



This is not a word for word transcript.

Jennifer: Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English, I'm Jennifer and with me today is Rob.

Rob: Hello Jennifer!

Jennifer: Now Rob, you're a man of taste – what would you usually wear to the office?

Rob: Well I think it's important to look smart, but in my job I can be casual, so perhaps a nice shirt and some jeans or casual trousers?

Jennifer: Very nice, and what about the women, what do they wear?

Rob: Well, there's quite a range at work – some ladies are quite smartly dressed and might wear a dress or a skirt and blouse, but others are more casual. Of course, they ALL look lovely – including yourself.

Jennifer: Hmm, I'm not sure how sincere you are about that, but I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. We're talking about the importance of dress codes on 6 Minute English today, but before we get to our story, I've got a question for you and it's all about fashion, something I'm sure you know lots about. Are you ready for the all-important question, Rob?

Rob: Yes I am.

Jennifer: Fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld is known for his bold statements about fashion and famously said: "One is never over-dressed or underdressed with a what?"

- (a) Pair of jeans
- (b) Little black dress
- (c) Pair of high heels

Rob: Oh dear, I don't even understand the quote? What does it mean exactly?

Jennifer: If you are overdressed, you look too formal. If you are underdressed, you are not formal enough – so he thinks there is one fashion item which is perfect for *all* occasions – is it a pair of jeans, the little black dress, or a pair of high heels?

- Rob:** Well surprisingly I have no idea about women's fashion. I'll go for a) a pair of jeans...
- Jennifer:** Well we'll see if you're right at the end of the programme. Now back to our story which is about a controversial microblog post which has **sparked a debate** in China.
- Rob:** That means it has lots of people talking about it – and often arguing about it!
- Jennifer:** The post was from a metro operator in Shanghai who suggested that women should dress in a **conservative** way in public.
- Rob:** If you dress conservatively, you wear traditional clothes and avoid anything outlandish or revealing.
- Jennifer:** The blog post included a photograph of a woman wearing a see-through, or transparent, dress.
- Rob:** That's certainly the opposite of conservative! I don't think many people would go out in public wearing an outfit you could see through!
- Jen:** Probably not, but this blogger's comment about the outfit has caused controversy. Listen to this clip from the BBC's John Sudworth – what comment was made about the photo?

BBC correspondent John Sudworth:

The Shanghai Metro authority used its official Weibo account, the Chinese version of Twitter, to publish a photograph of a woman in what appears to be a see-through dress, standing on a subway platform. "It's not surprising that women get harassed if they dress like this," the caption reads, adding "it's hard to avoid perverts. Girls, please cherish yourselves."

- Rob:** The Metro authority said that if women wear see-through clothes, then it's not surprising they get harassed.
- Jennifer:** Thousands of female passengers have been voicing their anger at this, as they feel it is an attempt to blame *them* for any **sexual harassment** they receive.
- Rob:** Those passengers think they should have the right to dress however they like - without being harassed.
- Jennifer:** But on the other hand, there are people who have said that women should not dress **provocatively**, as it might encourage people to make unwanted comments.
- Rob:** It seems that opinion is divided.
- Jennifer:** Here's the BBC's John Sudworth again with some of the responses to the statement.

BBC correspondent John Sudworth:

"The issue is currently the second most discussed topic on Weibo and has even prompted a small tube-train protest. One woman, angered by the statement, held up a banner reading; "I can be coquettish but you can't harass me." Other internet users through have spoken out in defence of what they say is simply common-sense advice. In an online poll, with 45,000 respondents so far, almost 70% said that women should dress more conservatively when taking trains or buses."

Rob: So it's even prompted a protest by some women who feel it's their right to dress how they like without people making comments.

Jennifer: That includes dressing **coquettishly** – or in a flirty manner.

Rob: But other people have said it's only **common sense** – or good judgement – to dress conservatively, as then nobody is likely to bother you.

Jennifer: Maybe not – but they argue that everyone should be treated with respect no matter what they choose to wear.

Rob: Sexual harassment is a huge problem in society and the question of how to avoid it is a difficult one. Who is responsible for harassment – the people who dress provocatively, or the people making the unwanted comments?

Jennifer: It's a difficult question, and I'm sure the debate will carry on for a long while. Speaking of difficult questions, I asked you a tricky one about clothing at the start of the programme. Karl Lagerfeld once said "One is never over-dressed or underdressed with a what?"

- (a) Pair of jeans
- (b) Little black dress
- (c) Pair of high heels

Rob: And I said ...

Jen: And you were wrong! Jeans are very important, very handy for the wardrobe, but according to Lagerfeld, every woman should have own a little black dress, as they are so versatile!

Rob: Have you got one?

Jen: I've got far too many. Ok, we've come to the end of today's programme. Rob, will you remind us of some of the words that we've heard today?

Rob: Of course, they are:
sparked a debate
conservative
coquettishly
common sense
sexual harassment

Jennifer: That's all we have time for today but do join us again for more 6 Minute English and for more help with any aspects of your English language studies go to our website BBCLearningEnglish.com. Bye for now!

Rob: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| sparked a debate | caused an argument |
| conservative | traditional or plan |
| coquettishly | in a flirty way |
| common sense | good judgement |
| sexual harassment | unwelcome comments about the body |
| provocatively | in a manner which attracts attention |

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