

DON'T DO IT!

HOW TO AVOID
THE 7 BIGGEST
Style Mistakes
WOMEN MAKE



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It happens all the time.
Perfectly intelligent, well-meaning women making mistakes, wasting their time and money and often wondering why they don't look and feel their best.

As a Personal Stylist, I work with a variety of women in varying stages of their lives. My clients come from all walks of life and come in many different shapes and sizes. Yet as diverse as they are, when it comes to style, getting dressed, creating outfits and looking and feeling good, they have the same struggles and often make the exact same mistakes.

Don't think I'm excluded here! (I could be the poster child.) For years I shopped and outfitted myself with the best of intentions, yet went about it blindly, with no idea that I was going about it all wrong. It left me wondering why I had clothes in my closet I didn't wear, outfits that never seemed quite right and questioning why I never felt good about myself.

It wasn't until I started tuning in to who I was and how I was built, paying attention to which styles, cuts, and colours suited me, that I began to see a difference.

I found myself no longer wasting time walking through stores not knowing what to buy or wasting money buying clothes I wouldn't wear. Putting outfits together was a breeze because I had all the right pieces in my closet and I often left the house knowing I looked pretty damn good.

The best part? Looking good made me feel good. Feeling good gave me confidence. And confidence? Well, you know that when you're confident you can pretty much accomplish anything.

I think we, as women are so busy taking care of others, our jobs, our pets or anything else that needs our attention, we end up making ourselves the last priority – sometimes not even making the list. The result is that we don't give ourselves the attention we need or the effort we deserve. I know I've done it, I see my friends doing it and many of my clients are no different. That's why we end up making these mistakes – through no fault of our own, simply by living busy lives and getting stuff done. Well no more!

If you've picked up this book you probably want to:

- a. Discover the mistakes
- b. Determine if you're making them
- c. Learn how to stop
- d. Look your best (or Smokin' Hot) all the time
- e. All of the above

So let's not waste any more time and jump right in. Here are the 7 biggest style mistakes I see women make and how to avoid them...

MISTAKE NUMBER ONE

Don't dress for your **BODY SHAPE**

Ooooo! This is a good one and it's why I'm starting here first. Mistake #1, which is so prevalent, is so easily rectified and can have the most incredible, most obvious results. The best part? It's easy to avoid. All it takes is becoming informed.

What is the "it" I'm talking about? It's knowing, or rather not knowing, how to dress for your particular body shape.

Without this knowledge, you might not know which clothing cuts, styles and lengths look best on you, how to wear certain items to suit your body best or how to choose and place accessories to monopolize on the body you've got. The result? You can end up buying all the wrong clothes and (even worse!) looking less than stellar. And who doesn't want to shine like a star.

Generally speaking, knowing and understanding your body shape (both your horizontal and vertical proportions) can help you create visual balance and harmony. Visual balance and harmony is pleasing to the eye. Pleasing to the eye, well, you get it. You look good. Really, really good.

It's all about highlighting certain parts,
deemphasizing others and fooling the eye into
believing that you are the epitome of
proportion and balance.

How to Avoid It:

To avoid Mistake #1, you need to determine your shape and learn how to dress for it. There are two ways you could go about it – one's mathematical and one's visual.

If you choose to use the mathematical approach, you measure certain parts of your body (horizontally), pop them into a formula and voila – you're typically either a piece of fruit or a geometric shape. Then you measure other parts of your body vertically to see whether or not you're short or long in certain areas. If it sounds difficult or confusing, don't worry – its not. Easy peasy.

If you choose the visual approach, you stand in front of the mirror and take stock of what you've got – both horizontally and vertically. You take a look at where you go in and where you go out, where you're long and where you're short and then you look at the relationship of all these parts to each other.

Some women are very obviously shaped a certain way and can determine their shape visually. They can see where they're unbalanced or where their proportions are off. Others? Not so much. If your body shape is one of the tough ones, don't be discouraged. There are a number of body shape calculators online and a variety of books dedicated to helping you determine yours.

Once you've identified your horizontal shape and vertical proportions, there's a great deal of information available with respect to how best to dress, do's and don'ts, tips and recommendations.

Overall, you need to be aware of and knowledgeable about the body you've got. Be watchful and start paying attention to how certain things look when worn certain ways. Play around with different cuts and styles to see what they do to your overall proportions and whether or not they're creating visual balance. If you're unsure, ask an onlooker if their eyes are pleased.

If you find this confusing or just want quick info fast, you can always contact a Stylist to assess your body and give you personalized tips. *I happen to know a really great one.*

MISTAKE NUMBER TWO

Wear the wrong COLOURS

Mistake #2 is often overlooked but extremely important. Many women have no idea which colours are best suited to their skin tone. They also don't know how important wearing the right colours can be to looking good. Big mistake.

Wearing colours that suit your particular skin tone can make you look fresh, rested and alive. They can also even out and brighten your complexion. Wearing colours that don't suit your skin tone can make you look dull, tired and sickly. They can exacerbate dark circles and the appearance of lines and wrinkles. (Gasp!) Who in their right mind would want that?!

Sometimes the effects of wearing unsuitable colours can be mild, but other times it can be quite severe – it all depends on the colour or shade and how far off you are. But even if it is subtle, wouldn't you want to err on the side of looking better than looking worse?

How to Avoid It:

If you're unsure of which colours suit you best, here are a few suggestions. The first (ideal situation) would be to get your colours done (technically called a Colour Analysis). Many Image Consultants and Personal Stylists provide this service. Having a professional identify your colours can be a bit of an investment but it's a lifelong one. Once you have them done, you shouldn't have to go through the process again. Another reason to have someone with experience determine your best colours is because some people's skin tones can be really tricky and a good match can be hard to determine.

The second thing you could do is **pick up some books or visit a website that helps you determine your colours** – typically done by season. The only trick with this option is that sometimes the standard rules don't apply and the results can be misleading. And, of course, if you get it wrong, you're no further along than when you started.

The third thing you could do is **start playing around with different colours when you're trying on clothes**. In bright daylight (the best lighting for this), place one garment at a time under your face to see what happens to your appearance. Do you notice the shadows on your face more? Do you look pale, blotchy or slightly ill? Or does your complexion even out and your skin appear smoother and brighter? Start noticing the changes and over time you'll probably be able to see the difference. Or maybe not. My money's on the professional Colour Analysis – get it done once and get it done right.

MISTAKE NUMBER THREE

Buy the wrong

SIZE

Buying the wrong size is an easy mistake to make for two main reasons – improper fit and lack of knowledge – and that’s probably why it’s made so frequently.

Let’s start with improper fit. Unless your clothing is tailor made, it’s very rare for every piece you buy to fit perfectly. Sometimes if an item is too tight in one area you have to buy the next size up just to get it on. The problem with this is that it may be too big in other areas and can look sloppy or just plain ol’ wrong.

Buying the wrong size for lack of knowledge is quite common. There are 3 scenarios that I see most. The first is that some women just aren’t sure how a certain piece is supposed to fit. The second is that they think a smaller size (meaning tighter) will make them look thinner, sexier – you name it. The third is the flip side, where some women believe that buying a larger size will make them look smaller or thinner or hide their flaws.

In the first scenario, a few pointers or tips are usually all someone needs to get them on their way. Sometimes a really great, honest salesperson that understands body shapes and style will do. Other times, it’s time to call in the pros.

In the second and third scenarios, by purposely buying the wrong size, some women end up creating the situation that they initially intended to avoid. Buying a smaller size to make you look smaller or thinner often doesn’t work. It just ends up looking like the item is too tight and showing off every lump and bump. Typically not too flattering.

On the other hand, buying an item in a larger size to hide flaws and make you appear smaller often ends up looking sloppy, ill-fitting and hides your shape altogether. It can actually have the opposite effect and make you look bigger than you are. Not really the goal, right?

How to Avoid It:

So what to do? **It’s simple – buy clothes that fit.** Buy them in your size, not someone else’s. If they don’t fit well, either get them altered or put them back and keep trying.

Ill-fitting clothes, clothes that are too big or clothes that are too small are not your friends. They’re like that person who says they’re your best friend but talks smack behind your back
Smart women don’t wear smack-talkin’ clothes.

MISTAKE NUMBER FOUR

Age

THEMSELVES

You know that woman who dresses like a teenager because she thinks it makes her look younger? Or the one who dresses in outdated clothing when in fact her grandmother wouldn't be caught dead in that outfit? Yeah – they both just end up looking older than they really are, but in completely different ways.

Dressing like a tween doesn't actually make you look younger and dressing for bygone eras (and not in a cool, hip way) does nothing for you either.

I'm all for wanting to look young, follow trends and be stylish but sometimes it can be done in excess and have a detrimental effect. On the other hand, not keeping up with the changes in fashion can make you look dated and much older than you really are.

The key in either scenario is to find balance – balance between staying current and age appropriate.

Now I know the words “age appropriate” can seem like a jail sentence to some and by no means am I saying you should box yourself in, limit your creative expression or be someone you're not. Never! But why would you want to try to look like someone half or even a quarter your age or someone much older, especially if it's doing more harm than good?

How to Avoid It:

So what do you do when you love the latest trends, want to dress young but don't want to look like you raided your daughter's closet? You take elements from those trends or the styles you love and incorporate them into looks that are a bit more reflective of where you're at in life.

And what do you do when you don't want to be a slave to the trends or revamp your wardrobe every time fashion dictates? Same answer – you pull from and adopt elements from some of your favorite styles and create a look that is both current and all your own.

If this seems a little daunting to you or if you have trouble determining which looks and styles to incorporate, don't be afraid to seek guidance. Just make sure you're seeking guidance from someone who knows what they're doing. In this case, hiring a professional might just do the trick.

MISTAKE NUMBER FIVE

Overdo

IT

Ever heard the phrase *Too Much of a Good Thing*? I hope so, because it really applies here. If not, let me break it down for you - there's good enough, there's just right and there's too much. When it comes to fashion or getting dressed, too much of anything, even something wonderful, isn't necessarily better. In fact, it can be bad. Really, really bad.

When you overdo it or wear too much of anything, you're making an extremely strong statement and it can, at times, be distracting.

Need an example? Take bracelets. One bracelet? Nice. A few or multiple bracelets stacked to create a statement piece? Great! Both arms covered in bracelets up to the elbows? Not so much.

Let's move on to makeup. A little makeup in natural shades to accentuate or highlight features is lovely. A little more makeup to create drama or add definition and colour can be beautiful, but caked on, heavily applied makeup that resembles something you'd see on a clown, is typically unappealing.

When it comes to wearing trends the same holds true. It's often best to wear one or maybe two (if done well) at a time. Trying to combine them all in one outfit is overkill.

Wearing multiple patterns or even just variations of one pattern at the same time is also tricky. Keeping it subtle by wearing just one piece is quite easy to do. Mixing two patterns at the same time can be a bit more difficult to do, or at least do well and wearing multiple patterns at the same time is really hard to pull off.

The problem with overdoing it (when it comes to style and getting dressed) is that it takes away from *you*. Taking it down a notch allows *your* true beauty and essence to shine through. And *that* is a good thing.

How to Avoid It:

If you happen to be the type of person who often overdoes it, ask yourself why. If it's because you absolutely love it, then go for it.

Walk to the beat to your own drum and own it.
Just be sure that there's not something else going on.

If you're doing it because it draws a lot of attention and you love to be noticed or if it's the opposite, where you hide behind all the extras so that no one will see the real you, there's probably a bigger issue at hand – one that might be worth addressing.

If you're doing it because you think that more of everything is better, you might want to revisit that theory and try paring it down a bit. Perhaps you could try a different method, a less is more kind of approach – a little less makeup, one less bangle, half a can of hairspray instead of the whole shebang. Ease into it. **Then, when people see you, they might actually see you.**



MISTAKE NUMBER SIX

Listen to

BAD ADVICE

If I had a dollar for every time a salesperson told me I looked good in something when it was hideously obvious I didn't, I'd be a very, very, wealthy girl. But no dollars came my way, so I work. Luckily I love my job and get to spend time with incredibly fabulous women. But from these fabulous women I hear the shocking horror of advice that some (probably) well meaning people give.

Salespeople, mothers, sisters, friends, spouses – everyone has an opinion and everyone has advice to share. Sometimes the opinions and advice of others is valid, but sometimes it's not.

I've worked with excellent salespeople who are extremely savvy and give honest feedback. I've also worked with those that are a little less knowledgeable and scrupulous and are more concerned with making quota than how good you look.

When it comes to friends, family, co-workers, etc., many of us are surrounded by people who give really great advice and truly want us to look good. Sometimes though, they'll give you advice based on their own beliefs and personal preferences, not necessarily on what might be best for you.

How to Avoid It:

If you find yourself often counting on the advice of others, take heart, you're not alone. The trick is to know who to listen to. When you're wavering and need help, it's tough to know whether you should listen to your intuition, your boyfriend, the latest magazine article you read, or your dog. (Is he silently mocking you?!)

First and foremost, go with your gut
— very rarely does it let you down.

If your gut isn't playing nice, go with someone whose style you admire and whose opinion you respect. If you get advice that doesn't feel right or from someone you can't trust, don't take it. Just because someone is supposed to have more knowledge or experience than you doesn't mean that they've got the right answer. In that case you're probably better off listening to your dog.

MISTAKE NUMBER SEVEN

Play it

SAFE

Ah, last but not least – Playing it Safe. You might think it's not a style mistake at all, but depending on why you do it, it can be a major one. In fact, this is the one mistake that most of my clients make.

Playing it safe might seem like an innocuous little mistake, but that's what makes it such a big one. You'd think that staying within your comfort zone, sticking with what you know or erring on the side of caution would be a good thing. In reality, it can hold you back, limit you and keep you from being the very best, most awesome you. That, my friend, would be the biggest mistake of all.

If you play it safe out of respect for a person or situation or because it's appropriate, then I commend you for your decision. If you play it safe because you don't know any other way, then there are steps you can take to learn and grow. But if you play it safe for any other reason, then we need to chat.

Now I'm not talking about being conservative here. No. When it comes to fashion, being conservative can be a style all its own. I'm talking about not being open to trying anything new or different. I'm talking about not taking risks. I'm talking about being fearful – of the unknown, of rejection or of who you might become.

When your style and how you dress is a reflection of you, changing it or altering it in any way can be intimidating and frightening. You might wonder if it's really you or if you can truly pull it off. You might also wonder how others might perceive you.

Yes it's risky to try new things. Yes it's scary. But think of the alternative. What if you could look ten times better? Or a hundred! What if by making some slight changes you not only look incredible but as a result you feel incredible, giving you the courage to go after what you've always wanted? Think it doesn't happen? It does! I see it time and time again.

I see women step out of their shell, try things they never thought they could wear or pull off and shine! I see them look at themselves in the mirror in disbelief, shocked that they could look sooo amazing. I see them start feeling good about themselves, gain confidence and start taking risks in other parts of their lives. I see them become who they were truly meant to be.

How exciting is that?!

How to Avoid It:

We've all been known to play it safe here and there, but if you're typically afraid to try new things (new styles, cuts, colours, etc.) or if you live in a constant fear of expressing your true self, here are some suggestions.

The first thing to do is figure out where you're at. Are you playing it safe because it's appropriate for your situation? Are you playing it safe because it's what you know and you're unsure of what else to do? Or are you playing it safe because you're afraid of the alternative? If you're willing to take just one tiny step into the unknown, I guarantee it'll be worth it.

The next thing to do is determine where you're going. What do you like? What excites you? What do you wish you could wear or pull off? What other version of yourself would you like to see?

Flip through some magazines or browse the internet for looks you like or celebrities whose style you admire. Are there certain pieces, cuts, patterns, accessories or shoes that stand out? Compile a collection of items that appeal to you.

Next, head out to the shops in search of these pieces and start trying them on. See how you feel in them. Do they feel good or do they feel foreign? Sometimes you'll put on an item and feel the love. Other times you'll put something on and feel downright awkward. That's OK! Don't dismiss it. It's perfectly normal and it might just take a little time to get used to. Baby steps – it doesn't have to happen over night.

Do this until you find a piece you're ready to purchase. Take it home, find something to wear it with and go for it. Then do it again. Wash, rinse, repeat.

Keep going.

Keep trying new things until you realize that you're no longer playing it safe, you're no longer unsure or afraid – afraid of what others might think or afraid of who you might become.

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT

...the 7 Biggest Style Mistakes I see women make. Not so bad, right? All very easily avoidable.

If you find yourself making any one or all of these mistakes and are a little discouraged, don't be. You might just need a little tweak here, a little adjustment there and you'll be good to go in no time.

On the other hand, if you find yourself making these mistakes and could care less, then that's quite alright. It's not so much about how you look as how you *feel*. If what you wear and how you look makes you feel good and gives you confidence, then all the power to you.

Ideally, you should be in a place where shopping's a breeze because you know exactly what suits you and what you should buy. You should have a closet full of clothes you love and putting outfits together is a ton of fun (or at the very least, stress-free). Ideally, you should look like a million bucks every time you step out your front door. But ultimately, you should feel great about yourself, have insane amounts of confidence and go after everything your heart desires.

And if you don't? Well, did I happen to mention
that I know a really great Stylist?

ABOUT BARBARA ALEKS



I'm Barbara Aleks, Personal Stylist and Certified Image Consultant. If you struggle with looking good, feeling great and having any sense of style, I can help. If you find yourself confused, frustrated and a little discouraged when it comes to knowing what to buy, how to wear it and how to put it all together, I'm your gal.

Imagine, knowing exactly what to do and how to do it, looking like a million bucks every time you step out the door and having incredible style that's reflected in all areas of your life.

HEAD ON OVER TO BARBARAALEKS.COM TO SEE HOW I CAN HELP YOU
LOOK BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE, BECOME THE CONFIDENT, SEXY WOMAN YOU WERE
BORN TO BE AND LIVE THE LIFE YOU WERE MEANT TO LIVE.