

STYLE

YOUR WAY to SUCCESS



5 SIMPLE STEPS
to Great Style
& the Confidence to
Get What You Want

BARBARA ALEKS

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BARBARA ALEKS

For Annabelle and Ryan

Anything is possible
once you set your mind to it.

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INTRODUCTION

HOW IT ALL STARTED

I've been styling for as long as I can remember. You may have heard of my first two clients. Barbie and Ken? They didn't say much, but I think they were pretty happy with the results.

I never actually planned on becoming a Personal Stylist. It sort of just happened. My mother was an extremely talented seamstress and worked in the garment district in Toronto. On Saturday mornings I used to go to work with her and she'd drop me off on trendy Queen Street West to wander through the shops. (That was before kidnappers and white vans.)

I'd to shop for hours, browsing through rack after rack of clothing, store after store. One of my favourite things to do was to people-watch. I'd observe what they were wearing and peek at what they were buying. But not in a creepy, stalker kind of way.

Over the years I became obsessed with clothes, fashion and style. And shoes. Oh the shoes! All the money I made

from my part-time jobs went to new outfits and magazines. Tons and tons of fashion magazines.

I'd scour the mags, cover to cover, noting what was in and what was out, figuring out how to create the perfect outfit. I paid attention to who wore what, what worked and what didn't and tried to determine why. When celebrities were featured, I observed how their different body shapes made their clothes look and thought about what they could have done to make themselves look better. Even from a young age, I was driven by wanting people to look their absolute best.

In high school, I initially wanted to pursue a career in fashion, but my art teacher convinced me to switch paths and apply to a university for Interior Design. I did just that, and while my professional ambitions were focused on building my design career, my love for fashion and style never went away. While my work was extremely important to me, so was what I wore.

I eventually left the corporate sector to have and raise my babies. When I started shopping with and styling some of the back-to-work moms in my kids' playgroups, something inside me was reignited. It was that initial desire for wanting women to look their best and this time I knew that I had to follow my heart. The rest, they say, is history.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

Being a Personal Stylist is a ton of fun and I love what I do. I get to hang out with amazing women, talk style and fashion, and shop. But you know what the best part is? Seeing the look in my clients' eyes when they realize how incredible they look, simply by choosing the right pieces and knowing how to wear them. Even better than that is seeing how things change for them afterwards.

Many women have no idea that making a few small adjustments to what they wear can have such a huge impact on their appearance and how they feel about and view themselves. They also don't realize the impact all of this has on their self esteem and ultimately their lives.

When a woman feels good about herself and how she looks, she holds and carries herself differently. She speaks differently. Acts differently. She becomes a different person – one with strength and power.

We all know that when a woman feels strong and powerful, she has a tendency to put up with less and go

after what she wants more. She no longer tolerates what isn't working in her life and ends up channeling her energy into what is.

People start to see her differently too, whether they realize it or not. Many people, consciously or subconsciously, judge and treat people based on their looks and their appearance. More often than not, when they see a confident, well dressed, stylish woman, they assume that she must be successful, talented, accomplished or competent. All appealing qualities when choosing a mate, on the job or in business.

So you can see how this has the potential to steamroll into bigger and better things. Not only do you start to look and feel better yourself, you start to look better to other people. All from making some minor adjustments and seeing yourself in a different light.

Every woman should look in the mirror and think, "Damn I look good!" She should be able to walk out her front door knowing that she looks and is truly amazing, confident that she's got what it takes to go after anything she wants.

The truth is that looking great really is quite simple. All it takes is knowing what to do, knowing what works and what doesn't, knowing what to buy, how to wear it and how to put it all together, knowing how to make the best choices for your shape, for your style, and for your lifestyle.

For some women, this knowledge comes easily and naturally. For others, not so much. For these women, the struggle is real. The uncertainty and frustration is daily

and ongoing.

Sure they could turn to magazines and the internet for style advice, but there's so much information out there, it can be extremely confusing and overwhelming. They could also hire a Personal Stylist when they need a little help, but not every woman has the means to do so.

That's why I wrote *Style Your Way to Success*. I want every woman to know how to look her very best no matter what she's doing or where she's going. I want every woman to be able to gaze in the mirror and know that she looks and is truly incredible, to have the confidence to take on her day, be true to herself and live the life of her dreams. Because we all know – when you look good, you feel good, and when you feel good, you do good. When you're doing good, doing your very best, that's when amazing things happen.

You might be thinking, “Really? All this from looking great, feeling great and having great style?” Yes. I've seen it happen, even within myself. Does it happen over night? No. Just like anything, it takes time. Change rarely happens over night. Does it always happen? Not always, but it does happen. Often enough to know that there's a correlation between the two.

Now is having great style the be all and end all to getting what you want in life? No. Of course not. It's a piece of the puzzle – an important one. It's a starting point, the first step, the beginning. And the end? Well, that's just up to you.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

I've worked with women from many walks of life and most seem to struggle with the same things. They want to look good and have great style, but don't know what to do or how to do it.

They shop but come home empty handed, not knowing what to buy, or they end up buying the same things. They have a closet full of clothes but nothing to wear or are bored of what they do have and feel stuck in a rut. They don't know what goes with what or how to look put together. Sound familiar?

Style Your Way to Success is a simple, straightforward guide – a step-by-step process to help you get from a place of confusion and frustration to one of clarity and contentment. It'll teach you what to do to look your very best – from determining your style to creating the perfectly curated wardrobe, from dressing for your body shape to putting together the perfect outfit. A process that I've used myself and with my clients.

By the time you're done, you'll know what to do to discover your very own personal style. You'll know how to create a solid, functional yet fabulous wardrobe that's filled with pieces that are right for you. You'll be able to determine where to shop, what to look for and what to avoid. You'll know how to figure out what to wear, how to wear it and how to add those finishing touches that make an outfit complete. And on top of it all, you'll look good. Damn good. So good, people will stop and stare.

If you want to look great and have killer style, keep reading. If you want to dress in a way that represents who you are and what you're all about, keep reading. If you want to have confidence, not only in what you're wearing, but also in yourself, so that you can go after anything you've ever wanted and achieve great success, keep reading.

Once you have the tools, the knowledge and the resources, the rest is easy. So let's not waste any more time. Let's get started.

STEP ONE

KNOWING YOU

chapter one

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

The very first thing you need to do, before you do anything else, is get to know you. Everything about you. Likes, dislikes, needs, wants. Faves, absolutes, must-haves. You need to know what makes you tick and what trips you up.

It's exactly what I do before I start working with a new client. I try to learn as much about them as I can. Not in a nosey way, but in an I-need-to-get-to-know-as-much-about-you-so-that-I-can-help-you kind of way. The more I know about someone, or the more you truly know about yourself, the more successful the styling process.

Which looks do you like? Which do you hate? How do you need to feel? How do you want to be seen? What's realistic? What are you striving for? Who are you? Who do you want to be?

Sound random? It's not. There's no point in doing anything that doesn't jive with who you are or what you do. There's no point in buying clothes that don't suit you

or your lifestyle. They'll just end up sitting in your closet unworn, taking up space and making outfit creation that much more difficult.

The more you know about who you are, what you like and what suits you and your life, the clearer your definition of your personal style, the less time and money you'll waste, the more curated your wardrobe and the more enjoyable the whole process of getting dressed will be.

So where to begin? First, be real. And realistic. Take a good long look at yourself and your life. Figure out what you truly like and dislike – in life, in style, in clothes, in comfort, in who you are as a person and who you'd like to be. Take a look at what's right and what's wrong, what's working and what isn't. Do it in your head or write it down. Whatever works best for you.

What you don't want to do is think in shoulds – I should like this, I should like that, I should be this person, I should want to be that. Do that and you might as well not bother at all. There'd be no point.

The one thing about style is that truly great style comes from within. It's an extension of and a reflection of who you are and what you're all about. Sure you could put on an incredible outfit, but that's not necessarily having incredible style. It's fleeting and temporary. So be honest, be true, and be yourself.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- What does a typical day look like? What do you do? How do you need to be dressed to do the

things you need to do? How would you like to be dressed?

- What do you do for fun? How do you spend your free time? What do you wear when you do it? What would you like to wear? How would you like to look?
- Which looks do you like? Which do you dislike? Why? Do these looks work for you? Which looks would be better?
- How do you feel about your existing wardrobe? Does it work for you? What do you have a lot of? What do you lack?
- When getting dressed, what do you struggle with most? Do you find the process of putting outfits together easy or difficult? Why?
- Do you have clothes in your closet you never wear? If so, what are they and why?
- Are there certain cuts, styles, colours or patterns you gravitate to? Are there those that you avoid? What's the reason?
- What would your dream wardrobe look like?

- How would you describe your personal style? Are you conservative or edgy? Casual or sophisticated? Bohemian or glamorous? Are you natural, sporty or exotic? Contemporary? Feminine?
- Is there someone whose style you admire? If so, what is it about their look that you like?
- Where do you typically shop? Which stores do you have the most success at or where do you buy most of your clothes, shoes and accessories?
- If you had an unlimited budget, where would you shop?
- Do you find shopping a challenge? If so, what problems do you face?
- When it comes to style, shopping, getting dressed or putting outfits together, what are your goals or what are you striving towards?

Asking yourself these types of questions gets you thinking about your life in practical terms. Knowing what works and what doesn't and being realistic, saves you time and money and keeps you from unnecessary frustration and struggle.

It allows you to be fully aware of what you like and what you don't like, what makes sense and what doesn't. It

tells you what to keep in your closet and what to dispose of, what to wear and what to leave for another day, what to buy and what to avoid. It also opens your eyes up to the changes you might need to make and exposes the things you could be working towards.

Asking yourself these types of questions and answering them honestly can also uncover any mental blocks or barriers you may have created. Most of us are harder on and more judgmental of ourselves than anyone else. We often limit ourselves, unnecessarily, not only in the things we wear, but in life in general.

See if you can determine any self-limiting or self-sabotaging thoughts or beliefs – about your body, your style and your self worth. What untrue stories are you telling yourself? Where are you pigeonholing yourself? Where can you open your mind to new ideas, thoughts or possibilities? Where can you expand and try something new?

chapter two

YOUR PERSONAL STYLE

Many of the women I work with don't know what their style is or insist that they have no style whatsoever. Here's the thing. Every single person has a style. Some people just need help sussing it out or defining it and some just need a little fine tuning.

If you feel like you have no style, don't like the one you do have, or feel you need a little help determining your personal style and don't know where to begin, the following exercise will help you out.

How to Determine Your Personal Style

Step 1: Take a look at your favourite outfits (and only your faves – the ones you absolutely love). What do you notice? What are the similarities? Do they have similar cuts, styles, colours or patterns? Or are they all different but have a certain look or feel to them?

Step 2: Flip through some magazines or go online and browse the fashion sites to see what appeals to you. Start a file – tear out your favourites from the magazines or bookmark the pages on websites that resonate with you.

Step 3: If you're on Pinterest, create a separate board for pulling looks that you love. Keep it private if you don't want anyone else to see it. If you're on Instagram, start following people whose style you like, admire or aspire to have. You can even screenshot favourite outfits and keep a separate file for all those pics.

Step 4: Once you've got a decent buildup of images or photos, scroll through them to look for common elements. Note the similarities in style, cuts, colours and patterns. These similarities, the look and feel that's coming through those photos, that's your style. You're drawn to them for a reason. They're things you like, that appeal to you, that you want. They're you.

Don't be surprised if you find that you have more than one style. It's actually quite common. We women are often more than one thing at a time and that translates into our style as well. We can be a blend of a few styles, with some being more prominent at times than others. Totally normal.

If you'd like, you can try defining your style (or styles) with words. Some common ones are: conservative, chic, bohemian, classic, artsy, edgy, exotic, romantic, rock,

glamorous, contemporary, minimalist, sophisticated, sexy, preppy, androgynous and western, to name a few. See if any of these words resonate with you or choose your own. If you'd prefer not to define your style(s) or have a hard time doing so, don't bother. You'll know the look you're going for.

This whole exercise can be invaluable. Knowing your personal style will help you narrow down which stores to shop at and which looks and pieces to shop for. Buying the right pieces will help streamline your wardrobe, making it more tailor-made to who you truly are and it'll make getting dressed everyday that much easier.

And that's it. By now you should be well on your way to being clearer on your likes and dislikes, preferences, needs and wants. You should have a good start on knowing what's realistic to your lifestyle and what your personal style is.

If not, don't be discouraged. This is a process and it can take a bit of time. Keep at it, keep searching and you'll get there soon enough.

chapter three

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STYLE

Before we move on to the next step, there's one other thing to consider. It's what I like to call the Psychology of Style.

Every single one of us has a mental dialogue going on in our head about pretty much every aspect of our lives. It's one of the reasons meditation is so highly recommended – to quiet the inner voices. The voice I'm most concerned with is the one that pertains to your thoughts about yourself.

As a stylist, not only do I have to listen to what my clients tell me, I have to listen very closely to what they're not telling me. I have to try to hear their innermost thoughts – thoughts they don't always know they're thinking.

Now I'm no psychologist, and don't profess to be, but what I do know is that we all have certain beliefs about ourselves that we've either created or that have been created for us, whether intentionally or not. Growing up or

at some point throughout our lives, someone may have planted a thought by commenting on our looks, our bodies or our abilities. Thoughts about who we are, what we can and can't do or who we can and can't be. Little seeds that have taken root and imbedded themselves deep within our minds.

Some of these thoughts are valid and legitimate and help us positively in numerous ways. Others are completely unfounded and can affect us negatively, limiting us in ways we might not even realize. These limiting beliefs are the ones I look out for.

If I had a dollar for every time I heard a client say, "I could never wear that" or, "There's no way I could pull that off" I'd be a very, very wealthy woman. As soon as I hear those words, or similar ones, the first thing I do is ask why. It's my job to help my clients look their very best, so if I come up against a belief that keeps them from doing so, I dig a little deeper.

If the reason is personal preference or a personal style issue, that's one thing. But if it's a thought ingrained somewhere deep within a client's mind, one that makes them think that they can't look a certain way, been seen a certain way or be a certain type of person, this is where there's work to do.

Sometimes identifying why the belief exists, realizing that it's not based on fact and has no relevance or credibility is often enough to help someone open themselves up to new ways of thinking – to try new things and see themselves in a different light. Sometimes though,

there's a bit more work to do, and until these negative thoughts are eliminated, there's no way to open someone up to new possibilities, new looks or new ways of seeing themselves.

If you have certain thoughts that keep you from looking the way you want to look, that keep you from trying new things or that keep you from embracing the style you wish to have, perhaps you too can dig a little deeper.

To work through these limiting beliefs, the first thing you need to do is identify the inner dialogue. In the case of your personal style, what are the things that you say to yourself? What are the things you believe about how you look or what you can and can't wear? What are the things you believe about who you are and what you can or can't be or do?

Sit quietly for a few minutes and jot down whatever thoughts come to you. Good or bad, positive or negative. Simply write down whatever pops up, without any judgment.

Once you're done, take a look at what you've written. Identify which thoughts are positive and which ones are negative. The positive ones will align with the truth of who you are, help you to be your very best and keep you open to new possibilities. The negative ones will do the absolute opposite and limit you from being the very best version of yourself. They'll pigeonhole you and keep you from achieving greatness.

When it comes to your style, how you dress and how you look, the positive beliefs will help you obtain the look

you've always wanted – one that makes you feel like a million bucks. The negative ones will keep you in a rut, keep you from trying new things and keep you from looking your absolute best.

Why is it so important to look your absolute best? Because (as I previously mentioned) we all know that when you look good, you feel good. When you feel good, you do good. When you look and feel amazing, you carry yourself differently. You stand taller, more proud. You move with strength and purpose. You're much more confident.

Confidence is such an incredible thing. When you're confident, you believe in yourself. You go after what you want. People see you differently too. They're attracted to you. They have more faith in you and your abilities. When you're confident, you can be and do anything. And who wouldn't want that?

STEP TWO

DRESSING FOR YOU

chapter four

DRESSING FOR YOUR BODY

Knowing how to dress for your particular Body Shape is key to looking great. It helps you create visual balance and harmony. Visual balance and harmony, in turn, pleases the eye. When something is pleasing to the eye, well, you get it. You look good. Really, really good.

Once you know how to dress for your shape, you know how to play up your assets and downplay the areas of your body that you don't necessarily want to draw attention to. You know how to highlight certain parts, deemphasize others and fool the eye into believing that you are the epitome of proportion and balance.

It also helps you know which clothing cuts, styles and lengths look best on you, how to wear certain items to suit your body best and how to choose and place accessories to monopolize on the body you've got.

Having this knowledge also saves you time and money. Once you know which cuts and styles suit your shape, you know which items to avoid when shopping and which ones

to hone in on. You no longer spend money buying things that don't flatter you and that sit in your closet unworn. It also saves you time when getting dressed because your closet is only stocked with items perfectly suited to you.

So how do you go about determining your body shape? Well, there are two approaches you could take – one mathematical and one visual. If you choose the mathematical approach, you measure the width of 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. Go one step further to measure the length of 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.

chapter five

HORIZONTAL PROPORTIONS

To determine your body shape (horizontally speaking), decide whether or not you're going to choose the mathematical approach or the visual one.

Some women are very obviously shaped a certain way and can easily determine their shape visually. They can see where they're unbalanced or where their proportions are off. Others? Not so much.

If you're unable to establish your body shape visually, don't be discouraged. There are a number of body shape calculators on the internet to help you determine it mathematically. Try more than one to see if the results are the same and then compare them to the body shape descriptions in this book. I use geometric shapes as visuals because I find that they make the most sense. But also because I just don't want to be a banana.

Mathematical Approach

If you've decided on the mathematical approach, you'll

need a measuring tape – the soft, fashion/sewing type, not the metal, hardware/construction type (because that could hurt).

You'll need to measure your bust, waist and hips (possibly shoulders) and measurements should ideally be taken wearing undergarments only. No padded or minimizing bras as they can skew the results.

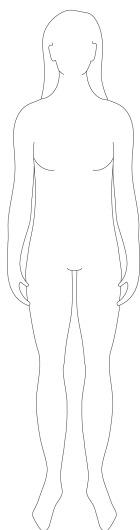
When taking measurements, the tape should rest comfortably against your body, neither sagging nor indenting your skin. Formulas may differ, so follow instructions on where the tape should sit on your body. Depending on the calculator, measure in either inches or centimetres, pop in your measurements and wait for your results.

Visual Approach

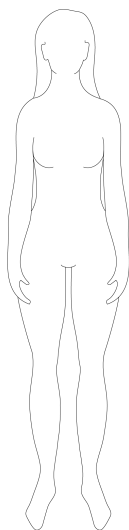
If you choose to forgo the mathematical approach, to establish your body shape visually, stand in front of a full length mirror. If you don't have one, at the very least, you need to be able to see from your shoulders to below your hips.

Wearing nothing but your undergarments, take a look at the width of your shoulders, bust area, waist and hips. Note the relationship of these areas to each other, and notice where one might seem overly wide or too narrow in proportion to the others. With that in mind, read the descriptions of the body shapes to follow and see if you can determine which one you resemble most.

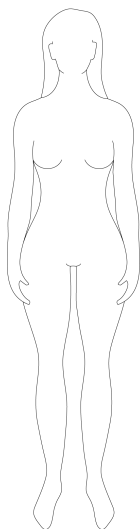
THE BODY SHAPES



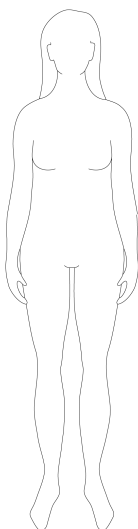
RECTANGLE



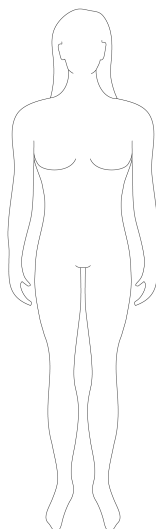
TRIANGLE



HOURGLASS

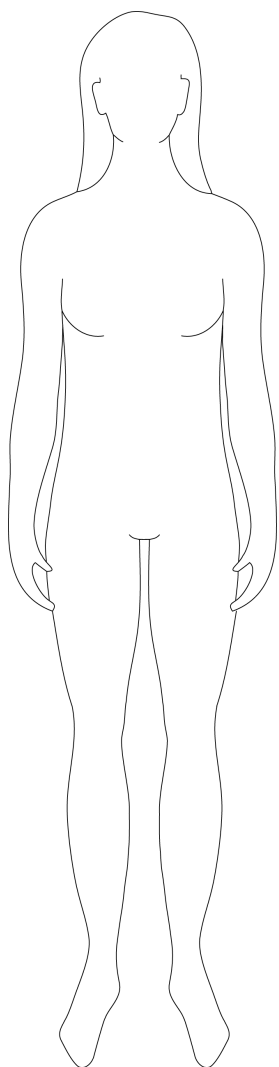


OVAL



INVERTED TRIANGLE

RECTANGLE



The Rectangle's figure is often referred to as "boyish". Shoulders and hips are about the same width and there's little to no indentation at the waist. The frame is typically small or medium, shoulders are average to broad, hips tend to be slender and limbs are trim to average. Bust can be small to full.

If you have a Rectangular shape, your goal is to create curves (much like an hourglass) by emphasizing your shoulders and hips and minimizing your waist. There are a number of ways to do this. You can create shape or add volume on top, cinch in your waist or conceal your waist altogether, or you can add volume at your hips.

I'm a Rectangle. And not only that, I have Scoliosis (curves in my spine), which makes what little waist I have lopsided and if you were to look at me face on, you would see that the left side of my waist is straighter and the right side of my waist has a bit of an indent. Try to dress that! Needless to say, you'll rarely see my waist. I often wear my pants, skirts and shorts on my hips and even belt my dresses there.

What to Wear

Tops: If you're looking to create shape or add volume on top, choose tops that have detailed or wide shoulders. They create the illusion of a smaller waist. Belted tops (with thin or small belts) also create the same illusion, as do peplum tops.

If you're looking to conceal your waist, empire tops,

drop waist tops, tunics that land at your hip or tops that land just below your bottom with or without a belt at the hip, conceal the waist and add width and focus to the hips. Tailored shirts, worn un-tucked, that land at your hip, are also ideal for those with a short waist (more on that later).

Pants: Rectangles have a variety of pant style choices to choose from and vertical proportions (covered later) should be considered when choosing. Generally speaking, the waistbands on pants should sit at your hip.

Low rise pants are better suited to you if you have more of a rounded bottom, but if you have a flatter one, it's best to wear your pants higher on your hip with a contoured belt to create curves. If you're looking to create volume at your hip, skinny jeans that sit on your hip will add the extra width you're seeking.

Shorts: Shorts can also be worn on your hip. If you tend to be on the shorter side and have the legs for it, short shorts will add length to your legs. If you tend to be of average height or taller, slim cut shorts that land at or around your knees, will balance out your height.

Skirts: Skirts too should be worn on your hip. Skirts that create curves or volume at your hip are ideal: pencil skirts that hug the body for curves, skirts with details such as pockets at the hip for width. As with pants, skirt styles are abundant: A-line, sarong style, circle and bias cut and should land at or around your knees.

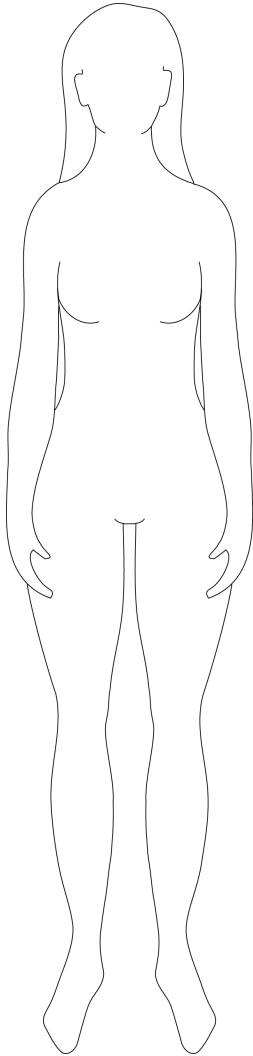
Dresses: If you're looking to define your waist, choose fitted shifts, shirt and wrap dresses, or dresses with belts placed at your waist or higher up on your hip. If you're looking to conceal your waist, choose tunics with or without a belt at your hip, straight shifts or straight shirt dresses.

Blazers, Jackets & Coats: If you're looking to create shape, choose jackets that are single breasted, with v necks and small collars, that are somewhat fitted and land at your hip. Belted or wrap jackets or coats that belt or wrap at or around your waist are also suitable.

If you're looking to conceal your waist, choose straight cut shirt jackets with clean vertical seams and lines, with details only at your hip.

Trench or wool coats that are belted or cut straight, without shoulder details, that land at your knees are also suitable.

TRIANGLE



The Triangle's figure is often referred to as hippy or pear-shaped (there's that fruit again). The hips are noticeably larger than the upper body. The upper body is typically slim, with narrow shoulders and rib cage, a small to medium bust and clearly defined waist. Hips, bottom and upper thigh tend to be full, while the tummy is frequently flat. Arms are average to full.

If you have a Triangular shape, your goal is to visually balance your narrow upper body with your wider lower body. This can be achieved by adding volume to your shoulders and emphasizing your upper torso, highlighting your waist and deemphasizing your lower body.

With a triangular shape, the main thing to remember is to go big on top and little on the bottom. Go for structured jackets, shoulder pads and shoulder details – anything to widen the shoulders. What you don't want to do is have any tops that land at the widest part of your hips (like wide bands or a horizontal stripe right at that point).

What to Wear

Tops: Tops that create shape, have details that pull the eye upward or add volume to your shoulders and upper body are ideal. For example, fitted tailored tops with vertical seams and darts or wrap tops create shape, and tops with texture, weight, ruching, ruffles, breast pockets, or shoulder details add volume to your upper body. Lace, small prints, graphics or striping will also add subtle volume and focus to your upper body.

Neck lines should either broaden your shoulders or draw the eye upward. Good choices are wide scoop necks, off the shoulder, slash necks, boat necks, square necks, sweetheart, v necks or crewnecks. Make sure that all your tops land at your hip to create the illusion of a longer torso as landing at your waist will cut you in half and landing at the widest part of your bottom will make it seem larger.

Pants: For Triangles, straight leg, boot cut or flared pants are best: simple cut, flat front, with minimal to no detailing or back pockets (front slash pockets should be sewn closed). Pants should sit low on your waist, with minimal to no waistband and should skim (not cling to) your hips. Lightweight fabrics drape the body without adding bulk and solid, dark colours will minimize your hips.

Shorts: Shorts on Triangles aren't recommended because of the focus on the widest part of your body. If you want to wear shorts, make sure the leg is straight and down to your knees and that there aren't too many details at your hips or rear.

Skirts: As with pants, skirts should have a simple cut, flat front and minimal to no detailing or back pockets. Skirts should sit low on your waist, with minimal to no waistband and once again, solid, dark colours will minimize your hips.

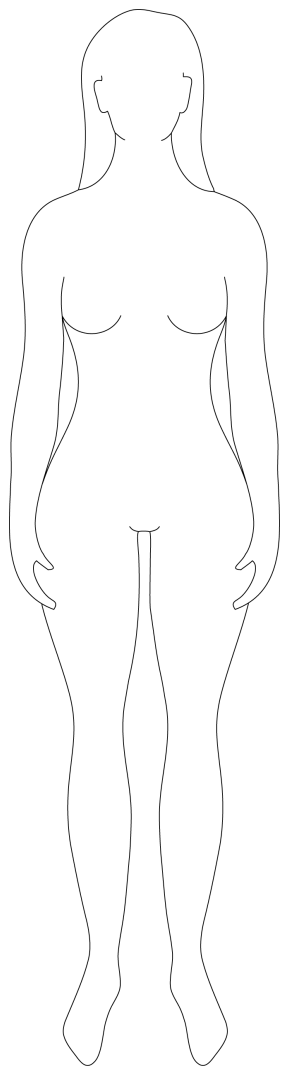
A-line skirts and circle skirts that come in lightweight fabrics that drape (such as silks, light wools, cottons, linens

or blends) are best, while straight skirts should come in firm, structured fabrics (such as firm wool or cotton twill). Skirts should be worn to your knees.

Dresses: Opt for dresses in solid colours that emphasize your upper body and drape over your lower body, such as empire, wrap, A-line or any dress that has enough detail or interest at the shoulders or bust. As with skirts, dresses should be worn to your knees.

Blazers, Jackets & Coats: Ideally, to suit your body shape, blazers, jackets and coats should be $\frac{3}{4}$ length or knee length: A-line, belted, trench. If you prefer a shorter jacket make sure that it ends at the high hip so as not to accentuate the width of the hip and it should have shoulder details and/or wide lapels (bomber or military style work well).

HOURGLASS



The Hourglass's figure is often referred to as feminine or curvy. Shoulders, bust and hips are similar in width and the waist is well defined. Bust is average to full, waist is small to average, hips and bottom are rounded and full, legs and arms are shapely.

If you have an Hourglass shape, your goal is to keep the balance between upper and lower body, emphasize the waist and elongate your figure. This can be achieved by following the natural curve of your body and drawing attention to your neck/chest area (not your bust).

The Hourglass is my dream body shape. Being a Rectangle, I've always dreamed of having curves. So as an Hourglass, my one recommendation to you is Work It. You've definitely got it, so flaunt it. My one warning to you however is to take caution. It doesn't take much to make you Va Va Voom, so make sure you're vooming when you want and not when you don't.

What to Wear

Tops: Simple tops in draping fabrics that follow your body's curves: blouses, wrap tops, halters or tailored shirts that skim (not cling) accentuate your upper body nicely. If your bust isn't too full, strapless tops that are structured and don't cling, work well. Open necklines, v necks, scoop necks and sweetheart necklines flatter your neck and focus on the décolletage, which is a good thing. Try to avoid detailing or pockets at the bust (which draws attention to it) and tunics that hide the waist. They'll do nothing for you.

Pants: As an Hourglass, boot cut, flared or full leg pants are best: simple cut, flat front, minimal to no detailing (especially no hip or back pockets if your booty is already full). Pants should sit low on your waist or high on your hip and should skim, in light or mid-weight fabrics that drape your body.

Skinny jeans or cigarette pants will accentuate your rear, so they should be avoided if yours is already ample.

Shorts: As with pants, shorts should sit at your low waist or high hip. If you have narrower thighs, you can get away with short shorts, as long as they're simply cut with minimal to no detailing. If you have fuller thighs, opt for Bermuda style shorts or those that land above your knees – simple cut, flat front, minimal to no detailing.

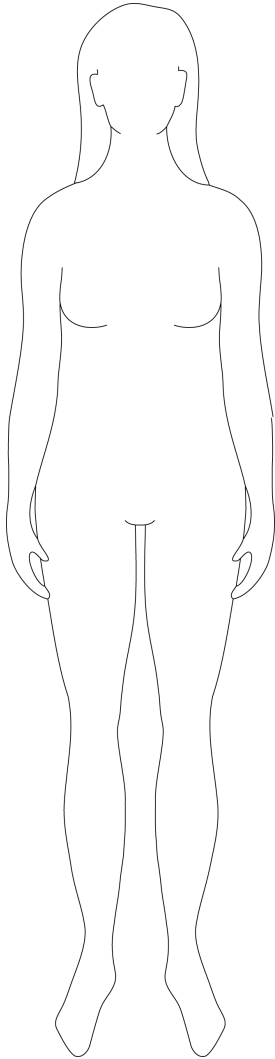
Skirts: As with pants and shorts, skirts should sit at your low waist to high hip and should be simply cut with a flat front and minimal to no detailing at hip or back. Skirts should follow the curve of your lower body and land at or around your knees.

If you're choosing a bias cut, A-line skirt or circle skirt, lightweight fabrics that drape (such as silks, wools, cottons, linens or blends) are best. If you're choosing straight or trouser skirts, choose those with firm, structured fabrics (such as firm wool or cotton twill). And if you're choosing pencil skirts, make sure that they hug, not cling to your body.

Dresses: Any dress that follows the curves of your body and is nipped at your waist – whether in cut or with a belt – is ideal for your body shape. Follow guidelines for Tops and Skirts to choose the right fit and style.

Blazers, Jackets & Coats: Simple, single breasted or wrap styles, with minimal detailing, no breast pockets and notched collars are best. Blazers and jackets should sit at your hips and coats should be knee length. Avoid boxy styles as they do nothing to flatter your figure.

OVAL



The Oval's figure is often referred to as round or apple shaped (okay – last piece of fruit). The torso is often full with most of the volume carried in the tummy and bust area and the waist is not clearly defined. The bust is often average to large, the bottom is typically small and flat and limbs are often quite slim in relation to the torso.

If you have an Oval shape, your goal is to balance your full torso with your slimmer lower body, to deemphasize your undefined waist and to elongate your figure. This can be achieved by choosing straight, skimming tops that minimize the volume of your torso and bottoms that draw attention to your legs and thighs.

Dressing an Oval body shape can be a bit tricky, but once you get the idea, it's a breeze. The most important thing to remember is that you want to visually lengthen the torso and try to avoid adding unnecessary bulk. V necks and vertical stripes or details, in lighter fabrics, are ideal. Anything that makes the eyes go up and down versus side to side is what you're looking for.

What to Wear

Tops: For Ovals, simple, straight, slimming, skimming tops that land anywhere from your high hip to just below your bottom are best. Try to avoid anything sloppy, clingy or too detailed at the bust or shoulders.

Tops with seams that sit at the edge of your shoulders and have an open neckline (such as a deep v neck or u neck) are slimming and lengthening. Vertical lines in the

form of patterns, seams or detailing are also lengthening as they visually elongate.

Tops with sleeve details attract attention to your arms and distract from your torso and tops with fuller armholes (such as raglan and kimono) deemphasize your shoulders. If you're looking to conceal your waist and slim your upper body, tunics that drape over your torso are a great choice as are light to mid-weight fabrics. Bulky fabrics will just add volume.

If you like to wear tailored shirts, avoid ones that are too fitted. Opt for a straighter cut that fits well across your shoulders and arms, skims your torso and has vertical details and curved shirttails.

Pants: Best choices for pants are straight, slim or boot cut with minimal to no waistband or contoured waistband that sit at your low waist or high hip. Make sure that they have a flat front and minimal to no detailing (especially no hip or back pockets). Choose lightweight draping fabrics – nothing that bunches, gathers or pulls.

Shorts: Bermuda style shorts with minimal to no waistband, that sit at your low waist or high hip and that land above your knees are best. Choose styles that are cut straight or slim – simple cut, flat front, minimal to no detailing (especially no hip or back pockets).

Skirts: As with pants and shorts, skirts should sit at your low waist or high hip and should be simply cut with a flat

front and minimal to no detailing. Slimming skirts such as pencil, straight or trouser are best. Try to avoid any skirts that are full, as they will add bulk.

Once again, choose lightweight fabrics that drape (such as silks, light wools, cottons, linens or blends) and remember that skirts should land at or around your knees.

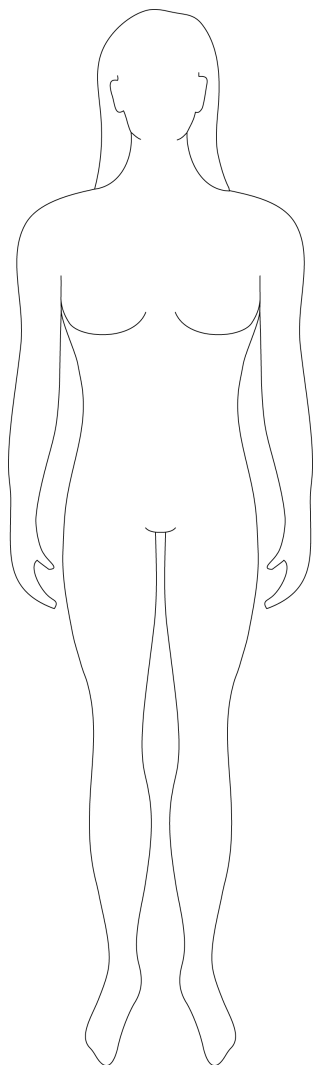
Dresses: Dresses that fall straight and skim your body such as shifts or shirtdresses are best for your body shape, and should land at or around your knees. Refer to Tops and Skirts to choose the right style and fit.

Blazers, Jackets & Coats: Ovals should choose simple, straight cut, slimming, single breasted blazers and jackets that skim the body. Seams should sit at the edge of your shoulders and they should land from high hip to just below your bottom.

If you're looking to lengthen the body, v necks, collarless and small notched collars are a good choice. If you're looking to mask the waist area, straight cut shirt jackets with clean vertical seams and lines and curved shirrtails will do the trick.

Coats that are straight, skimming or A-line can be worn to your knees.

INVERTED TRIANGLE



The Inverted Triangle's figure is often referred to as a swimmer's physique. The shoulders are wide and the waist and hips are narrow. The bust is typically medium to full and the limbs are slender.

If you have the shape of an Inverted Triangle, your goal is to balance the width of your back, shoulder and bust area with your narrow waist and hips. This can be achieved by minimizing your upper torso and creating fullness at your hips.

As an Inverted Triangle, you're probably well aware that you have a wider shoulder. If you feel that your shoulders are disproportionately wide for your body, then the key is to downplay them as noted below. For you, the trick will be to create width at the hips to balance those shoulders out. You want the eye to travel vertically on top and horizontally on the bottom, at the hip (but not unnaturally so, of course).

What to Wear

Tops: As an Inverted Triangle, you'll want to choose simple tops with soft sleeve details that land at your hips (such as blouses). Make sure that they're free of any breast pockets, horizontal detailing or shoulder details.

U neck tops that have vertical straps that sit close to your neck draw the eye inwards and away from your shoulders, and tops with fuller armholes (such as raglan and kimono) will deemphasize your shoulders.

Dark, solid colours worn on top will create a slimming

effect as will lightweight fabrics that drape, because they don't add unnecessary bulk.

Avoid horizontal neck lines that'll make your shoulders appear wider (such as slash necks, boat necks, square necks). Halter necks will also make your shoulders appear wider. You'll also want to avoid layering as it too will add unwanted bulk to your torso.

Pants: As an Inverted Triangle, choose pants that are worn at your hip and have wide waistbands and hip details (such as pockets). Pants that create fullness in the hip or legs (such as straight, full or wide leg styles, boot cut, etc.), in heavier weight fabrics, patterned or highly detailed will add focus and/or volume to your lower body. Belts worn at your hip also draw attention to that area to create the illusion of width, and as a result are a good choice.

Shorts: As with pants, shorts that are worn at your hip and have wide waistbands and hip details (such as pockets) are best. If you're on the shorter side and have the legs for it, short shorts will add length and draw attention to your legs. If you're of average height or taller, choose Bermuda style shorts that land at or around your knees.

Skirts: As with pants and shorts, skirts should be worn at your hip and land at or around your knees. Skirts that create volume at the hip (such as with detailing, pockets or fullness) are ideal. Good examples are A-line, circle, bias cut, pleated and trouser. Sturdy or medium weight fabrics

(such as cottons, wools or blends) will add volume to your lower body as well, and as a result are a good choice.

Dresses: Dresses that fall straight and skim your body, such as shifts or shirtdresses, are best and should land at or around your knees. Dresses that have a drop waist or detailing at the hip add volume to your hip area, which is a good thing.

Refer to Tops and Skirts to choose the right style and fit.

Blazers, Jackets & Coats: Dark, solid colours worn on top create a slimming effect, which is what you want. Choose simple, single breasted blazers and jackets with v necks or small collars and vertical lines that land at your hip. (No breast pockets, horizontal detailing or shoulder details.) Peplum styles create volume at your hip and are a good choice.

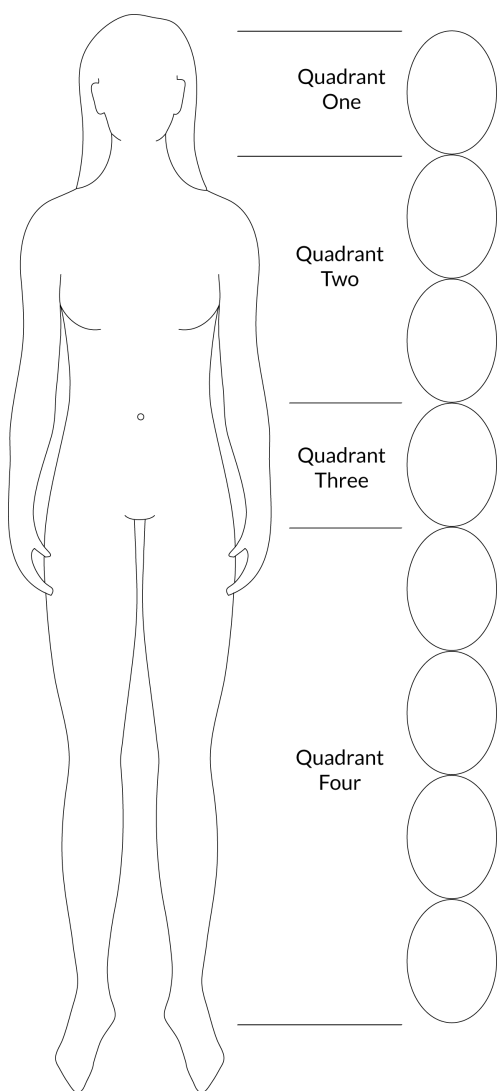
Coats that are cut straight can be worn to your knees.

chapter six

VERTICAL PROPORTIONS

Now that you've determined your body shape (horizontally speaking), it's time to assess it vertically. If you've ever taken an art or drawing class, you may be familiar with the concept of the human body being 8 heads tall. Ideally speaking of course. The theory extends beyond the art room and is a great tool for helping you determine why certain clothes and/or how you wear them, look good on you and why they don't (beyond your horizontal body shape).

On a vertically proportionate body, the head is (obviously) one, the upper torso (from the bottom of the chin to the waist) is two heads long, the pelvic area (from the waist to the bottom of the pubic bone) is one, and the legs are four heads long. The length of the head does not have a standard size and is dependent upon the individual. So when you're assessing your own body, use the length of your own.



VERTICAL PROPORTIONS

Anything that veers from the standard proportions creates imbalances and it's these imbalances that you try to dress for and attempt to correct (visually) or fool the eye into believing that they don't exist.

In order to determine your vertical proportions, I suggest standing in front of a full length mirror or have someone in front of you to help you out. Bare feet or socks please – no shoes. It's also easier to do if you're in your yoga/workout wear or undergarments – no baggy, thick or stiff clothes. Makes for more accurate dimensions.

While you can use a cloth tape measure, I actually like using a construction style measuring tape – the ones with the metal blades. I find that since they're stiff and can be locked into place, they're much easier to use for this exercise. I also recommend taking all your measurements in inches. Not feet and inches. Much easier to do the math.

How to Determine Your Vertical Proportions

Step 1: Take the dimension of your head vertically. You might want to do this while looking in the mirror. The dimension should include the top of your head to the underside of your chin. This is Quadrant One.

Step 2: Take a measurement from the underside of your chin (while looking straight ahead) to your waist. You should be measuring the front of your body, straight down. Your waist is where you indent on the side (or not depending on your body type) or is the narrowest part of

your torso. This is Quadrant Two.

Step 3: Take a measurement (again the front of your body) from your waist to the bottom of your pubic bone (without bending over – I know, very tricky, but do your best). This is Quadrant Three.

Step 4: Take a measurement from the bottom of your pubic bone to the floor. Do this while standing straight up so as to not skew your results. This is where having a friend help or a metal measuring tape comes in handy. If using a soft cloth tape, make sure it's taught. If using a metal measuring tape, start with the end of the blade on the floor and the tape box straight up vertically so that the number ends at the top of your legs for easier and more accurate reading. This is Quadrant 4.

Step 5: Finally, if you know your exact height, write it down below. If not, take a full measurement of your height from the top of your head to the floor. It might be easier in the assessment to convert the height to all inches (not feet and inches).

Step 6: Add all of your quadrants together to see if they add up to your overall height. If not, retake your measurements to see where you misjudged or erred. Keep going until you find the error. All of your quadrants should total your overall height.

Your Vertical Proportions

Quadrant One (Head):

Quadrant Two (Upper Torso):

Quadrant Three (Rise):

Quadrant Four (Legs):

Total of 4 Quadrants:

Overall Height:

Now that you have your measurements noted, it's time to assess your vertical proportions and to see whether all four of your quadrants are balanced.

I will use my measurements as an example to help you see how this works.

Barb's Vertical Proportions:

Quadrant One (Head): 8"

Quadrant Two (Upper Torso): 14.5"

Quadrant Three (Rise): 10.5"

Quadrant Four (Legs): 29.5"

Total of 4 Quadrants: 62.5"

Overall Height: 62.5" or 5'-2.5"

THE QUADRANTS

QUADRANT ONE - THE HEAD

This measurement is the length of your head and is the basis for determining your vertical proportions.

Short Head: If your overall body height is more than (or longer than) 8 heads long, you have a Short Head.

Long Head: If your overall body height is less than (or shorter than) 8 heads, you have a Long Head.

Barb's Head: My head is 8" long. Based on the length of my head, if my body was properly proportioned, I would be 64" or 5'-4" tall. I'm not. I'm only 5'-2.5" tall, so I have a Long Head.

How to Balance a Short Head

If you have a Short Head, your goal is to visually lengthen your head. This can be done by wearing your hair in a style that creates volume at the top of your head or by wearing it pinned up. This can also be achieved by your accessories – hats, hair pieces, etc. (Make sure to consider your face shape too.)

How to Balance a Long Head

If you have a Long Head (like me), your goal is to visually shorten your head. This can be done by cutting

bangs or creating more width in your hair style. (Make sure to consider your face shape too.)

For example, I have a Long Head and should technically wear bangs (which I could do and would definitely work) but because I have a prominent chin, I find that I need to keep my forehead free from bangs to balance it out and distract from it.

QUADRANT TWO - THE UPPER TORSO

This measurement is from the underside of your chin to your waist and determines the length of your Upper Torso. Ideally your Upper Torso should be 2 heads long.

Short Torso: If your Upper Torso is less than (or shorter than) 2 heads long, you have a Short Upper Torso or what's more commonly referred to as a Short Waist.

Long Torso: If your Upper Torso is more than (or longer than) 2 heads long, you have a Long Upper Torso or what's more commonly referred to as a Long Waist.

Barb's Torso: Based on the length of my head (8"), my upper torso should be 16" long. It isn't. It's only 14.5" long. It's shorter than 2 heads long, which means that I have a Short Upper Torso or a Short Waist.

How to Balance a Short Waist (Short Upper Torso)

If you have a Short waist, your goal is to visually lengthen it. I find that the best way to balance a short waist is by visually dropping your waist or bypassing it altogether. This can be done by wearing tops or jackets with a dropped waist or ones that either land at your hips or gather or tie at your hips. Wider tops can be belted at your hip as well to bypass your waist. Tops that come down in a v-shape lengthen your waist as well. Any bottoms that you wear should sit at your hips as opposed to your waist.

How to Balance a Long Waist (Long Upper Torso)

If you have a Long Waist, your goal is to visually shorten it. You can do this by visually raising it or bypassing it altogether. High waist pants, skirts or dresses that are thick waisted, are great for raising your waist, as are thick belts and cummerbund (or cumberbund) styled belts. Bypassing your waist means wearing clothing that does not define your waist, whether by landing on a different part of the body (such as your hips) or bypassing altogether such as a tunic.

QUADRANT THREE – THE RISE

This measurement is from your waist to the bottom of your pubic bone and determines the length of your Rise. Ideally your Rise should be 1 head long.

Short Rise: If your Rise is less than (or shorter than) 1 head long, you have a Short Rise.

Long Rise: If your Rise is more than (or longer than) 1 head long, you have a Long Rise.

Barb's Rise: Based on the length of my head (8"), my Rise should be 8" long. It isn't. It's 10.5" long. It's longer than 1 head long, which means that I have a Long Rise.

How to Balance a Short Rise

If you have a Short Rise, your goal is to visually lengthen it. Similar to having a Long Waist, you want to either raise your waist or bypass it altogether. The difference with a Short Rise however is that you don't need to thicken the waist with wide belts (as you would with a Long Waist). Any type of belt will do as long as you wear it up on your waist (not close to your hips). If bypassing your waist altogether, remember to consider your other proportions too. For example, do you have long or short legs? Dress according to those recommendations as well.

How to Balance a Long Rise

If you have a Long Rise, your goal is to visually shorten it. Similar to having a Short Waist, you want to visually drop your waist or bypass pass it altogether. You can drop your waist by having tops land, gather or belt at your hips.

Bottoms should also sit on your hip, not your waist.

QUADRANT FOUR – THE LEGS

This measurement is from the bottom of your pubic bone to the floor and determines the length of your Legs. Ideally your Legs should be 4 heads long.

Short Legs: If your Legs are less than (or shorter than) 4 heads long, you have Short Legs.

Long Legs: If your Legs are more than (or longer than) 4 heads long, you have Long Legs.

Barb's Legs: Based on the length of my head (8"), my Legs should be 32" long. They aren't. They're 29.5" long. They're shorter than 4 heads, which means that I have Short Legs.

You might notice here that if the body is supposed to be 8 heads long, your legs should equal half of your body. So if your legs are long, your Torso is typically short, and if your Legs are short, your Torso is typically long.

In the section below on how to balance the legs, I'm going to provide tips on how to balance the Legs with the Torso as opposed to just discussing the legs themselves. I'm doing this because there are tricks that you can do throughout your body to provide an overall visually

balanced vertical proportion.

When reviewing the following tips, always keep your (horizontal) body shape in mind and the effect these suggestions will make. If the information conflicts, dress for your body shape and see if there are any slight modifications you can make to accommodate your vertical proportions.

Short Legs with a Long Torso

If you have Short Legs, your goal is to make your legs look longer and shorten the torso.

Tops should be empire waist or long waisted, with neckline interest. Avoid long tunic styles and opt for shorter overblouses, sweaters and jackets that fall at or above your hip bone. Layering 2 tops also breaks up the length of the torso.

Avoid cropped or capri pants (which make your legs appear even shorter) or skinny jeans (which reveal the truth). Opt for straight, wide or wide flares (high waisted), that just skim the floor. Skirts and dresses should land just above the knee, be calf length (with high boots) or long (skimming the floor). Heels sure do help. Leg shortening ankle straps, as well as round or square toed shoes, don't.

Avoid low rise bottoms as they can make the torso appear longer. Wear wider belts that match your pants and skirts, avoiding low slung or convex belts.

Long Legs with a Short Torso

If you have Long Legs, your goal is to make your legs

look shorter and torso look longer.

Tops and jackets should be longer in length, drop waist or tunic. Necklines should be v neck or open blouses or use long necklaces or scarves to create a deep v shape. Cropped pants and low rise pants, shorts or skirts tend to visually shorten the legs and make the torso appear longer. Avoid jacket pockets or detailing in the torso area and avoid wide or stiff belts. Opt for narrow or low slung belts.

chapter seven

TIPS AND TRICKS

Beyond horizontal and vertical proportions, many of us have certain physical features that we'd prefer looked different or a bit more proportionate to the rest of our bodies. I've compiled a list of the most common ones, complete with little tips and tricks to help them appear more balanced with the rest of the body.

Please note that these are only recommendations based on you wanting to change the appearance. If one of these situations describes you but you're not bothered, then by all means just skip it and move on. I'm in no way implying that these are musts and/or flaws. They're not. They're just tips that I've found helpful to clients who have come to me with concerns about various issues that they'd like to remedy in some way.

Short or Thick Neck

If you have a short or rather thick neck and would like to create the illusion of length, opt for necklines with a v

neck, scoop or wide scoop, cowl or anything that keeps clear of your neck. Say no to turtlenecks, upturned collars or collars that sit tight around your neck. They should be open or lie flat instead.

When accessorizing a shorter neck make sure that scarves and necklaces are long and drape away from your neck (so as to create a mock v shape). Avoid short chunky necklaces and chokers or scarves that wrap too closely around your neck.

Another thing that helps the neck appear longer is to choose earrings that dangle and are medium to long in length. Avoid anything that is round or button shaped.

Long or Thin Neck

If you have a long or thin neck and would like it to appear shorter or thicker, opt for necklines that sit close to your neck or come up high on your neck. Turtlenecks, upturned collars, stiff collars or crew neck tops work well. Say no to v necks, large scoop necks or necklines that sit far away from your neck.

When accessorizing a longer neck, make sure that scarves wrap close to your neck and necklaces sit close to the neck (such as chokers and thick chunky pieces).

Choosing the right earrings can also help make your long, thin neck appear shorter. Choose short or round earrings as opposed to long, dangly ones.

Large Bust

There's a large bust and then there's a LARGE bust.

Whether or not yours is large or LARGE is a matter of opinion. Regardless of its actual size, if you would like to minimize the appearance of yours, the first thing you need to do is get yourself fitted at a specialty bra shop or lingerie store. It's time to know what you're dealing with.

The second thing to do is buy and wear a minimizing bra. If you want to minimize what you've got, the last thing you need is more padding and plumping.

With the girls nicely tucked away, it's time to make some choices on what to wear. Dark coloured, thinner fabrics are more minimizing than light coloured, thicker ones, so keep that in mind when purchasing new items or when deciding what to put on.

When deciding on necklines, opt for those that break up the space between your neck and your bust such as v necks or open necklines. Wrap tops and dresses are a great choice as long as they actually wrap and cover everything that needs to be covered. No gaping or sagging allowed.

If you don't want people to notice every single curve on your chest, opt for tops that are slightly looser rather than tighter. But not tent-like loose. Nothing good ever came from wearing a tent.

When trying to make the girls appear smaller than they are, avoid anything that draws attention to them – like pockets right smack on top of them. Pockets on your boobs are like flashing arrows pointing directly to them saying, “Look at me. No really. Look. At. Me.”

Small Bust

If you have a small bust and would like to maximize it or make it look bigger, the first thing to do is buy a (properly fitted) padded bra or one that enhances what you've already got. What would we do without Victoria's Secret?!?

If that's not maximizing enough for you, try wearing necklines that sit up close to your neck like crew necks, turtlenecks or halters. In this case, v necks are the enemy.

If the girls still don't look big enough, try wearing thicker and lighter coloured fabrics. These will fool the eye into making them appear larger.

Details, pockets or anything that draws attention to the bust will also help in making them appear bigger. But stop short of pasties. Those are best worn behind closed doors. Or on a stage.

Arms

Arms are funny things. No matter how much or how little someone weighs or how the rest of their body looks, some women just don't like the look of their upper arms or feel that they look too big.

If you're one of these women and would like to have your arms appear smaller, then definitely avoid short or cap sleeves and choose three-quarter or long sleeves. Just make sure to avoid tight fitting sleeves. Opt for looser styles instead.

Large Rear

Got a little more junk in the trunk than you'd like? One way to make it appear smaller is to avoid unnecessary details, embellishments or pleats along your rear. Be careful of pockets that stick out or have flaps, as they tend to add unwanted volume.

To minimize a full bottom, make sure that your pants, shorts or skirts don't cup your behind but fall away from it and that waistbands sit on the upper hip.

Small Rear

Got a teeny tiny little bum and wish it looked a little more bootylicious? Take a look at the Large Rear section above and do the absolute opposite. To visually enhance your rear, try wearing bottoms that have pockets, details, pleating or anything that adds volume in that particular area.

Tummy Troubles

The number one area that my female clients are most self-conscious about is the tummy area – especially after having kids. To minimize your tummy, avoid anything that is tight or clings to this area (these tend to highlight every lump and bump). Instead, opt for tops or dresses that glide over or hide the bulges.

To mask the tummy area, make sure that the waistband of pants, skirts or shorts lands at the hip. Avoid anything too low slung as this has a tendency to create a muffin top – which defeats the purpose.

If you have quite a bit of extra tummy or carry most of your weight in this area, avoid anything that draws attention to it or adds volume, such as belting at the waist, double breasted jackets, thicker fabrics or detailing around the area.

Thick Calves or Ankles

If your calves or ankles are thicker than you'd like or if you're sporting a pair of cankles, avoid cropped, skinny or tapered pants. These will just highlight the area.

Ankle straps on shoes or shoes that look too delicate should be avoided – they'll just make your calves and ankles look bigger. Opt for wedges, platforms or shoes with a more substantial heel instead.

Looking Slimmer

If you'd like to look slimmer, try wearing softer and thinner fabrics as they have a tendency to make you look slimmer than thick, stiff heavy ones.

In general, vertical stripes and detailing in clothing are much more slimming than horizontal stripes and detailing. Just remember, vertical lengthens and horizontal shortens.

Oversized, baggy or puffy styles add volume, as does bulky detailing or over-layering. So if you're trying to look slimmer, avoid adding too much bulk to your look. Monochromatic or tonal dressing (wearing one colour or tones of one colour head to toe) is more slimming than wearing multiple colours. Dark colours and matte fabrics are more slimming than light colours and shiny fabrics.

Remember that if you're trying to look slimmer, all fabrics should drape over your body, not stretch, cling or bunch together.

When wearing shorts, make sure they cover and conceal the widest part of your thigh. If they fall short of this area, they tend to make your legs look thicker than they actually are. Bypass this area and you reveal the slimmer part of your leg.

Looking Heavier

If you'd like to appear a little heavier than you are, take a look at Looking Slimmer above and do the absolute opposite. Consider layering your clothing and opt for heavier, stiffer fabrics in lighter colours.

Looking Taller

If you, like me, come up short in the height department, there are ways to trick the eye into making you seem just a little bit taller. The first and most obvious is to wear sky-high heels. Brilliant, right? Now you know why people hire me.

The key to looking taller is to create a long, lean look and avoid visually breaking up the body. Vertical details, stripes and straight lines as well as monochromatic dressing (as previously noted) give the illusion of length. Anything that visually chops the body horizontally breaks the illusion of length so avoid wearing belts in a different colour or ankle straps on shoes.

To visually lengthen the leg when wearing a skirt, wear

the same colour tights and shoes. This will fool the eye and make your legs appear longer than they are.

Looking Shorter

If you're tall and would like to appear shorter, other than wearing flats, your goal is to visually break up the body horizontally so that it doesn't appear as long. This can be done by wearing multiple colours, wearing a different coloured belt, necklace (or anything that sits horizontally across your body) and wearing horizontal stripes and/or detailing in your clothing. Just remember – chop, chop, chop.

Looking Younger

Remember when you were young and you'd put on a ton of makeup to look older and try and get into the bars with your fake ID? No? Oh. Never mind. Let's just say that lots of makeup (and darker colours) tends to age you. If you tend to wear a lot of makeup, softening your makeup or wearing a little less will do wonders in helping you appear younger.

Dying your hair too dark or in an all over flat colour also has a tendency to age someone. If you do colour your hair, make sure to choose a shade that's within two shades of your natural hair colour. Highlights and/or lowlights done properly can also help soften the look and help you appear younger as well.

Staying current with your hairstyle as well as your makeup, clothing and accessories really makes a huge

difference in appearing younger. A dated look has a tendency to make you appear older than you really are.

Being current doesn't mean that you have to be super trendy or dress like a sixteen year old. Being on trend is one thing, but trying too hard, adopting trends that aren't age appropriate or dressing like a teenager (when you're clearly not) can make you look just flat out old.

The number one thing that seems to have the most positive effect in trying to appear younger is to be young at heart. Having a good attitude, taking care of yourself, eating well, exercising and living life with passion and purpose gives you a lease on life that can't be beat.

chapter eight

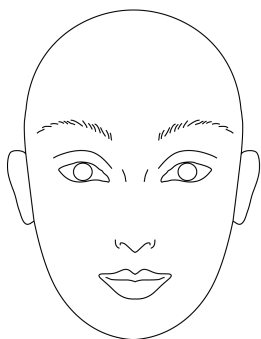
OH WHAT A BEAUTIFUL FACE

I couldn't possibly write about dressing for your body without mentioning that gorgeous face of yours. Most of the time, it's one of the first things people see. Wouldn't you want to know how to dress for its shape too?

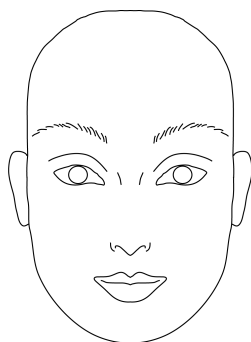
Identifying your face shape and understanding it, is just another piece in the overall proportion and balance puzzle. Once you know your face shape, you can emphasize and deemphasize specific features by choosing certain hairstyles and accessories.

Determining your face shape can be very easy, extremely difficult or somewhere in between – all depending on your face. Some face shapes are quite obvious while others need to be established through a process of elimination.

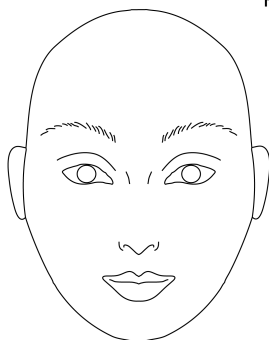
THE FACE SHAPES



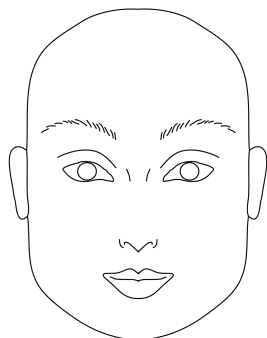
OVAL



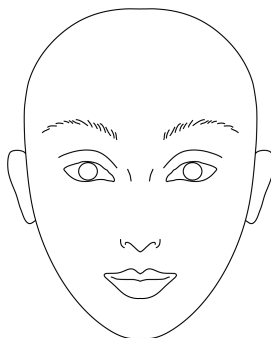
RECTANGLE



ROUND



SQUARE



HEART

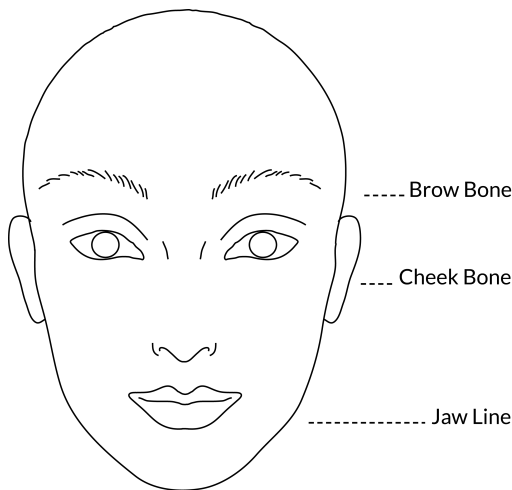
How to Determine Your Face Shape

Stand in front of a mirror, pull your hair away from your face and secure it so that your hands are free.

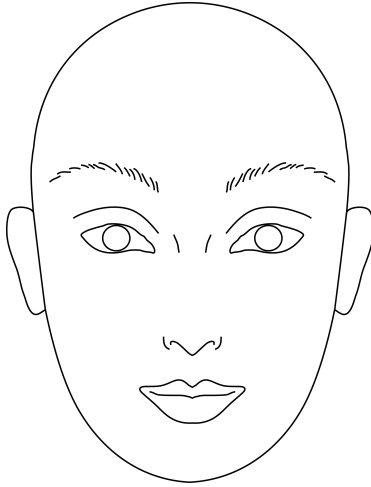
One way to determine your face shape is to trace the outline of your face onto the mirror and see if it resembles any of these shapes: oval, rectangle, round, square, and heart.

Compare the shape you have traced to the ones on the previous page. Which face shape did yours most resemble? If you're unsure, start eliminating the face shapes that are least like your own.

Another way to determine your face shape is to look at the relationship of your brow bone, cheek bone and jaw line to each other. Take a look yours and read the descriptions to follow to determine which description most resembles your face.



OVAL

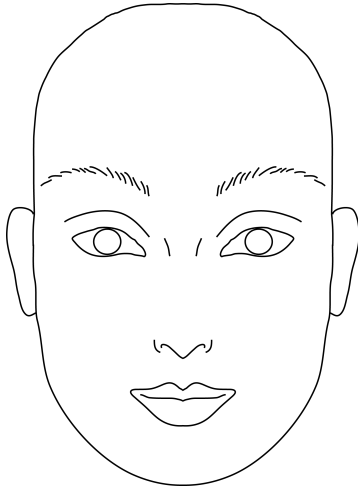


The Oval face is described by some as the most balanced of face shapes. It is longer than it is wide, but not too long and not too wide.

If you have an Oval face, your only goal is to work with the scale and proportions of your face. What does this mean? It means that the hairstyles and/or accessories you choose should be in proportion to the size of your face and facial features. You don't have to worry about lengthening, shortening, widening or narrowing your face. You, my dear have an extremely balanced face shape.

Most hairstyles will suit you, especially symmetrical ones, as will most glasses and earrings, as long as the styles are proportionate to your face.

RECTANGLE

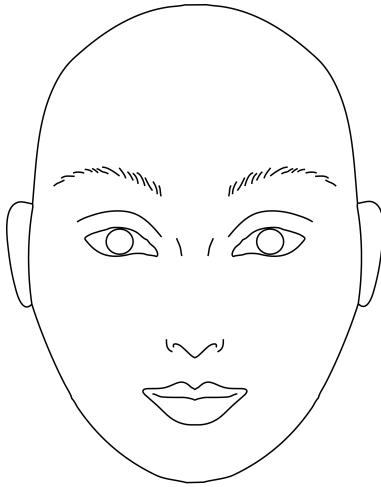


The Rectangular face appears to be narrow in width and quite long. The brow bone, cheek bone and jaw line are all similar in width.

If you have a Rectangular face, your goal is to shorten the length of your face and create width.

Mid-length hairstyles with bangs and fullness at the sides are best. Eyeglasses should be wide with a focus on horizontal lines. Keep earrings short and wide as well.

ROUND

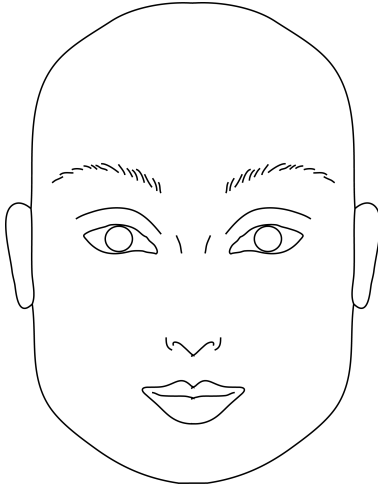


The Round face is circular in shape. The cheek bones are wider than the brow bone and jaw line.

If you have a round face, your goal is to lengthen your face and avoid making it look wider.

Hairstyles should have volume at the top of your head (not sides) to draw the eyes up vertically. Side parts, long side swept bangs and gradual layers are best. Eyeglasses should be rectangular or geometric. Earrings should be longer than they are wide.

SQUARE

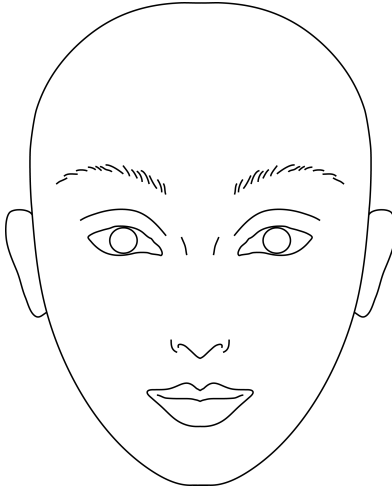


The Square face appears to be quite short in length in relation to its width. The brow bone, cheek bone and jaw line are all similar in width.

If you have a square face, your goal is to lengthen your face and soften the angles.

Hairstyles should have volume at the top of your head (once again to draw the eyes up vertically). Asymmetrical, textured or layered cuts with soft waves or curls at your jaw line will suit you best. Eyeglasses should be rounded or oval. Earrings should also be rounded or oval and longer than they are wide.

HEART



The Heart shaped face appears to have a pointy or v-shaped chin. The brow bone and cheek bone are wider than the jaw line.

If you have a heart shaped face, your goal is to balance your narrow chin and jaw line with the width of your brow and cheek bones.

Hairstyles should fall at or below your jaw line, avoiding volume at the top of your head and bangs should graze or cover your eyebrows. Eyeglasses should be wider at the bottom than top, be rimless or similar to an aviator style. Earrings should drop away from your ears and be wider at the bottom.

chapter nine

COLOUR

Now that I mentioned the face, I can't possibly go on without discussing colour. In each of the face shape descriptions, I noted hairstyles and accessories that would suit each particular shape. But they aren't the only things to consider.

Not only are your haircut and style important (as well as your accessories) but so are your hair and makeup colours. The former deal with your shape and the latter deal with your undertones, but they're no less important.

You could have the best hair cut, perfectly suited to your shape, but if your hair colour and makeup is all wrong for your skin tone, then you're doing yourself a disservice and taking away from your overall look. The same goes for wearing the wrong colours in your clothing and outfits.

Here's the problem. 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. 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?

If you're unsure of which colours suit you best, here are a few suggestions:

Option 1: 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 quite tricky and a good match can be hard to determine.

Option 2: 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.

Option 3: 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 begin to see the difference.

My money's on the professional Colour Analysis – get it done once and get it done right.

The same goes for hair colour too. Here's what I recommend. If you're unsure which hair colour would make you look your best, find a hair stylist and/or colour technician who knows what they're doing.

Not sure how to find one? Watch some of your local morning or daytime lifestyle shows to see which experts they have on regularly. They're experts for a reason.

STEP THREE

YOUR CLOSET

chapter ten

THE PERFECT CLOSET

Now that you have a good idea of your personal style and know which cuts, styles and (hopefully) colours suit you best, it's time to move on to your closet.

Having an organized, functional closet filled with a wardrobe that's been carefully curated for your style, shape and colouring, is extremely important for a number of reasons. It makes putting outfits together easier (making getting dressed a breeze) and saves you time doing so. You know exactly what you have, what you need to fill in the gaps and you don't waste money buying items that aren't required. It also helps save space, making best use of the space you do have.

Being aware of exactly what you have and what's needed or missing, also helps you plan for future shopping trips. (Which we'll cover in Step Four.) See how important it actually is?

So how do you go about creating this fabulous closet? Well, you've already started. The first step is to know

which pieces work for you. (Which you determined in the first two sections.) The second step is to get organized. Which really means make a big mess and then clean it up. The key though is in the cleaning up part – knowing what to keep and how to put it all back together again.

Now, before you tackle your closet, there are two things to consider. The first is to make sure you have at least half a day to do so. If you have very few clothes, a couple of hours might do, but this is not a project you want to abandon half way through. Err on the side of caution, just in case.

The second thing to consider is the functionality of your closet. Take a good long look at how it's set up. Is there any way you could rearrange it to maximize the space or make it more user friendly? Could you add some rods or shelves for more storage space? Could you add bins, baskets or hooks for smaller items or accessories? If there are ways to better utilize your closet, purchase the required items before you clean out your closet so that they're on hand when you do. (Refer to Chapter 11: Closet Storage Tips, for some ideas.)

HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT CLOSET

Step 1: Empty out your closet.

That's right. Take it all out – the clothes (on hangers), the shoes, handbags, accessories – everything that's in there. This might seem counterproductive and slightly

insane, but you're starting fresh and it'll be much easier to have a blank canvas.

(Keep in mind you'll need space to make 4 piles: Keep, Maintain, Donate and Discard.)

Step 2: Go through every single item (all your clothes, shoes, handbags, etc.) and answer the following questions:

- i. Is it you?

Is the item a reflection of the person you are now or want to be or is it a reflection of the person you used to be (and no longer are)? Is it in line with your personal style? Is it right for your body shape? Is it the right colour?

If the item is not reflective of the present or future you, if it's not indicative of your personal style, if it's not right for your particular shape or colouring, donate it. No point in hanging onto something that doesn't serve you well.

- ii. Do you love it or is it functional?

Every piece in your closet should have a purpose. You either need to love it, love the way it looks on you or it needs to serve some sort of function – be a layering piece, hold up your pants, etc. If you don't love it, it doesn't flatter you or it has no purpose, get rid of it. Stick it in the Donate pile.

Worried that you might not have anything left? Good! It'll force you to buy only the most incredible pieces. The goal here is to have a fabulous closet – not a mediocre one.

iii. Have you worn it in the last year?

If you've worn it in the last year and it's in good condition (colours haven't faded, no tears, stains, pilling), put it in the Keep pile. If it's not in good condition, is it repairable? If so, put in the Maintain pile to take to the tailor, cleaner, etc. If it's not repairable, put it in the Discard pile. If you discard it and it's an integral part of your wardrobe, take note of it and start a list of items you need to purchase.

If you haven't worn it in the last year, do you see yourself wearing it in the near future? If it's an event-specific piece and you haven't been to that type of event in the last year, cut yourself some slack. Otherwise, be ruthless. Chances are, if you haven't worn it in the last year, you probably won't and it's taking up valuable space in your closet. Do yourself a favour and put it in the Donate pile.

If you haven't worn it because it's too small and you're hanging onto it because you plan to lose weight, donate it. When you do lose finally lose the weight, celebrate by buying yourself something new. If it's too big, either put it in the Maintain pile to get altered or donate it. Unless, of course, you plan to

grow.

If you haven't worn it because you have nothing to go with it, keep it but write down the item(s) you need to purchase to create an outfit.

Step 3: Put your closet back together.

Now that you've sorted all the items, it's time put the Keep pile back into your closet. Before you do, if there are any changes that need to be made to your closet system (as previously noted), now's the time to do it. Add the extra shelves, rods, hooks, etc. or bring out the baskets or bins to have on hand.

If you have a specific work wardrobe, organize your closet first by work wear and weekend wear. Then separate it into tops, bottoms, dresses and jackets. In the tops sections, organize by sleeveless, short sleeve, long sleeve and sweaters. In the bottoms sections organize by skirts, shorts and long pants. These bottoms can be further divided into denim, casual and dressy. Dresses can be sorted by length, season or event (depending on what you own). Once that's all sorted, group similar colours in each section together.

Organize shoes by heel height and purpose – flats, wedges, day heels, evening heels, booties and boots – and then by colour. Bags can be sorted into purpose and colour as well – work, day use, evening, beach, etc., and accessories should be grouped by function and colour.

Once everything is put away in its new spot, take your

piles to their respective destinations and you're all done. Now you can sit back, take in your fabulous new closet and enjoy planning your next step – filling it up again.

chapter eleven

CLOSET STORAGE TIPS

Over the years, I've organized quite a few closets and have picked up a few tips along the way. Here are some of the things I've learned with the hopes that they might help or spark some creative ways of managing and storing your items.

- Invest in the right hangers – they can make your life easier and be better for your clothes. Flocked hangers are great for tops that slide off easily; hangers with hooks are perfect for spaghetti straps and narrow hangers save space in tight closets. If you can't find the right hanger locally, search online for sites that ship to your location. Whatever you need – there's a hanger for it.
- If you're tight on closet space, make sure you're using every available square inch – double hang rods (one above the other), hang shelves above your rods for

more storage space, use baskets for smaller items, attach wall hooks to hang accessories, stack shoe boxes or place shoes front to back.

- Vertical hanging canvas shoe organizers are also great for storing a variety of smaller items too. Socks, tanks or narrow folded T-shirts fit in nicely. Even clothes that can be rolled up (such as skinny jeans or leggings) could fit. Scarves, clutches and smaller handbags (depending on their size) can also be easily tucked away to make use of the vertical space.
- If you've used up all of your closet space, see if you have room for a tall narrow bookcase in your bedroom. Bookcases are great for folded items such as T's and sweaters or even baskets of sunglasses, undergarments or rolled belts.
- Don't forget about under your bed. If you have the space, there are low containers made specifically for under bed storage. Use those for off season or rarely worn items.
- When storing clothing for long periods of time, refrain from storing them in plastic containers. Your clothes need to breathe and plastic containers can trap in moisture and/or odour, creating mildew and unwanted smells.

- Make sure to clean each item before putting it away. If the item is soiled, the stain will set in over time, so much so that neither you nor your dry cleaner will be able to remove it. Take extra care when folding the item for storage. Be watchful of where the item creases and make sure that any special details or embellishments are sitting flat – not bunched or stretched out.
- Sweaters can be tricky. Some lose their shape when hung, so opt for folding them instead. If you do hang your sweaters, try to use thicker hangers so that the shoulders of the sweater aren't stretched or get lumps where the end of the hanger sits. If you have narrow shoulders, try using children's hangers to hang your sweaters. Just make sure that the end of the hanger sits right at the sweater's shoulder seam.
- If you fold and stack sweaters, pile them according to weight – heaviest on bottom to lightest on top. This way the lighter sweaters don't get "squished" by the heavier ones and you'll have fewer creases and fold lines.
- When storing heavier sweaters during the hot summer months, fold them into breathable, sealed cotton bags to protect them from dust and dirt. Take extra care when folding them for storage so that you don't have any unnecessary wrinkling.

chapter twelve

MOVING FORWARD

Now that your closet's organized and filled with only the best pieces, here's something to consider: most of us wear 20% of our clothing, 80% of the time. In order to keep your closet and wardrobe filled only with pieces that you actually wear, start stacking clothes that you wear regularly onto one side of your closet or group them together. You'll soon begin to see which clothes you wear most and which ones get left behind.

Even though you've done the work to clean out your closet, it doesn't mean that there won't be a few stragglers left. Try to figure out why you don't wear the ones in the "left behind" section and determine whether or not they need to stay. Taking a look at what you do actually wear and knowing why you don't wear certain items tells you a great deal about what you should buy more of and what you should stop buying.

Here's another thing to consider. Most of us tend to wear the same pieces together or an outfit combined the

same way, over and over again. Try switching it up a bit by mixing and matching your favourite pieces.

If you've curated and bought well, then you should be able to switch things up a bit without too much trouble. If you're having difficulty, it could be an indicator that there may be gaps in your wardrobe.

Don't be afraid to mix different colours and/or patterns together. These days in fashion anything goes. Gone are the days of having to match every single item in your outfit. In fact, the less matchy-matchy the outfit the better. Be bold, be creative and be daring. Fashion should be fun. Use your tools, use your instincts and express yourself through the choices you make.

If you find that there are certain cuts, styles, colours or patterns that just don't work on you but that still find their way into your closet, make a list of these items on your smartphone (if you have one) and check it before each shopping trip or while you shop. That way you won't be tempted to purchase them and they'll stay out of your closet forever. Hopefully.

STEP FOUR

SHOPPING FOR YOU

chapter thirteen

HOW TO SHOP FOR YOU

Shopping is one of my favourite things to do, and not only that, it's something that I could talk about for hours. Before we start talking shop though, let's do a little recap.

In Step One you learned about you – your life, your lifestyle, your personal style, your thoughts and your feelings. In Step Two you learned about dressing for you – your body shape, your vertical proportions, your face shape and your colours. In Step Three you learned how to create the perfect closet for you – fully functional with a curated wardrobe suited to you and your tastes.

In Step Four you'll learn how to shop for you, and it requires everything you've done to this point. So, if you haven't done the work from Steps One through Three, I suggest you go back and do it. Where you shop, what you shop for and how you shop, is dependent upon everything you've learned about yourself so far. If you don't know these things, you can't possibly shop effectively.

Where you shop depends on your style and budget, what you shop for depends on your style and budget (obviously), but also on your body shape and which colours suit you best. It also depends on what you have in your closet or, more importantly, what's missing. How you shop and how to be a smart, efficient, successful shopper depends on all of it. Every single piece of the puzzle is needed in order to complete the picture.

Being a smart, savvy shopper doesn't just start when you're in the mall. It starts way before that. As a Stylist, shopping is more than just a pastime for me, it's quite literally my business, and everyone knows that when it comes to business, you need a plan. So unless I'm just browsing, when I shop for myself or with a client, I always have a plan, and so should you. (Unless of course you'd like to waste countless hours or your hard earned dollars.)

Shopping with a plan always starts before you leave your home, mainly in your closet. That's where you want to take stock of your wardrobe to see what you have and what you're missing.

Note what you have plenty of so that you don't buy any more and jot down which items need coordinating pieces to turn them into outfits. If you find that your wardrobe has gaps that you need to fill, add those to the list as well. These are the items you'll be looking for when you shop. (This is when having a good grasp of your style and knowing which styles and cuts work for you, comes in handy. It means you'll have a good, solid, functioning wardrobe to build upon.)

Once your list is complete, decide on your budget. Determine what you think each item is worth or what you'd be willing to spend. Keep this amount in mind when you shop so that you don't end up spending more than you should.

If you don't think you'll be able to purchase all the items on your list, prioritize and shop accordingly. Just keep the others in mind too. We all know that just because you shop for something, doesn't mean you'll find it. You might actually have more luck finding those lower priority pieces.

If you plan to shop for an item to coordinate with an existing piece, bring it along. It's so much easier to find a match when it's with you. You'll also be able try the items on together to see if they're right for each other. You know – see if they have good chemistry.

Make sure to also bring along the appropriate undergarments for whatever it is you'll be shopping for. It'll give you a truer indication of how things look with all your bits and pieces in their proper place.

Now that you've got all the pre-shopping work done, you need to decide where to shop. This, as previously mentioned, depends on your budget, style and body shape. No point in visiting stores that are out of your price range, aren't compatible with your style, or don't have sizes or cuts conducive to your body.

If you're not sure which stores to hit to find what you need, do some online pre-shopping prior to leaving your home. Search your area or the local mall directories to see

what's available to you, in your vicinity. Part of this step might be trial and error, but you won't know what's out there unless you do some digging.

If, while you pre-shop, you find some items online that you like and that are available at stores in your area, call ahead to see if the locations closest to you have your size and even one size up and down just in case. Map out your route so that you can hit the shops in the most efficient way and pick the best time of day to visit the area. That way you're not driving in circles during peak traffic and shopping times. (Although sometimes, based on your schedule, those things are unavoidable.)

Now if you're not a shopper or don't like to shop (which always shocks me but is apparently quite common), try to make the experience as enjoyable as possible. Dress in comfortable clothes and shoes that are easy to take off and put back on, wear your hair in a way that won't get ruined or bother you after multiple clothing changes and stay hydrated and fed.

Shopping can be exhausting work – even for someone who shops for a living. If you're thirsty, hungry, tired or uncomfortable, you'll either leave early without having achieved your goal, buy the wrong thing, or end up really, really, super cranky. Take it from me – no one likes a cranky shopper.

chapter fourteen

STYLE WORDS

Another thing to determine before you actually start shopping or pre-shopping, are your Style Words. A Style Word is a word you choose to describe what an item of clothing, accessory or shoe (etc.), has to be, in order for it to even be considered worthy of your attention. It's a word that describes you, your style, or your style aspiration, to a "T". (This is why having a good understanding of your personal style is so important.)

For example, my Style Words are Sexy, Stylish and Edgy. If I'm considering purchasing an item, it has to either be sexy (but not slutty), have some sort of stylish quality about it (cut, detail, etc.), or it has to have an edge to it (i.e. leather, buckles, studs, black). If it doesn't fall into one of these three categories, it doesn't get purchased.

Style Words are meant to help keep you from buying something that isn't you or that doesn't resonate with who you are – a purchase that ends up sitting in your closet unworn, becoming a total waste of money. What I like to

call a Bad Buy.

A Bad Buy happens for a variety of reasons – all of which are, well, not good. So whether you've purchased something because it looked great on the mannequin, the sales staff talked you into it or it was on sale and too good to pass up, you still end up with an item that doesn't benefit you in any way.

How do you keep from making these bad purchases time and time again? You only choose pieces that look amazing on and that can be described by your very own, very specific, self chosen, Style Words.

There is however an exception to the rule – basics. Sometimes you just need to purchase some basics, like T's or tanks, to round out your wardrobe. These don't necessarily have to follow the Style Word rule, however they still need to look really great on. (No point in deviating from what works or looks good.)

So why Words and not just one Word? Over the years I've found that we're never really just one style, but a blend of many different styles expressed in different ways at different times. One word just isn't enough. I find three to be about right.

Could you use four words? Absolutely. Five words? Still ok. Six? If that's what expresses who you are and it's what you need, then do it. However, I caution you from choosing too many words. You might end up with a closet full of clothes that leaves you feeling a bit scattered or you might have a hard time mixing and matching when getting dressed. For myself and my clients, I find that three seems

to be the perfect number – enough to include your many moods, but not enough to overwhelm or cause chaos.

You can even apply this principle when decorating your home. I often ask my interior design clients to choose three words when I start working with them. That way we stay on track and avoid making any choices that aren't completely, 100% true to them or their style.

In fact, anytime you need to purchase something, consider your goal or your desired result and make sure to check in with yourself throughout the process – especially before you hand over any funds.

Stay focused, stay on track and you'll never end up with another Bad Buy again.

chapter fifteen

THE ART OF SHOPPING

When I shop with clients and they're paying for a certain amount of time with me, I need to provide them with the most value for their dollar. I need to fit in as much information as I can in the limited time we have together and I need to make the most of their shopping experience.

As a result, over the years I've picked up a few things about shopping. Here are some of the things I've learned that will hopefully help make your shopping experience more effective and more successful.

WHILE SHOPPING

- If you shop at a particular store regularly, where the staff works on commission, find a great salesperson, seek them out every single time you go and don't buy from anyone else. Being loyal to them might mean that you get the heads up on new product or sales or they

might even put items aside for you that they wouldn't for anyone else. You might even find that they're more honest with you – they know that if they give you good advice and that you truly do look great, you'll keep coming back.

- If you're in a large department, off-price, mass discount or chain store, don't limit yourself just to the women's department. Men's departments are great for sweaters, cardigans and thick, wool socks and if you happen to be petite, check out the juniors department for both basics and trendier items. Just make sure that whichever department you shop in, you choose well and make the pieces you purchase your own (in the way you wear them), so that it doesn't look like you shopped in the wrong department.
- If something on the rack catches your eye, but you're not sure about it based on how it hangs on the hanger, try it on. Some pieces actually look better when they're on the body, especially when paired with a coordinating piece. If you're not sure how to wear it or what to wear it with, ask a salesperson to make a recommendation. Just keep your body shape and proportions in mind. If you've tried it on and still aren't convinced, take a photo of yourself in the outfit on your smartphone and keep revisiting it – you might just need some time to get used to the new look. If after a few days you still aren't warming up to it, delete the photo

and move on.

- Always take 3 sizes of any article you're trying on into the fitting room. Sometimes an item can take on a whole different look if it's a little bit bigger or smaller and you might think of another way to wear it than you originally intended. Be watchful of how the fit of the garment changes as you size up or down and make sure that it's still flattering in all the right places.
- When shopping, don't get hung up on size. Sizing is not universal – different brands will size their clothing differently. Who cares if you're a 10 in one store and a 12 in another? What matters most is proper fit. Sizing these days is so random. (I mean, really – what the heck's a double zero?)
- When trying on clothes in a store, sit down, lift and bend your arms and knees, and walk around. Quite often an item or an outfit will look great while you're standing in one place, but once you move around, it bunches, gathers or pulls in areas that aren't the most flattering. Put the garment to the test before you commit to buying it.
- Make sure to check all angles in the mirror to see how flattering they are from the front, back and sides. If the store doesn't have angled mirrors and you can't see what you look like from behind, ask the sales person to

describe the fit to you or have them take a picture with your smartphone (if you have one) or theirs (if they do). Remember that you don't only want to look good from the front, you want to look good from behind too.

- If any item you try on feels slightly uncomfortable, no matter how much you love it, leave it behind. If it doesn't feel right when wearing it for a short time, just imagine how it'll feel after wearing it for a whole day. On the other hand, if it's an issue that can be easily remedied and you can do it on your own, then go ahead. If there will be a cost involved in fixing the problem, ask a salesperson if they'd be willing to discount the item the approximate value of the cost.
- If you find an article of clothing that you love, that fits perfectly and is not trendy, buy multiples (possibly in other colours). We all know how hard it is to find the perfect piece and we also know how sad it is if it gets torn, stained, lost or simply wears out. If you do purchase multiples and they're all the same colour, you can either cycle through all of them (so that each piece gets less wear) or keep washing and wearing only one (and store the others away until they're needed).
- Stock up on basics, neutrals or classics during promotional and/or end of season sales. Many stores actually start discounting their items a few weeks into a season, so scour the sales racks for items that you

purchase regularly, could wear year round or even next year. Accessories are great to buy during sales. Even trendier pieces can be worn into other seasons and for many years. Why pay full price if you don't have to?

- When it comes to shopping, know your limit. When I shop with clients, I find that most people start to fade after 3 to 3.5 hours – especially if they've been shopping without a break. Any longer than that and you might find yourself making poor choices or buying something merely because you want to leave. If you must persevere, take a break, sit down and have something to eat and/or drink. Resting for a few moments and refueling or recharging will help you continue shopping with a clear and focused mind.

BEFORE YOU BUY

- Before you buy something, ask yourself the following questions: Do I have something similar? If so, how is this different? Can I afford it? Do I need it? How many times will I wear it? If it's different than anything you own and you can afford it, need it and know that you'll wear it more than once or twice, then go for it. (Assuming of course that it fits properly and looks great.)
- Another thing to consider before you buy a garment, is

whether or not it's a piece you could properly care for. Check the care instructions to make sure. If you don't have the time or patience to hand wash a piece that will need hand washing, don't buy it. Similarly, if you don't want to go through the hassle of having to take your clothes to the cleaners, don't buy clothes that are Dry Clean Only.

- Know the value of the item you're about to buy. Beyond considering style, colour and fit, know how much the piece is worth to you. How many hours would you have to work to pay for it? How many days per week, month or year can you realistically see yourself wearing it? Sometimes spending a little more on a item that you'll get more wear out of is worth it and spending a little less on an item you might only wear once or twice makes more sense.
- Don't buy something because you think you should wear it. If you're not going to be comfortable in it or feel that it won't suit who you are, you probably won't wear it. Don't allow yourself to be pressured by over zealous sales people or shopping buddies either. If you're the slightest bit unsure about a purchase, put it on hold and think about it. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't try something new or different, just that you shouldn't feel obligated to do so.
- Always know the return policy before you buy

anything. Prior to making a purchase, find out whether the store accepts returns, exchanges or both. Know how long you have, what happens if you don't have the receipt and if there are any conditions in which an item might not be returned.

- If you're buying a Final Sale item, make sure to clarify the policy, as final sale items are often nonreturnable. Keep in mind that some stores offer a different return policy for members of their loyalty program or if you're on their list. Asking ahead of time and joining could give you a longer return window or extra perks.
- If you're unsure about a purchase (for whatever reason), either put it on hold or take it home to decide (keeping the return policy in mind and hanging onto the receipt). Sometimes thinking about it away from the store or taking it home helps you realize whether or not it's the right piece. And you wouldn't want to buy the wrong piece because wrong is... well, it's just wrong.
- Never, ever buy anything unless you absolutely love it. I don't care how massive the sale, how obligated you feel or how desperate you are, if you don't love it or if it doesn't make you look divine, don't buy it. You might wear it once or twice, but it'll probably sit, for the most part, unworn, taking up valuable space in your closet. Even if you do find yourself wearing it, you'll probably never feel your best in it. So what's the point?

- If you find an item that you just have to have and it's slightly damaged (and it's the only one in stock), don't discard it without considering if it could be repaired or salvaged in some way. Calculate the costs and ask the store for a discount. Just make sure that the discount is worth your while. If you do decide to purchase the item, find out if you'll be able to return or exchange it, just in case. Quite often stores will classify a damaged item as final sale (no returns). This way you're aware of all your options before you make your decision.
- If a store you're shopping at offers electronic receipts emailed directly to you, make sure to accept. This ensures that you're guaranteed to have it (unless you delete it) should you need to exchange or return items. If the store doesn't have this option and you're prone to losing your receipts, create a system or have one place, like a metal tin or basket, that you drop all your receipts into as soon as you get home or clean out your wallet.
- If a store asks you to do a survey, taking the time to do it could be worth your while. Quite often they'll provide you with a discount or promotional code for completing it. We all know – every little bit helps. Some stores will even enter you into shopping spree contests or gift card giveaways for completing surveys. Who wouldn't want a shopping spree or free gift card to their favourite store?

ONLINE SHOPPING

Online shopping is a great way to shop without having to leave the comfort of your home. There are however some things to consider to make the most of your online experience:

- To avoid temptation or purchasing something outside your budget, use price filters when shopping online. That way you're only searching for items that you can afford and you won't be enticed by items you can't. Still not safe enough? Only browse online when you have the money to do so or put your shopping money in a separate bank account and don't allow yourself to spend more than what you have available.
- If shopping on a website that is outside of your country, determine all your shipping costs, duties and taxes before you purchase. Know if the website will be acting as your customs broker or if you will be responsible for paying duty costs once the items arrive. If duty and taxes are not included in your final price, you can always estimate the costs with the use of online duty and tax estimators.
- Read all the policies, Frequently Asked Questions and fine print. Reading the Return/Exchange Policy is an absolute must. Know what you can return/exchange and how long you have to do it. Some websites will not

allow returns or exchanges on sale items and most will not refund shipping charges, nor will they pay for your shipping costs to return the product to them. Make sure to factor in these costs to see if the item is worth purchasing.

- Keep in mind that when you're returning an item for which you paid duty, you may need to contact a government services agency to request a refund for all taxes and duties incurred. Remember to keep all your purchase and duty receipts for your refund request.
- If you are purchasing clothing or shoes and are unfamiliar with the particular manufacturer or designer, be sure to check their sizing charts. If you're not interested in having to deal with returns, purchase from manufacturers or designers whose items you already own and whose sizing you're acquainted with.
- When placing your first order with a website that is new to you, contact customer service to see if there are any first time buyer discounts or special offers. These aren't always posted on the site. If you find a website that you like, sign up for their mailing list to receive discounts, special offers or advance notice of sales.
- Stick with known, reputable websites that have the most trusted security requirements in place. With a little research, planning and preparation, online shopping

can be an easy and enjoyable experience. Maybe even a little too enjoyable!

MAXIMIZE YOUR SHOPPING DOLLAR (AND YOUR WARDROBE)

I don't care how much money you make or how much cash you have in the bank, there's no reason why you can't or shouldn't try to maximize your shopping dollar. It just makes financial sense. Maximizing your shopping dollar can, in turn, maximize your wardrobe. I am living proof.

You might think that because I'm a Stylist, I have a ton of clothes. The truth is that (at the time of writing this book) I have one garment rack for hanging and one dresser. That's it. Being clear on my style, knowing how to put things together and shopping smart keeps my wardrobe super lean. (Although using really thin hangers and stacking clothes in my dresser like a game of Tetris sure doesn't hurt.)

There are three things that I do and that I teach my clients to do to make the very most of every shopping dollar. The added bonus is that it helps create a highly functional wardrobe that requires less pieces to create more outfits. Win-win I'd say. Here's what they are:

1. Purchase items that can be worn throughout multiple seasons.

Gone are the days of having distinct summer and

winter wardrobes. These days, most pieces can be worn in creative ways through many seasons. Knowing how to layer and mix different fabric weights and textures keeps a look fresh and unique. The key is to making sure that the overall outfit is weather appropriate.

Need some ideas? When the thermometer starts to drop, summer crop tops can be worn over long sleeve shirts. Light summer skirts, shorts or dresses can be worn with tights or with socks and booties and a heavier coat or a thicker sweater.

2. Only purchase an item if it goes with at least 3 things in your wardrobe.

If you buy a piece of clothing that can only be worn with one other piece in your closet, it's not providing you with the opportunity to mix and match and be used a variety of different ways.

If you have limited closet space as well as limited funds, purchasing items that go with more than one piece in your wardrobe, means that you'll be able to create more outfits from less pieces. This keeps your closet from becoming over full and your bank account from dwindling.

3. Purchase multi-purpose items.

Multi-purpose, multi-use or multi-wear items are pieces that can be worn more than one way. While your first thought might be of convertible bridesmaid dresses, multi-purpose clothing can actually take on many forms.

One example is items that are reversible – sweaters,

belts, jackets, etc. While they may be few and far between, they are out there. Finding a piece that's reversible is like doubling your money. Or your wardrobe.

Blanket scarves are another example of items that can be worn more than one way. They can be wrapped around your neck in typical scarf fashion, worn as a wrap, and if the fabric is thin enough, can be worn sarong style. The only limit is your imagination.

Finally, one of the best ways to maximize your dollar and ultimately your wardrobe, is to take excellent care of your clothing. Following the cleaning instructions on the tags should extend the wear of your clothes, helping them last longer and look better too. And who doesn't want better looking clothing?

SPLURGE VERSUS SAVE

One final piece of shopping advice before we move on – know where to splurge and where to save.

Let me first start by saying that if you absolutely fall in love with an item and just have to have it, and it looks amazing on, and it fits incredibly, and it makes your heart leap with joy, and you can afford it, go for it. Buy it. Splurge. Life is too short to pass up these rare moments.

Now, if you want to know where to best spend your hard earned dollars and where to save, here's a tip – splurge on investment pieces and classics and save on

basics and trendier items.

Investment pieces are items that you'd like to last multiple seasons and/or stand the test of time. Classics are pieces that can be worn year after year and still remain in fashion. Some classics are investment pieces and some investment pieces are classics. Make sure that when you're shopping for these items, you look for reputable manufacturers, brands or designers. Focus on quality fabric and workmanship and, of course, make sure that the styles, cuts and colours are best suited to you.

Basics are items that you wear day in and day out and that you typically have to replace regularly (tank tops, white T's, socks, etc.). Trendy items go in and out of fashion quickly and typically last only a season or two. Pieces that you know you'll only wear for one season or that you know you'll want to replace regularly, don't necessarily need to be made of superior quality or be super expensive. If they don't need to last multiple seasons, there's no need to spend unnecessary money on them.

Not sure how much money to allocate to each? A general rule of thumb is to spend about 75% of your shopping budget on good quality classic cuts, styles, colours or patterns that suit your body shape, colouring and lifestyle. Spend the remaining 25% on fun, trendy, frivolous pieces that will come and go regularly as styles, seasons or your moods change.

Just remember, it's always best to spend where you need to and save where you can.

SIZE AND FIT

While we're on the topic of shopping smart and knowing how to best spend your dollars, I can't go any longer without discussing buying the right size. For you that is.

By now you should have a good understanding of your shape and which styles and cuts work for you, but did you know that even if you're making all the right choices, buying the wrong size can ruin everything you're trying to achieve.

I have worked with a number of women who believe that buying an item in a smaller size or tighter fit will make them look thinner or sexier, or that buying an item in a larger size will hide flaws and make them look smaller. Unfortunately, the opposite is usually true.

Wearing something that's too small just ends up looking like the item's too tight and it shows every lump and bump. Wearing something that's too big, looks sloppy, hides your shape and can make you appear larger than you are. None of which are all too flattering and defeat the purpose.

We all know that 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.

If your body is shaped a certain way that this situation occurs frequently for you, or if you find a piece that you

love but that doesn't fit quite right, take the next step and get it made to fit. Take the item to a tailor and have them alter it to make it perfect for you and your shape. It may cost a little more, but the benefit will far outweigh it. Not only will you look better, you'll end up feeling better in it too.

chapter sixteen

CLASSICS

As previously mentioned, classics are pieces that can be worn for multiple seasons, years even, and still remain fashionable. Having classics in your wardrobe is a great way to keep your look timeless. Pairing them with trendier pieces updates your look and makes it seem more current. They're extremely versatile and as such, also extremely popular.

You can also see why splurging on good quality classics is an investment in yourself and your wardrobe. The better quality the classic, the longer it will last and the better it will look over the years.

If you're interested in adding some classics to your wardrobe and would like to invest in some quality pieces, here's a list of a few pieces that you may want to consider.

Button Down Shirt

I've yet to meet someone who doesn't look great in a crisp, white, button down shirt. No matter what your style,

there's always a way to adapt a classic white shirt to suit your particular look.

When purchasing a white button down shirt (or any colour for that matter), make sure to look for fabric that doesn't wrinkle easily – wrinkles detract from the overall look. Also make sure that the shirt fits across the shoulders (not too tight and no seams hanging off the shoulder), across the chest (no gaping or pulling) and through the arms (not too tight and not too loose).

Consider how you'll wear the shirt and make sure that the length of the shirt will suit your requirements.

Fisherman Sweater

A fisherman (or Aran) sweater truly is a timeless piece that can be easily updated over the years by its accompanying pieces. If you plan on purchasing one, make sure to invest in quality yarns and workmanship. Proper care will also help it last.

Here are some other things to consider before you buy:

Size: Do you want it to be fitted, oversized, or somewhere in between?

Neckline: Crew neck, v neck, turtleneck, zippered? Choose the neckline that suits you best and that will be the most versatile.

Colour: Undyed sweaters are typically a creamy off-white colour, but some are available in a dyed wool. Choose a colour that best suits your skin tone.

Cashmere Sweater

Cashmere sweaters should last years. If they're properly cared for that is. If you plan on investing in a cashmere sweater, choose one in a solid, neutral shade such as grey, tan, black or navy.

If you're unsure which cut or style is best for your shape, opt for a simple (free of embellishments) v neck sweater that is fitted (not tight) and that lands at or just above the hip – all flattering options for most body types.

Cardigan

Short, long, loose, fitted, neutral, coloured or patterned, these versatile pieces are a must-have in any wardrobe. It's always good to have a variety of styles and colours on hand.

Worn buttoned, unbuttoned or partially buttoned, on their own or as a topper, belted or without, these flexible and functional staples add another element and dimension to any outfit. Just remember to consider what the length of the cardigan does to your overall look. You might have the perfect outfit on, but the addition of the cardigan could throw it off.

Blazer

Extremely versatile, a blazer can be worn a number of ways and is easily paired with a variety of pieces. Use it to dress up a pair of shorts or jeans or throw it over a dress. Team it with a crisp white shirt or button it up with a camisole underneath. Fold the sleeves twice for a more

casual look and to give your outfit a visual “lift”, or wrap a belt around the waist to show off your curves.

When shopping for a blazer make sure that it sits properly at the shoulder, that you can button it up and that there’s no excess fabric at the sides or around the back. If there is, either look for another one or get it altered to fit just right.

Boxy Jacket

When I think of boxy jackets, I think of Chanel. While you don’t have to spend thousands to own a great looking boxy jacket, you do need to know how to wear one to have it look good.

The first trick is to have it sit perfectly at the shoulders – this allows it to hang just right. Not too tight that it’s pulling and not too loose that the seams sit out past or hang over your shoulders.

The second trick is to pair it with a slimmer bottom so that your whole look doesn’t become too boxy or frumpy. If you tend to carry extra weight in your mid section, make sure that the jacket lands below your widest part to create a leaner look.

Denim Jacket

Denim jackets are extremely versatile and come in a variety of different styles, cuts and colours. They can be worn with pretty much anything and add a casual, easy vibe to any outfit.

When buying a denim jacket, pay special attention to

both cut and style – they can make the difference between your look appearing classic or trendy. As always, a proper fit always looks better, so make sure the jacket you choose fits well and suits your body shape.

Leather Jacket

Much like a denim jacket, a leather jacket (real or faux) can be adapted to suit any look and can dress an outfit up or down – depending on its style.

Motorcycle inspired jackets have been all the rage for years now and can add a little spice to a seemingly simple outfit or a little edge to a feminine look.

While a black leather jacket is probably the most versatile, there's nothing wrong with choosing another colour that suits you and your wardrobe best.

Jeans

If you're in the market for a new pair of jeans and aren't sure where to start, head over to a specialty denim bar or store that sells a variety of different brands and styles. Doing so will not only save you time (multiple options in one location), it'll keep you from becoming overwhelmed with the selection. Specialty shops typically have extremely knowledgeable sales staff who'll be able to guide and assist you throughout the process.

Make sure to look for a style that suits your body shape and spend a little more on a quality pair that will last – ones with the right amount of stretch that won't leave you sagging after a few hours. Keep in mind that dark washes

are more flexible than lighter ones and can be easily dressed up or down.

Finding a pair of jeans that fits perfectly is like looking for a needle in a haystack. That's why we have tailors. At the very least, you have to be able to fit into them and button them easily and effortlessly. Gone are the days of lying on the floor or across your bed to zip them up.

If they fit at the hip but the waistband is too big or they're too big around the thighs or legs, those are easy fixes – get them taken in. Too long? Another easy fix. Too short and you'll probably have to pass – unless you want to roll the cuff to just above the ankle for a cropped look.

Pencil Skirt

The key to a great looking pencil skirt is fit. Perfect fit. It should skim and follow the contours of your body but not cling to it. If it bunches or rides up when you move, it's probably too tight. It shouldn't be too loose either. If it's floating around you then it's not a pencil skirt – it's just a skirt.

Not sure how long it should be? Ideally it should land at or around your knee. Shorter than that and it starts becoming a mini skirt. A body skimming mini skirt just doesn't have the same class as a pencil skirt.

Shift Dress

A shift dress is an easy, versatile, classic dress that flatters most body types and is great for a variety of occasions. Having at least one in your closet means that

you're ready to go should any situation arise.

Pair a shift dress with a structured bag, some low heels and a blazer and you've got an instant office look. Throw on a denim or leather jacket and pair it with some booties to make it more casual. Grab a clutch, throw on some sparkly earrings and a pair of strappy sandals and you're ready for a night out.

Just make sure that your shift dress lands at or around your knees and skims your body – no clinging or pulling.

Wrap Dress

Wrap dresses are timeless and flatter most body types. While perfect fit is ideal – having the dress wrap over the chest and around the waist – it's not imperative.

If your wrap dress wraps around the hip more so than the waist, don't worry – as long as the ties don't slide up, causing the chest area to fall open, you're fine. If your dress exposes too much cleavage, wear a fitted camisole or tank underneath or pin the underside of the dress where you'd like the fabric to stay. If the bottom of the dress flaps open while you walk, a carefully placed safety pin (hidden on the underside) will keep that from happening.

Coat

If you'd like to purchase a coat that will last through the years, buying one in a classic cut that suits your body shape, in a solid colour that goes with the majority of colours in your wardrobe, is ideal. Black, navy, gray and camel are typical go-to colours – just make sure that

whichever colour you choose, it suits your skin tone.

If it's an investment piece, you'll want to make sure it fits properly and fits well. So what makes a good fit? Ideally, shoulder seams should line up with your shoulders. Too far past and your coat can look sloppy. You should be able to cross your arms comfortably, reach forward or reach up without feeling too much pulling across the back of the coat. You should also be able to button up the coat without any pulling across the front. Make sure that these are also the case with an extra sweater worn underneath.

Purchase the best quality coat you can afford so that it wears well and looks newer for longer.

WARDROBE BASICS

Clients often ask me for a list of basics that they should have in their wardrobe as a starting point. I always hesitate to do this because everyone's situation, style and lifestyle is very specific to them and I don't want anyone purchasing something just because it's on a list. Most still want one anyways.

If you're one of the people that like to have a list of wardrobe basics, there are a variety on the internet to choose from. I too have compiled my own list for a very generic individual, without taking into consideration personal style or body shape.

Please note that it's merely a guide. Not every item will work for every person, nor is it a complete list of

everything someone should have in their closet. It's simply a tool and starting point.

While I have mentioned some colours on the list, I have refrained from assigning a colour to every single item. Some people might be most comfortable choosing blacks and whites for their basics, while others might choose navy blues and whites or browns and creams. Colour choices are subjective and should be based on skin tones and preferences.

Tops

Tank

Camisole

Short Sleeve T

Long Sleeve T

Breton Shirt (long or $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeve)

Crisp White Button Down Shirt

Turtle Neck

Sweater (crew or v neck)

Cardigan

Bottoms

Denim (dark wash)

Denim (casual/weekend)

Khaki/Chino

Black Trouser

Black Pencil Skirt

Summer Skirt (casual)

Straight Leg Short

Summer Short (casual)

Dresses

Day Dress

Little Black Dress (evening)

Shoes

Ballet Flat or Loafer

Sensible Heel for Day

Evening Pump

Classic Tall Boot

Bags

Classic Shoulder or Handbag

Tote Bag

Evening Clutch

Belts

Casual

Dressy

Outerwear

Black Fitted Blazer

Trench Coat

Leather Jacket (real or faux)

Denim Jacket (dark wash or white)

Winter Additions

Thick Sweater

Wool Trouser

Winter Coat

Parka

Winter Boot

Summer Additions

Lightweight Printed Top/Blouse

White Jean or Pant

Summer Dress

Sandal

STEP FIVE

YOUR OUTFITS

chapter seventeen

THE PERFECT OUTFIT

Ah, the final step. Last, but definitely not least. Where all the knowledge you've accumulated in the previous steps and all the work you've done so far, comes together to help you create the perfect outfit for any situation. Every. Single. Time. How cool is that?!?

One of the most common concerns I hear from my clients is that they don't know how to create an outfit. They see other women look put together and wish they could do the same. They don't know what to wear with what, how to accessorize or even where to start and often get so overwhelmed that they give up. What they don't realize is that putting an outfit together is as simple as 1-2-3, or in this case, 1-2-3-4-5.

Here are 5 easy steps that will help you create the perfect outfit for any occasion:

HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT OUTFIT

Step 1: Gather Your Intel

The very first (and most important) thing you need to do before you get started is to know what you're going to be doing, how you want to feel or who you want to be. Are you running errands and want to be comfortable? Are you going out for lunch with clients and need to be the polished professional? Or is it Girls Night Out and you want to look and feel sexy?

You also need to consider the logistics. What's the weather like? How will you be getting to where you're going? Will you be walking far or stepping in and out of a car? Will the temperature be consistent or do you need to layer up? Once you have everything figured out, keep this info in mind as you continue through the rest of the steps.

Step 2: Pick Your Base

The second step is all about picking your base. Not your underwear (those you pick to suit your base), but your first layer of clothing – your top and bottom. Your choices can be as simple or as elaborate as you want or need them to be – depending on where you're going, what you're doing and everything else you've considered in Step 1.

Now, if this is where you run into trouble (knowing which top to put with which bottom), here's what I recommend: keep it simple. A white T-shirt with jeans, a

blouse with a pencil skirt, a button down with trousers. If patterns trip you up, choose two solid colours that are either monochromatic (the same colour) or contrast each other (i.e.: black and white).

If you'd like to try something different, but aren't sure what, flip through some magazines, see how your favourite Fashion Influencers pair things together or search the internet for inspiration and ideas. Whatever you choose, don't forget to consider the info you obtained in Step 1.

Step 3: Add Your Layers

Now that you've got your base pieces, it's time to add some layers. If you're choosing to keep your outfit simple and the temperature outside doesn't call for anything more, skip this step. But if you need an extra layer (or two) to keep warm or complete your outfit, now's the time to choose it.

Layering pieces can be shirts, vests, cardigans, sweaters or blazers. They can be denim or leather jackets, military or moto jackets, trench coats or wool coats (to name a few). How many pieces you add and the choices you make will all depend on Steps 1, 2, and you.

Generally speaking, when layering, you'll want to vary textures and fabric thicknesses. The layers closest to your body should be the thinnest fabrics and sit closest to your body. You can increase the thickness and bulk the further you move away from your body. If you wear something extremely thick and bulky underneath a thinner, more

streamlined or form-fitting garment, it can look odd and like you're bigger than you truly are.

You'll also want to vary lengths too. If you're layering, don't hide it. Let people see what you've got going on. Varying the lengths of the pieces you're wearing makes it obvious that you have multiple items on. It also keeps people from thinking you've eaten too many bowls of pasta the night before. (Not that there's anything wrong with that.)

When layering, keep an eye on your proportions. Don't get so carried away that you lose sight of the effect the layering has on your overall look. Never forget what's best for your height, body shape or your own natural proportions.

Step 4: Choose Your Shoes

If you're a shoe lover like me, this is the best part. (I often choose my shoes first and then create the outfit.) If you're not a shoe lover and consider your shoe choices to be unimportant and purely functional, then consider this – in some cases, shoes can make or break an outfit.

If you're trying to pull off a really great look, your shoes need to reflect and coincide with your clothing choices. They need to relate to the mood and feel of what you're trying to create. Of course they need to be practical – you need to be able to walk and be comfortable, but you don't need to sacrifice style for practicality.

Shoes can also be the show stopper in your outfit – the

focal point. Decide whether you want them to stand out or blend in. Then choose your pair accordingly. Don't be afraid to make a statement with your shoes. Just make sure to choose only one statement per outfit at a time. If it's your shoes, keep the rest of your outfit simple and low key.

Step 5: Accessorize

Accessories can take a look from drab to fab and can complete any outfit – think of them as the icing on the cake. The simple act of adding just one or two pieces will add pizzazz to your outfit and give you a polished look. Many women don't take this final and most crucial step and then feel unfinished.

Many of my clients tell me that they don't know how to accessorize, but it really is quite simple. I think we're often so concerned about doing something right or wrong that we don't even try. Sometimes a little trial and error is all it takes.

When most people think of accessories, they automatically think of jewelry. Eye glasses, watches, belts, scarves, hats and handbags are more often than not functional pieces, but they're also considered accessories. Treat them as such and factor in their effect on your whole look when getting dressed.

Remember, accessories not only complete an outfit, they can be an expression of personal taste. Choose and purchase your accessories as you would your artwork – opt for pieces that speak to you, that you love or that reflect

who you are.

Most importantly, don't worry about being perfect. If you keep at it, soon you'll get the feel for what works best for you and what doesn't.

Here are a few tips to consider when purchasing or wearing accessories:

Jewelry

If you're unsure of where to start, try choosing one statement piece each time you get dressed and make that your focus. Keep all other accessories to a minimum. Make sure to accessorize the area or part of your body that you want to feature or accentuate. The bolder the piece, the more attention you'll draw to it and the surrounding area. On the other hand, if there's a part of your body that you'd like to detract from, hide or camouflage, don't place any accessories there to avoid drawing attention to it.

Not sure which piece goes with which outfit? If the accessory is coloured, wear it with an item in your closet that has the same or contrasting colours. If it's a metal, try wearing silver accessories with cooler colours and gold or bronze accessories with warmer coloured clothing. If you're still not sure what to wear or how to wear it, flip through magazines or browse the internet for ideas – just avoid the “what not to do's” or the “worst dressed” lists.

Don't have a bold statement piece and need something in a pinch? Try layering smaller or subtler pieces of jewelry (such as multiple necklaces or multiple bracelets) together to make a more significant impact. If you're unsure of

what to group together, find a common element in all pieces (metal, colour(s) or style) or make sure they all relate in some way to your whole look.

When layering necklaces, make sure the pieces are of varying lengths so that they don't bunch together. Not sure how many pieces to layer? It depends on the size of each piece and how elaborate they are, but 3 is a good place to start.

Necklaces and bracelets aren't the only jewelry you can stack. Try stacking your rings to make them stand out. Match the metals for a cohesive look or get creative and mix them up to make more of a statement.

If you're petite, avoid accessories that are so big that they overpower you. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't wear bold or showy pieces, just that they should be proportionate to your frame. You don't want to look like a kid wearing her mama's jewelry.

If you have a large frame or a fuller figure, avoid dainty or small accessories – they can make you appear larger than you are. You should also avoid anything that is excessively large, which can have the same effect. The key (once again) is to find pieces that are proportionate to your frame or size.

If you're unsure of what "too big" or "too small" is, relative to your size, play around with different accessories and take a look in the mirror, or snap a selfie. When you look at yourself, what do you see? Do you notice the accessories or do you see yourself? Are the accessories taking over or do they add a finishing touch and complete

your outfit? Keep at it and you'll eventually get a feel for what works for your particular size.

Eyeglasses

When choosing the best eyeglass (and sunglass) frames for your face shape, refer back to the section on Face Shapes. Ideally though, you're looking to balance out your shape and your features. Some might say you're looking for contrast. For example, if you have an angular face, opt for rounder styles. If you have a rounder face, opt for angular styles. If your face is overly long, choose a style that creates width, and if your face is short and wide, opt for a style that creates height.

Remember to choose glasses that are proportionate to the size of your head and face – ones that aren't too big or too small. Taking selfies as you try on different frames will help you to see which style is right for you. If you still can't determine the best shape for your face, go to a reputable store that has knowledgeable and experienced sales staff who can help you with your decision.

Watches

If your budget allows for it, invest in two watches – a practical one for when running around during the day and a dressier one for elegant nights. That way your day watch won't diminish the look of your evening outfit and your dressier one won't get ruined by all the things you do during the day.

If you have an office or corporate job and can afford to

buy a third watch, have one designated just for work. Choose a style that will suit your work attire and if you buy well, it should last for many years.

Not sure which metal or colour to choose? Opt for one that will suit your jewelry and clothing best. If you tend to wear a variety of different metals in your jewelry, opt for a mixed metal watch that can be worn with anything.

Belts

Beyond being just purely functional and holding your bottoms up, belts are a great way to create shape in shapeless tops, dresses and jackets and add a finishing touch to your outfit. Make sure that the placement of your belt (whether it's on your waist or hip or somewhere in between), is conducive to your particular body shape.

Keep in mind that belts can visually break up your body, so if you want to create a longer, leaner look, ensure that the colour of the belt is similar to the colour of the clothing underneath. Alternatively, if you'd like the belt to visually break up your body (i.e. you have an extra long torso), choose a belt in a contrasting colour.

Scarves

Made for more than just keeping you warm, scarves are great versatile pieces that if bought well, can last for years. A well purchased scarf never goes out of style. On the other hand, you don't have to spend a ton of money on them if you don't want to and can change them up seasonally or regularly.

Having a number of scarves on hand, in a variety of colours and patterns can help you transform your look quickly and easily – especially if you have a closet filled with simple basics or classics. Feel free to be creative in your choices and use them to express your own unique sense of style.

If you're looking to purchase a scarf that will stand the test of time, buy a well-made square one in silk, in a non-trendy pattern. If you don't need it to last, then the sky's the limit. Regardless of how long you want your scarves to last, remember to purchase ones in colours that suit your skin tone.

If you're not sure how to wear or tie scarves, search the internet for examples. There are a number of scarf tying websites, articles and video tutorials available. Remember to take a look at what the different methods do to your overall look and your proportions. You'd be surprised at the effect a simple scarf can have.

Hats

I think you either are a hat person or you're not a hat person. It takes a certain comfort level and confidence to wear a hat when the situation doesn't call for it or require it. Or even if it does.

If you love the idea of wearing hats as an accessory (or even just for function), the key is to buy the right style in the right colour and the right size. Too small and it won't fit your head, too big and it'll float and move around. The wrong colour will look off and the wrong style won't suit.

Try a variety of hats on before you buy to make sure you've got the right one for you. Take a look at what it does to your face and your overall look. If you can't find one that fits properly or one that's the right size and shape, consider having one custom made. It's actually quite an easy process and can be a great investment.

Handbags

It can sometimes be easy to forget that your handbag is also an accessory. While it's a functional piece, it's still a part of your outfit and there's no need to sacrifice style for practicality (or vice versa). With so many different bags, briefcases, totes and backpacks available, at a variety of different price points, there's no reason why you can't function as you need to and look fabulous while doing it.

Consider how the colour and style of the bag affects your outfit. Is it in line with what you're trying to achieve or is it throwing your whole look off? Never, ever, under any circumstance, underestimate the power of the purse.

When purchasing, wearing or holding a bag, keep in mind that it will accentuate or draw attention to whichever body part it rests on or near and can make it appear larger. Make sure your handbag sits at the smallest part of your body or near the area you want to draw attention to. For example, if you carry most of your weight in your hips and are smaller on top, wear a shoulder bag that sits above the waist. On the other hand, if you happen to be quite full in the chest and have a narrower lower body, wear a bag with a longer strap that sits near the hip or carry one with

a top handle.

When it comes to bags, size definitely matters. If the bag's too big, it might overpower you. Bags with long straps that sit lower on your body can make you look shorter. Small bags on a larger frame can make you appear larger. And on and on it goes. Play around with a variety of shapes and sizes to see which is the best shape for your size and frame.

chapter eighteen

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

We all have those times in our lives when we want to look extra special, extra sexy or extra fabulous. These occasions require us to step up our game, put in a little more effort or do something that we normally wouldn't. It's these special occasions though, that we want to get just right.

Here are 3 situations where going the extra mile will hopefully give you the results you're looking for:

PARTY NIGHT

When you've got a party coming up (whether it's for a specific event or holiday) and you want to look extra special, here are 3 things that might help you get there:

1. Throw on a Fabulous Skirt

If there's one thing I know about putting an outfit together, it's that once you have a fabulous piece, the rest

is easy.

If you're going to wear a skirt to your next party, why not choose one that makes a statement. Look for a skirt with bold colours or patterns or great texture. Choose one that's sleek (like a pencil skirt), voluminous (like a gathered or pleated skirt) or one that's somewhere in between (like a tulip skirt).

Whichever you choose, make sure it's the main focus of your outfit and keep everything else subtle.

(If you're not a fan of skirts, opt for a pair of attention-getting pants instead. Just make sure that they're flattering in all the right areas.)

2. Add some Sparkle

Nothing says party like a little sparkle. The great thing about wearing something with a little shine or shimmer is that you can keep your outfit pretty simple – the sparkle does all the work.

If you don't like the idea of wearing something sequined or bejeweled, choose accessories with a little glimmer. Grab a sequined clutch, throw on a pair of dazzling shoes or opt for a glittery scarf, necklace or earrings.

Just remember to keep your sparkle to a minimum. In this case, a little definitely goes a long way.

3. Amp Up Your LBD

A good basic LBD (Little Black Dress), like a shift, is great to have on hand for a multitude of occasions. But

when it comes to parties, it's nice to amp it up a bit.

Try choosing an LBD with a little somethin' somethin'. Perhaps it has a plunging neckline or a cut-out or two. Maybe it's strapless, has a high slit or has only one shoulder. Or maybe it exposes a bit of your back.

Whichever you decide to wear, make sure the occasion calls for it and that you're not exposing more of yourself than you should.

Regardless of what you choose to wear to your next party, make sure to choose something that makes you feel fabulous.

DATE NIGHT

Whether you're going out on a first date with a new beau or it's date night with your hubby, what girl doesn't want to feel extra fabulous? I've been on many dates, both as a single woman and a married one (with my husband of course), and the one thing I know is that feeling amazing on a date involves more than just the right outfit. Here are 5 tips to consider and try before you head out with whoever's lucky enough to have you on their arm:

1. Pamper Yourself

The very first thing you might want to do, before you do anything else, is pamper yourself. Giving yourself a little self care helps you feel good about yourself before your

date. Whether you get a mani-pedi, a massage or have a relaxing bath, luxuriate in the experience and make yourself feel extra special.

2. Put Some Effort into Your Grooming

When it comes to dating, (especially first dates), it doesn't hurt to put in a little extra effort. Wear your hair down, style it or curl it. Put on some makeup and throw on a subtle scent – just don't overdo it. Go easy on the hairspray and perfume and if you're playing up your eyes, keep the lipstick subtle. And vice versa.

3. Look Great and be Comfortable

While you definitely want to look great on a date and show off your assets, you still need to be comfortable. Dating can be stressful (if you're dating someone new) and you don't want to be tugging, pulling, fidgeting or be unable to move properly.

Build your look around the body part you love most. Got great legs? Highlight them in a fitted pencil skirt. Been working out those arms? Wear a sleeveless blouse to show them off. Love your cleavage? Wear a slightly lower cut top. Just make sure to leave something to the imagination.

On the flip side, if there are some parts of your body you're not comfortable showing, keep them covered to keep you from feeling exposed. It's also a good idea to layer your look so that you have something to remove if the venue (or you) get a little warm.

And remember, you need to be comfortable in

everything you wear – even your shoes. If you're wearing high heels and can't walk in them, leave them behind. You're better off opting for a lower heel and not (literally) falling all over your date.

4. Get a Second Opinion

Sometimes it doesn't hurt to ask a friend or someone you trust for a second opinion. If they truly want the best for you, they'll be honest. If you don't have someone you can trust, try asking a dating consultant. It's their job to give you the best advice and steer you in the right direction.

A second opinion might also give you a boost of confidence – confirming that you really do look as amazing as you think you do.

5. Be Your Best Self

The best thing you can do for yourself and for your date is to be yourself – your very best self. Show your date who you truly are. Be animated, use facial expressions and carry yourself with confidence.

Most importantly, have fun and enjoy. He may not turn out to be Mr. Right, but sometimes Mr. Right Now can be just as good (unless, of course, you're married).

GOING FOR SEXY

This last special occasion is any time you want to sex it

up a bit – without being too obvious. Looking overtly sexy is pretty easy. Throw on some tight, skimpy clothes, expose a ton of skin and you're good to go. Being subtly sexy however, can take a little more thought and effort.

If you're going sexy, here are 10 possible ways to achieve it – without looking like you're giving it away:

1. Body Parts

The easiest way to be subtly sexy is to be just that – subtle. Don't reveal too much at once. Choose one body part to feature and that's it. Throw on an off-the-shoulder top, put on a backless jumper or show a tiny bit of cleavage. Just not all at once. The key (once again) is to leave something to the imagination.

2. Hair

Whether you opt for wearing your hair down naturally, in soft flowing curls or pin straight, whether you choose to wear it back in a sleek pony tail or tousle it to give it that just-got-out-of-bed look, the key is to do something with it. Put in the effort and style your hair in a way that makes you feel sexy.

3. Eyes Versus Lips

Choose to play up your eyes or your lips. If your eyes are your focus, try a smoky eye and/or some false lashes to add drama and focus. If you'd rather play up your lips, throw on some red lipstick (in your shade of course) or create the perfect pouty, kissable lip.

4. Heels

Throwing on a pair of heels is one of the easiest ways to turn up the sexy on almost any outfit. The more sleek and strappy the heel, the better. A word of caution – if you can't handle a high heel, either wear a kitten heel or opt for a different style. Nothing sexy about a woman stumbling around in shoes she can't walk in.

5. Scent

A great scent can be oh so sexy. The key here is to choose a fragrance that isn't overpowering and to apply it lightly (where it's only detected in close proximity). If you walk into a room and heads turn because everyone can smell you, you've put on too much.

6. Slits

Slits on a skirt or dress can be extremely sexy – especially in form fitting ones. The best are those that aren't detectable or don't slide open until you move, and then expose a little, but not too much, skin.

7. Sheer

Wearing a sheer top or skirt can be subtly sexy as long as there's some fabric covering all the important parts underneath. A camisole or bustier under a sheer blouse or a shorter opaque fabric under a sheer skirt can keep you from revealing too much. It's the hint of some skin that keeps it subtle.

8. Lace

Much like sheer fabrics, but perhaps even more so depending on the pattern, lace needs to be lined with some fabric underneath to keep it from exposing too much skin. Always err on the side of caution – it's better to reveal a little less.

9. Cutouts

Carefully placed cutouts on clothing can be the perfect way to add a hint of sexiness. Displaying just a tiny bit of skin here and there leaves much to the imagination and can be more alluring than doing the opposite.

10. Confidence

In reality, you could apply any of the above tips and do your best to be subtly sexy, but if you don't have confidence in yourself, it's not going to matter. Confidence is super sexy and doesn't cost a dime, but it can also be one of the hardest things for some women to achieve.

Whatever you decide to do or wear, or however you decide to look, make sure that it makes you feel good about yourself, truly confident and is 100% you.

chapter nineteen

COMMON MISTAKES

So now that you know how to throw together the perfect outfit every single time you get dressed, there are a few things I'd like to caution you about – they're mistakes that I see women make time and time again, ones that are easily avoidable.

Here are 3 of the most common ones I see when it comes to getting dressed and putting outfits together and what you can do instead:

1. Age Yourself

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 way 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?

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 favourite 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.

2. 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.

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.

3. 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. Most of the time it is, but 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 all the time.

I see women step out of their shell, try things they never thought they could pull off and shine. I see them look at themselves in the mirror in disbelief, shocked that they could look so 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?!?

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?

Much like you may have done in the personal style section, 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.

CONCLUSION

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

So there you have it. 5 Simple Steps to Great Style & the Confidence to Get What You Want.

If you've gone through every step outlined in this book, you should have a pretty good idea of what to do and what not to do – what to wear, what to avoid, what to buy, what to leave behind, how to curate your wardrobe and how to create the perfect outfit for every occasion.

If you still find yourself a little fuzzy on a few of the details, don't fret. These things take time and sometimes a little trial and error is required. It's to be expected – especially if this is all new to you. Don't be discouraged and definitely don't give up.

If you need to reread this book, do it. If you need to go through the steps two or three times, do it. Keep at it until you get to a place where you know yourself inside out – where you know what works for you and what doesn't. Keep going until your wardrobe is everything you want it to be and you're able to walk out the door with a style all

your own and the confidence to go after what you want.

You see, there can't be any more excuses, because you now have the tools at your fingertips. You have all the steps required to get you looking and feeling your absolute best, knowing you look damn good, holding and carrying yourself with strength and power. All it takes is getting real and doing the work.

It's time to show up. It's time to be bold, courageous and shine. It's time to show the world who you are and what you're made of, because while you may be at the end of this book, you're not at the end at all. You're actually at the beginning, of a new day, a new way of being and a new you – a beautiful, stylish, confident you, ready to take on the world, go after your dreams and get what you want. Every. Single. Day.



BARBARA ALEKS is a Personal Stylist, Certified Image Consultant and Interior Designer.

She helps women discover and live their own unique style, empowering them to transform themselves from the inside out, to become the confident women they were born to be and to live the amazing lives they were meant to live.

“Many women have no idea that making a few small adjustments to what they wear can have such a huge impact on their appearance and how they feel about themselves. They also don’t realize the impact all of this has on their self esteem and ultimately their lives.”

Barbara Aleks

IF YOU:

- **struggle with looking good or having any sense of style**
- **find yourself confused, frustrated and a little discouraged when it comes to knowing what to buy, how to wear it or how to put it all together**
- **wish you had the confidence to live the life of your dreams**

Then you need...

STYLE YOUR WAY to SUCCESS

IMAGINE:

- **having incredible style that’s reflected in all areas of your life**
- **knowing what to do and how to do it, giving you complete power and control**
- **looking and feeling truly amazing, confident that you’ve got what it takes to go after anything you want**

All it takes is...

5 SIMPLE STEPS

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