

Dress Sharp, Look Professional

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Story by Elena Reed.

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Three tips for wardrobe success

1. Don't buy anything unless it goes with four other items in your closet

Have you ever stared at your closet wondering how you ended up with such a miss-match of pieces? Before you know it half of your morning is wasted and you end up wearing the same thing day in and day out! A good wardrobe is the one that allows you to create many looks in no time. Remember the old saying? Proper planning prevents poor performance.

2. Do your major shopping twice a year. Add on inexpensively when you see something you like.

Well planned shopping is much easier than you think. Just before a change of season, new stock hits the stores. That's when you need to do your shopping, not when the sales are on as there will be nothing decent left.

So, right now I invite you to take a pen, open up your diary and block one day at the end of August (your Spring/ Summer update) and one day at the end of February (your Autumn/ Winter update) for shopping!

When the time comes, you simply need to do a pre-shopping planning session to separate your 'wardrobe needs' from 'your own wants'. Write it down, keep it close to your heart and make sure you don't buy a thing unless it's on your list and of course... unless it goes with four other items in your wardrobe.

As the time goes by, you may bump into something nice that you love to death. Can you buy it? Of course! Just make sure it does not put a hole in your budget. It's good to be spontaneous when you have a system already in place.

3. Buy quality not quantity

We all have more important things to spend our money on than clothing. Kids' education, mortgage payments, grocery bills... the list goes on. If you buy well, however, that is one quality garment instead of five poor ones, you will actually save thousands of dollars in the long run.

Gentlemen's corner: what's in a suit?

Your suit should always be first class as nothing makes you look more professional.

The fabric is the biggest factor in the price you pay. Light weight wool is good for all year round. Cotton is your second best choice for Summer.

A black suit is inappropriate for day time, use for evenings only. Navy, charcoal and dark brown are good enough for the office without being too formal. Light grey, beige and stone colours are in fashion for Summer 2010.

The double-breasted jacket has made a huge comeback.

Summer is the perfect time to add some patterns into your closet. This year choose from houndstooth, herringbone, Prince of Wales check and pinstripe.

The more buttons your suit jacket has, the taller you look.

One button in a single breasted jacket is very fashion forward. Two buttons are the best. Three buttons are harder to pull off – works best for taller men. Four buttons – approach with caution; best when avoided.

The rule of vents. For business choose a suit with two side vents. Single vent equals dinner suit.

Secret women's business: know your fashion

Like most other things in life, successful fashion is about letting your inner self shine through. Updating your look is important but it does not have to break the bank.

Add these items to your wardrobe inexpensively this season:

1. Something colourful. Colour is the easiest way to update your look. The shops are blooming with bold brights and lively hues. The top brights for this season are super lemon, dark citron, vibrant green, bold coral, fuchsia red and bright blue.

2. A Summer scarf. Make an impact by spicing up your old jacket with a cheerful linen scarf or drape a stylish kerchief around your neck when wearing a business shirt.

3. A checked or stripy shirt. Not only are patterns back with vengeance, chances are you already have a stripy shirt hiding in your closet. Wear it with confidence. What an affordable way to make your look feel new.

4. A fabulous day time dress. The dresses are everywhere and they are so easy during hot Summer days. You don't need to think about what to wear it with as it is an outfit already. All you require is couple of accessories to spice up your look.

5. An interesting belt. If your body shape allows, wear a belt with your suit jacket, day time dress or tasteful top. Choose a striking colour if you want to add individuality to your outfit or a neutral hue if your intention is to define your waist.

Elena Reed is a speaker and stylist specialising in image and business etiquette. She runs regular webinars for professionals to help them create a winning image for career and personal success. Meet Elena at www.elenareed.com.au



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