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Building A Workable Wardrobe

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- How many times have you wished someone would do your shopping for you?
- Do you put off shopping until the last possible day, then dash out and purchase something to wear for that specific occasion?
- Do you puzzle over coordinating clothes?
- Do you purchase pre-coordinated items and always wear them together?
- Have you noticed that sometimes you receive compliments on certain clothing combinations but don't know why?

If you have answered "yes" to any of the questions then this guidesheet can help you avoid wardrobe pitfalls.

Building a workable wardrobe doesn't just happen, it takes both planning and effort. The pay-offs are many. First, there are satisfactions—you've accomplished your goal of a wardrobe that works. Second, the dollars spent yield greater combinations and variety than in the past. A well planned wardrobe contains sufficient variety to take you from weddings to picnics without special purchases. Finally, building a workable wardrobe is challenging, fun and rewarding.

Start With the Clothes Closet

While it may sound like a good idea to throw all of your clothes away and start over, most of us can't afford that approach. The way to begin is to take an inventory of the clothing in the closet.

It is easier if everything is removed and evaluated individually. Look at the garment and try it on. Does it fit? Have you worn it during the past year? If the answer is no to both questions, the garment should be discarded. If the garment does fit and it has not been worn for a year, the garment belongs in the loser pile. If the garment is in good condition and you would like to wear it but it needs some alterations, put it in the repair pile. There should be several items that do fit, do not need repair and have been worn many times—these are keepers.

Put into the closet only those items that can and will be worn. Organize the closet so it will be useful and stimulate creative dressing. Group like items together such as shirts and blouses next to skirts or trousers. Arrange these items by color families such as reds and blues. This arrangement helps you see new combinations, which means more use of your clothes.

Your clothes buying habits should be evident after evaluating your clothes closet. While it's no great error to make purchasing mistakes, it is costly to keep repeating them.

Try to analyze why some garments were losers, why were these clothes not worn? Was it poor garment design, the wrong color, shoddy workmanship, a size too small, or didn't fit your personality? Grouping your wardrobe by color may reveal too many colors for good coordination. What is desirable is the interchange of clothing items and accessories to increase use.

Analyze Yourself

Clothes may enhance the individual through **color**, **silhouette** and **mood**. For the greatest personal effect all three components need to be appropriate for the individual.

Color

You have certain colors and combinations of colors that are more pleasing to you. Each person should experiment with colors to identify those that are most pleasing. As color identification depends upon many factors a prescription approach is questionable.

Your skin tone, hair and eye color determine the most enhancing colors. Regardless of race, you will either have a blue or gold skin undertone, usually the natural hair coloring follows the skin coloring. Your best colors do not change but may soften or mellow for skin tones are consistent as they weather, tan or age. As one ages, skin and hair coloring becomes less intense. Harsh, bright colors and clean pastels are generally less attractive on older persons but are colors that children wear well. As nature has softened personal coloration, so the mature individual should soften their color choices. Vivid colors contrasted with fading skin and hair coloring emphasize age.

There are many ways to determine whether you

have a blue or gold skin undertone. One of the simplest is to try on blouses or fabrics in magenta (pink/purple) and orange. If you have a blue undertone, the magenta will soften the facial lines and bring a healthy color to your face. If you have a gold skin undertone, the orange blouse will be the most enhancing. The incorrect blouse color will accent dark lines around the eyes, mouth and nose. This color test needs to be carried out in the daylight, without cosmetics and with the hair covered. Improperly colored hair or a wig interferes with accurate results.

After you have determined your personal coloration, you need to identify the colors that will enhance your appearance. The intensities (brightness or dullness) and values (lightness or tint and darkness or shade) are a major factor in color selection. For example most individuals look good in some type of blue but is it a bright blue, a pastel blue, dark navy or primary blue? The truth is you can wear colors from most color families; it's the intensity or value that makes the difference. For more detailed information on color consult the references cited in this guide.

Individuals with different skin color undertones look better in some colors than others. Persons with blue undertones are enhanced by wearing colors such as black, navy, grey and purple whereas those with gold undertones look good in brown, orange, yellow and greens. This does not mean that persons with blue undertones should not wear any greens, but should select blued greens (emerald, turquoise) rather than yellowed greens (olive, chartreuse). The individual with blue undertone will look best in other colors that are also "blued" such as blue reds or purples, for example, rose pink, plum, fuchsia and magenta. Persons with gold undertones look best in colors containing yellow - brown, orange, rust, coral, olive and lime green.

Identifying a personal color plan helps you save money by focusing on fewer colors and better coordination. Once you have identified yourself as having a blue undertone then you can build your wardrobe around neutral (black, grey and white) and basic (navy or maroon) colors. For those with gold undertones, your basic colors will be brown or beige.

Color holds the wardrobe together. Build your wardrobe around two or three colors, preferably

Neutral/Basic	Navy/Maroon	Navy/Red	Brown/Beige	Black/Grey
Accents	pale blue	pale blue	coral	lilac
	grey	grey	amber	red
	red	bright green	rust	bright green
	gold	white	gold	moss green
	emerald green	wine	turquoise	sapphire blue

neutral and basic colors. For greatest mileage most items selected in these colors will coordinate with each other. Variety can be added by using accent colors for blouses, sweaters and accessories. A recent magazine article featured a nine piece wardrobe (1 blazer, 2 pants, 2 skirts and 4 blouses) using three colors, 40 different combinations resulted!

The chart suggests some neutral and basic colors for effective wardrobe planning and accent colors for blouses and accessories.

Silhouette

Knowing your actual proportions will be an asset when selecting garment designs to enhance or camouflage figure irregularities. A good figure is more a matter of good proportions than specific measurements. In a well-proportioned figure there are no abrupt changes in size but rather rhythmic gradation of restrained curves. To determine your proportions measurements need to be taken and compared to other body parts. The following exercise will help you decide about your personal proportions.

Once you have taken your measurements and compared them to the standard, you have some indication of your proportions. If you found that your torso is not well proportioned, then you should consider designs that might camouflage these variations.

Suppose you found that your waistline was lower than the ideal. There are several realistic approaches. One solution would be to select garment styles that do not emphasize the waistline such as a princess, empire or dropped waistline. Another approach would be to use belts that would raise the apparent waistline such as a wide belt or belt that was the color of the skirt rather than the blouse. For broad shoulders, one does not want to emphasize the shoulder line with fullness at the sleeve cap or shoulder pads but rather decrease emphasis by using raglan or kimono sleeve styles. Try to conceal proportions that are not ideal through the use of design line or color. For additional ideas on camouflaging body irregularities, see the Home Economics guidesheet 504, Design for you Part V - Figure Analysis.

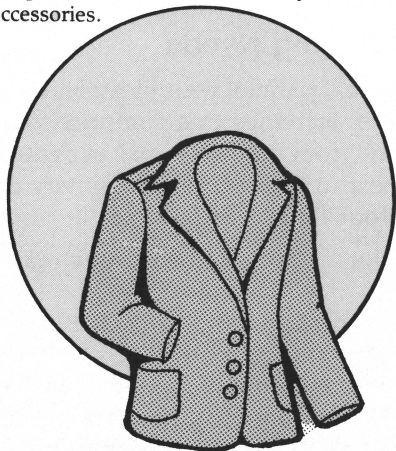
In the Western culture the ideal fashion figure is tall and slender. More women appear to be concerned with creating the illusion of height and slenderness. Certain colors, texture and lines can camouflage figure irregularities, disguising their true proportions. Colors can make you appear larger or smaller depending upon their bright or dullness (intensity) and light or darkness (value). Fabric texture adds to or reduces apparent size by bulk, pliability or weight. Garment lines can lead the eye different directions depending

Women's Body Proportions

- | | Inches |
|---|------------------|
| A. <i>What is your height?</i> | |
| 64 inches or 5'4" or under is considered short; over 67 inches (5'7") is tall. | (1) _____ |
| B. <i>Is your torso well proportioned?</i> | |
| ● Measure from your hips (9 inches below the natural waist) to the top of the head. You are well proportioned if that measurement (2) is one-half of your height (1). | (2) _____ |
| ● Measure from your hip to your foot. | (3) _____ |
| ● Measure from the hip to the knee. Your torso is well proportioned if measurement (4) is one-half of (3). | (4) _____ |
| C. <i>Are you broad shouldered?</i> | |
| ● Measure your shoulder width. (from shoulder bone across the back to shoulder bone) | (5) _____ |
| ● Measure from the prominent neckbone at the back neck base to the waist. | (6) _____ |
| You are well proportioned if (5) equals (6); if (5) is greater than (6), you have broad shoulders. | |
| D. <i>Do you have long arms?</i> | <i>Yes or No</i> |
| ● Compare the position of the elbows to the waistline, do they meet? | (7) _____ |
| ● Compare the position of the fingertips with the mid thigh, do they meet? Your arms are well proportioned if you answered yes to both (7) and (8). | (8) _____ |
| E. <i>What is your bone structure?</i> | |
| ● Measure around your wristbone. You are considered small boned if your wrist measurement is 6 inches or less; large boned, if greater than 6 inches. | (9) _____ |

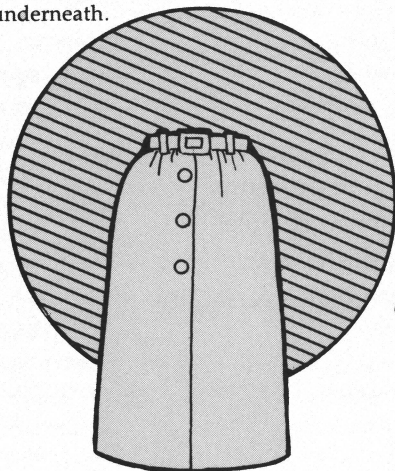
Wardrobe Investments

Wardrobe basics are an assortment of garments that coordinate with each other to give the illusion of an extensive wardrobe. It is important to buy classics that will not look outdated in a year. Keep these coordinates "trendy" with accessories.



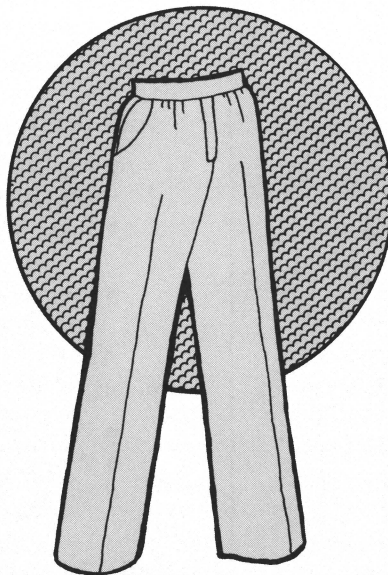
1. The blazer—One blazer for each season is a staple for every wardrobe. A classic wool tweed for winter that coordinates with slacks and skirts and for warm weather, a lightweight, unconstructed blazer in a natural color will go with almost anything. The blazer is one item that will turn a skirt into a suit, and a simple pair of pants into an outfit.

The blazer is also great over jeans for weekends, and over a dress for work—then take it off and have a dressy dress for evening. Accessorize by adding a wrap belt over the jacket, or layering shirts, vests or turtlenecks underneath.

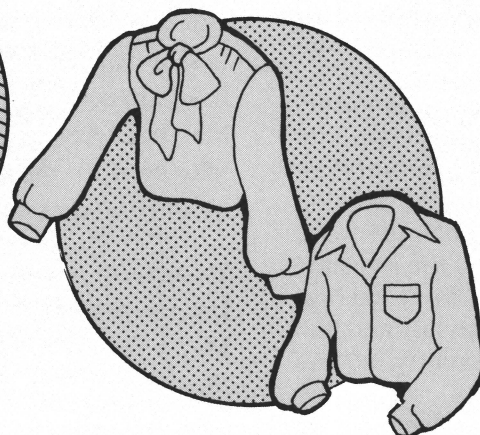


2. Classic skirts—Choose A-line, dirndl, or slimline skirts, depending on your figure type. Choose a few seasonless fabrics such as lightweight wools, gabardines, or cotton blends in good, basic colors that provide a background for the rest of your wardrobe. Fabrics with a texture, such as nubby linen or wool, provide interest to an outfit while still remaining more neutral than a plaid or bold pattern.

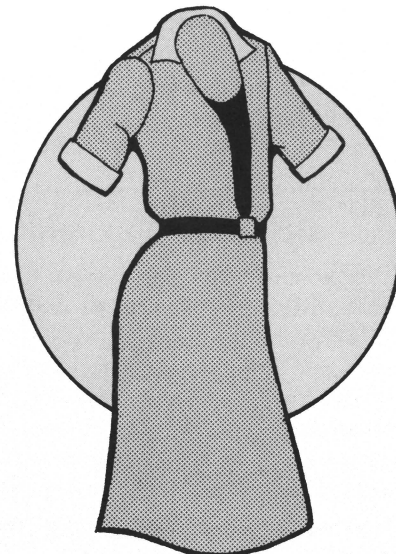
Wardrobe basics built around two or three colors will help your wardrobe work for you. Plan your own best colors in fabrics with compatible textures. You will not be limiting your wardrobe to just the two or three colors, because you will be adding variety with accent colors. The sample chart below will give you an idea of the possibilities in color selection.



3. Functional classic slacks—Look for tailored slacks in comfortable fabrics such as gabardines or cotton blends. Avoid plaids and stripes, but subtle tweeds or fabrics with texture are great in the same color family as the skirts.



5. Blouses or shirts—Cotton/polyester blends in pastels and white are good basics. Blouses and shirts should coordinate with your other wardrobe pieces, and can provide the accent color for your outfits.



4. The basic dress—The dress could be in a shirtwaist style. When choosing the fabric and pattern, consider one that can be worn several ways. Fabrics such as polyesters and cotton blends are very functional. Once again, accessories play a major role in "dressing up" or "dressing down" an outfit.



6. All-season coat—A coat should fit easily over your blazer. This garment should also be color-coordinated with other clothes in your wardrobe, especially pants.

These basic coordinates can provide a variety of outfits, in addition to the fashion looks that can be achieved by adding belts, hats, scarves, boots, and jewelry.

on their placement, direction and grouping. The following examples indicate how to use color, texture and line to decrease apparent weight and increase apparent height.

Decrease Apparent Weight

Choose garments that have

- sufficient ease and fit well.
- ¾ or full length sleeves.
- self belts or vertical emphasis.
- asymmetric balance and diagonal closings.
- fabrics that do not cling, but drape well.
- smooth textured fabrics, rather than nubby surfaces.
- dull surfaces rather than shiny ones.
- dark colors rather than light and bright colors.

Increase Apparent Height

Choose garments that have

- straight or slightly flared lines.
- bolero or short jackets.
- neckline emphasis.
- same color in both top and bottom components.
- a single breasted style (suits and coats).
- vertical emphasis in seams, pleats or styles such as princess style.

Mood

Identifying your clothing personality takes time, awareness and trial and error. It is usually easier to identify someone else's personality than your own. Yet many people will readily admit "no, I don't care for that garment, it's just not me", so people can identify their clothing mood.

Personalities have been described as dramatic, sporty/natural, romantic, and classic. Each personality generally is enhanced by certain garment characteristics. The dramatic type works well in bold, striking styles and colors; the sporty person, in sportswear, casual natural hairstyles and cosmetics; the romantic exudes femininity in soft curves, billowy fabrics, delicate details from jewelry to hairstyles; and the classic clothes are more formal than sporty, of fine quality and controlled details.

Accept yourself and let your clothing express your personality. Frequently when people dress in clothing that is not consistent with their personality they are uncomfortable and this feeling interferes with interaction with others. Develop your own sense of style because it is a positive expression of your personality.

Any fashion is only as good as it looks on you. Don't worry about the same silhouette; variety can be achieved through fabric, color, texture and accesso-

ries. No one notices the same silhouette if it enhances your personality and build. Some of the best dressed people wear forgettable clothes. Smart looking and properly fitting, they're the background to their owners; the people you meet will remember you for your achievements rather than your attire.

Consider Your Clothing Needs

Clothing needs should parallel your lifestyle. Consider the time spent on activities that comprise your lifestyle - work away from home, social activities, sports, work at home and leisure. Which activity do you spend most of your time? Check to see if

- most of your clothes are used for your major activities
 - there is at least one garment for each type of activity (some garments are multipurpose)
 - the major portion of your clothing budget is spent on clothing used the majority of the time.
- After you have inventoried your recently reorganized closet, identify additional clothing needs,
- What activities require clothing replacements?
 - What activities require additional clothing items?
 - What items need to be repaired or cleaned?

Planning Your Wardrobe

Start your wardrobe planning before the season arrives. Basic items can be purchased early and extras filled in at sale time.

Plan wardrobe additions that will work for you. If you feel more comfortable in dresses than a blazer and skirt, wear dresses. Consider the pros and cons of one-piece versus two-piece dressing when making your decision.

One Piece

Less initial cost

Easier to conceal figure problems

May be more socially acceptable

May be worn most of the year

More basic dresses, greater versatility

Two Piece

Longer wear life

May be more versatile

May be considered more professional

Updated easier

One piece may wear out, other piece still usable

Make a list of the garments you have in your wardrobe. Decide on the color focus you want to establish for the future. Plan to buy only those garments that will enhance your figure. Establish priorities by budgeting and planning purchases in order of importance. Think about wardrobe coordina-

tion. Use the "rule of three", don't plan to buy something unless you can think of three ways to wear it.

To help determine necessary trade-offs, consider how long you will wear each garment before you buy it. "Cost per wearing" is what watching your clothing investments is all about. An inexpensive blouse may seem like a bargain but if you only wear it five times, the cost-per-wearing may be considerably more than an expensive blouse worn once a week, five months a year for the next three years - that is 60 wearings.

Start with either the one or two piece approach when wardrobe building adding a blazer or jacket, additional tops and bottoms for greater coordination. As the blazer is generally the most expensive item, it is important that it coordinate with the majority of wardrobe items and be a color that enhances your appearance.

As you shop for your planned wardrobe items purchase as much as you can afford at one time. This approach will reduce the chance of buying items that do not coordinate. The piece-meal approach to shopping can be very expensive.

Classic styles last longer. Simple styles with natural silhouettes and an easy fit remain in fashion longer. Tailored suits, straight-legged pants, shirtwaist dresses and A-line skirts are fashionable year in and year out. Tailored or casual clothes usually wear longer than extremely frilly designs.

Quality clothing will usually perform better in use and last longer. Quality is the result of appropriate design and fabric selection as well as excellent workmanship. Mix expensive and inexpensive items to stretch the clothing dollar. Remember that the more expensive items are displayed best close to the face. A reason that one should spend more for the blazer than the skirt or trousers. For additional information on garment quality see Home Economics guidesheet 637 Ready-to-Wear Quality Signals.

Consider your total wardrobe - think about accessories and coats. If you have limited your color focus you will save considerable money on accessories. Clothes shouldn't be so sensible they bore one to death, so plan for accessories that will add some sparkle and surprise to your wardrobe. "Accessories Make A Difference" Home Economics guidesheet 634 has numerous suggestions on how to select and use accessories effectively.

Summary

Putting together a workable wardrobe requires planning, creative thinking and experimentation. With the varied social demands of today's women and the economy squeeze, it's essential that garments coordinate and enhance your appearance.

Analyze your present wardrobe by taking an inventory. Take a critical look at yourself. Determine your personal coloration and experiment to find the colors which look good on you. Look at your figure and analyze your proportions. These results should indicate which styles and fabrics will enhance your figure.

Let your clothes express your personality. Remember any fashion is only as good as it looks on you. Plan your wardrobe on a limited number of colors that have a common base of blue or yellow, then add accessorizing items that coordinate. With these guidelines you should have a workable wardrobe and one that is unique and pleasing to you.

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