

## Shop Smart to Dress Well

Do you love to shop? It's my guess your answer is a, 'yes, but'. "I love to shop but not for myself.' I completely understand because I hear it all of the time. Shopping can be frustrating, or it can be a joy. What? Yes, it can be a joy – and here's how to do it.

Before you hit the stores, whether in person or online, decide how much money you want to spend. Then, follow these rules.

Rule # 1. Know exactly what you need. Only after you've purchased what you need, can think about those pieces that catch your eye. First, take inventory of your clothing. This means going through your closet and taking out everything you don't wear, don't like and doesn't fit. When you've done this and you are left with the items you love, write a list of pieces that will expand your wardrobe. Those are pieces that complete an outfit. For example, a blue blouse that you can wear with jeans, skirts and pants to make several more outfits.

Rule # 2. Buy only what you need. Don't buy pieces out of habit. I've found that women have many of the same pieces in their closets. If you have five white t-shirts that are in good condition and exactly the same cut you probably don't really need another one.

Rule # 3. If you are working with a budget stay away from that great plaid, flowery or embellished bag if most of your wardrobe is patterned and none of the colours in the bag match the clothing you already own. Only add prints and patterns when you know how to match them.

Rule #4. Don't be seduced by a low price. No matter how expensive it was if it doesn't fit don't buy it. You might find the nicest designer jacket at a low, low price but if it's the wrong color or it doesn't suit your body type you will not likely wear it. Or, you will wear it and it won't feel good.

Rule #5. Shop prepared. If you are shopping to find a blouse to match a certain pair of pants, wear the pants shopping. Or if you are buying a skirt wear heels or

take an appropriate pair of shoes with you to get a better idea of how the skirt will look.

Rule #6. Do the movement test. Bend over, sit, cross your legs and really pay attention to how the garment feels. Does it stay in place or does it ride up, bind or feel uncomfortable? Make sure it fits – sleeves, shoulders, waist and hips.

Rule #7. Check the label for cleaning instructions. Only buy dry-clean items if you are willing to dry-clean.

Rule #8. Make sure you know which colours flatter your skin/hair and eye colour before you shop. Only buy that top or dress if it's a flattering colour.

Rule #9. Put aside time to shop and shop alone. Shop with friends only for fun, not when you want to replenish your wardrobe. Shopping alone saves time and you will be less likely to buy something you'll have to return, or worse yet, will sit in the back of your closet.

Rule #10. You must love it. Only buy those pieces you *love*.

Keep these rules in mind before and when you shop and you will have a closet full of clothes you love.

Sheila Alley, Personal Stylist