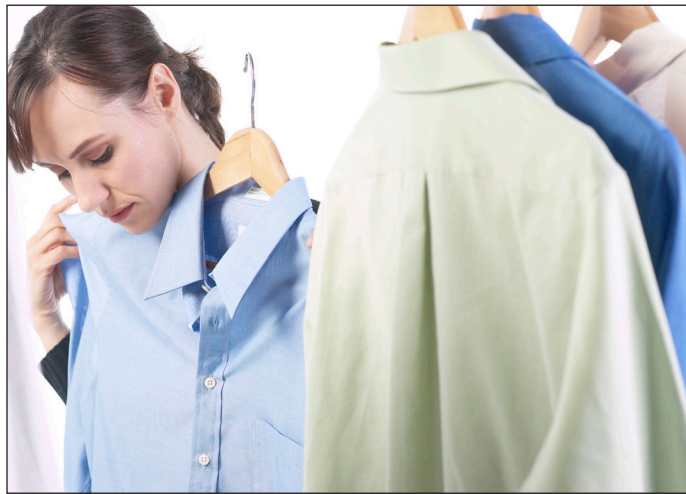




# Extending Your Wardrobe Investment

Building a wardrobe can be expensive, so you need to use some shopping savvy.





When was the last time you wore that shirt?

Have you recently had a change in weight? Are you preparing for a job interview? Or maybe you are starting a new job and need to build a career wardrobe. Building a wardrobe can be expensive, so you need to use some shopping savvy.

### **Survey Your Closet**

What is in your closet? Are there clothes hanging in your closet or stored in boxes that you have not worn in a year or longer? Ask yourself why you have not worn these clothes. Are they too big? Too small? Are they in need of repair?

### **Make repairs**

If you have basic sewing skills, try making minor repairs. Minor repairs are tasks that require thread and a hand sewing needle, such as attaching buttons, repairing hooks and eyes, or hemming pants. (See resources for information on clothing maintenance and basic sewing skills.)

If you have more than basic sewing skills, you may decide to alter your own clothes. The following tips will help.

### **Alter a Shirt, Blouse, Skirt or Pants.**

- Try on the garment wrong side out and stand in front of a full length mirror.
- Have someone pin the excess fabric you want taken in.
- Remember not to remove comfort ease (the extra room that allows you to move in the garment).
- Use a measuring tape to make sure the pins are an equal distance from the raw edge.
- On the inside of the garment, stitch (using a basting stitch) where it is pinned, taking in the excess fabric as you stitch.
- Try on the garment to see if it fits correctly.
- When you are satisfied with the fit, sew over the basting stitch with a straight machine stitch.

### **Make alterations**

Some repairs and alterations require more than basic sewing skills. You need to have a sewing machine, other sewing equipment, time, and knowledge. If you lack the skills or equipment, you must decide if the clothing item is worth paying for the repair or alterations. A seamstress may charge as much as \$20 per hour for services. If the item is a vintage item or has special memories, then you may want to make that investment. Ask about the charges before committing to the services.

### **Make Room**

When was the last time you wore that shirt? Can't remember? At the beginning of the season, turn all the hangers in your closet backward. After wearing the item, replace the item in your closet hanging forward. When you get to the next change in season, you will be able to identify the clothing items you have not worn. Why haven't you worn the items? Are these items that you no longer need? Could the items be sold or donated?

**If your clothing does not sell at the consignment shop, consider donating to a thrift store.**

### **Visit Consignment or Thrift Shops**

Consignment stores, once referred to as second-hand stores, provide you an opportunity to regain part of your fashion investment. Consignment stores attempt to maintain an inventory that is currently in-season, clean, and in good repair. Items are tagged at a reduced price from original value. When the item is sold, the consignment store receives a percentage of the sale price. Usually a time period is set for the item to be displayed in the store. If items are not sold by the end of the season or the time period, items can be reclaimed or disposed of—often donated to a local charity. The consignment store does not take responsibility for any damage that occurs while clothes are on display.

#### **Before taking items to a consignment shop:**

- Visit the consignment shops in your area. Learn the type of merchandise or customer that the store is trying to attract. This will help you locate the store where your items would sell best.
- Learn the store policies, including the number of days the item will remain in inventory, how and when payment is made, and the percentage of commission the store receives.

- If you have a high-priced item, consider dry cleaning prior to taking the item to the store. The investment in dry cleaning may add to the selling price.
- Make an appointment with the manager to discuss the items that you plan to sell.
- Maintain a record or receipt of items that you have consigned to the store.



If your clothing does not sell at the consignment shop, consider donating to a thrift store. Thrift shops or charity stores contain items that are donated, and they are usually operated by volunteers. Often you are given a receipt to declare the value of the donated items. If the thrift store is a non-profit organization, you will be able to use your donation as a charitable deduction on your income tax. Because thrift stores have low overhead, the items sold are much lower in price.

Be aware that some thrift stores are operated for charities. The charity acquires the



merchandise, but the contractor runs the business of selling donated items while sharing a percentage of profits with the charity. Prices tend to be higher in these thrift shops.

### **Be a Bargain Hunter/ Opportunity Shopper**

You need to shop regularly to find bargains. Stores receive new merchandise daily. That includes consignment and thrift shops. At the beginning of a season, people tend to evaluate their closets, so you will see new clothing appearing in the consignment and thrift stores at that time. You may find clothing, accessories, shoes and vintage items. Designer brands sell quickly. Be aware that there are laws concerning the sales of fake designer pieces.

Purchasing from a consignment or thrift shop is not the same as buying new products. Try on the item. The original

Consider using accessories, such as belts and scarves, to update the look of classic styles.



owner may have altered the garment and the size 12 may fit like a size 10. Inspect the items for stains, broken zippers, missing buttons, or other defects. In some stores you may be able to negotiate the price. There may not be a return option as at stores selling new merchandise, so take your time before making the purchase and ask about the store policies.

Have you ever purchased an item that is tight or a size too small, hoping that you will lose weight? Usually those incentive purchases result in a waste of resources. While you are in transition, it is a better idea to purchase a less expensive clothing item that fits your body. Stick to the basic or classic fashion items that stay in style. Consider using accessories, such as belts and scarves, to update the look of classic styles. Accessories are a less expensive way to make a basic wardrobe item look trendy.

If you invest in new clothing, protect your investment with proper care. Read and follow care labels. Treat stains correctly and store properly.

### **A Perfect Wardrobe**

A perfect wardrobe should contain 60 percent classic pieces, 20 percent basics, and 20 percent trendy items. Following is a list of 10 must-have classic items for the perfect wardrobe.

- A good coat
- Good quality knitwear
- A cocktail dress
- A shirt with collar
- A great pair of jeans
- An A-line skirt
- Boot-cut or man-style pants
- A pair of boots
- A handbag
- Any other signature pieces that you feel suit your own personal style

## Resources

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