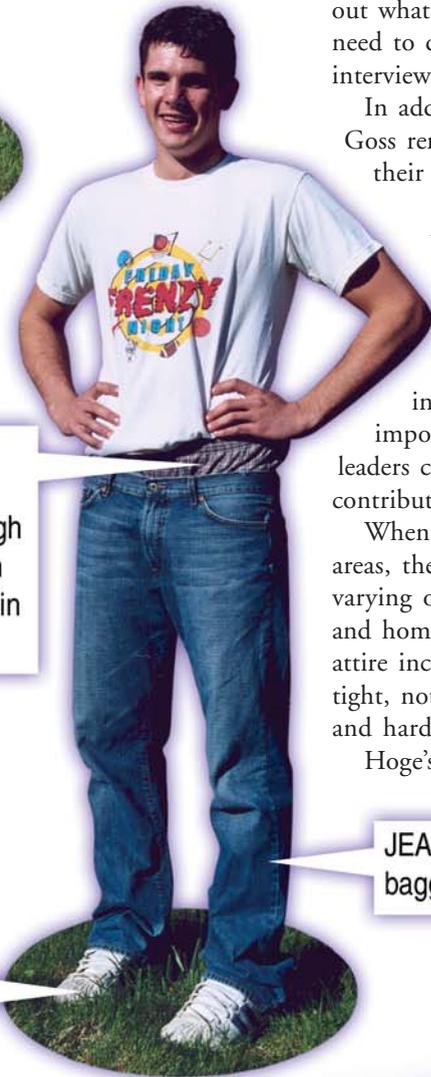
BALLCAPS—Don't wear ballcaps in the show ring, as it can hinder eye contact with the judge, the animals around you and other exhibitors.

SHIRT—Don't wear baggy t-shirts.

SHORTS—Don't wear shorts — long pants provide one more layer to protect your skin if your animal gets in a fight or if you brush by a nail or wire.

BOXERS—Don't let your undergarments hang out. Even though this look is popular in the hallways, it's not in the show ring.

SHOES—Don't wear tennis shoes. If you've ever had a hog step and twist off of your foot, you know how sharp their toes are and how painful that can be.



JEANS—Don't wear baggy, ripped jeans.

"I prefer to see kids wear the same clothes that they wore in the gilt show (if it was the same day and you are not unusually sweaty) in showmanship as well," Hoge says. "You are showing your hog, not yourself. A little ring wear shows me you have worked hard that day."

An appropriate showmanship outfit does not need to be expensive, Wendt adds. No judge expects you to spend a lot of money on your show outfit, but they do want to see you wear something that looks nice in the ring. There are many looks available today that are tasteful and affordable.

So, what exactly is the right look for showmanship? "You have to be dressed for the occasion," Hoge says. "You are there to show hogs."

"If you are a girl wearing tight jeans or a boy wearing overly baggy jeans, you are going to be uncomfortable in the ring," he continues. "When showing hogs, you have to wear clothing that has flexibility, as you can find yourself in the most unusual positions."

Wendt says he approaches showmanship like a job interview where the judge is the interviewer and the exhibitor is the interviewee. The judge's goal is to find out what the exhibitor knows about their skills — youth need to dress and act appropriately like they were in an interview in the ring.

In addition to the intensity occurring in the ring, Goss reminds youth that many people are watching their class from the outside.

"Not only do younger kids learn from watching you in showmanship, but you are also being watched by future employers and breeders," she says. "As more NJSA shows are held in conjunction with open shows, youth exhibitors have greater opportunities to interact with these adults. It becomes increasingly important to dress appropriately so these industry leaders can look out in the ring and see kids who can contribute and make a difference in the industry."

When it comes to jewelry, ballcaps and other gray areas, these judges agree to disagree. Judges will have varying opinions based on their backgrounds, profession and home address. But, they all agree that winning show attire includes an appropriately fitting shirt (not too tight, not too loose), a belt, dark jeans or nice khakis, and hard-soled shoes.

Hoge's final advice for showmanship attire is simple — don't give the judge a reason to beat you.

If your outfit doesn't, you've got what it takes. **SE**

Special thanks to our models, Jamey Albrecht of Crawfordsville, Ind., Walter Colvin of Russellville, Ind., and Brice Murphy of Linden, Ind.