

# Unlocking a good wardrobe requires self-sense

By Debra Witt  
Staff Reporter

Are you afraid to open your closet door each morning because the boogie man has been known to warp your wardrobe overnight?

Well, that boogie man may all be in your head, literally — at least in your fashion sense.

A wardrobe ill-suited for your figure and lifestyle can be fixed easily if you understand some basic fashion principles, three Lincoln fashion experts said.

The fashion industry has something for all shapes, sizes and lifestyles, said Rose Marie Tondl, clothing specialist in the department of textiles, clothing and design at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Understanding your personality and lifestyle is necessary to understand your personal style, said Gerdi Heath, independent image consultant for Beauty For All Seasons.

Heath said tastes change as styles change. People need to adapt their style to reflect these changes, she said.

The hardest part of finding an image is knowing your body. Look at your body in a mirror from all angles to understand your shape. You then can determine if you fit into the angular, curvy or average body category, Heath said.

Most people, Heath said, fit into the average height and weight category. These people have the easiest time finding clothes to fit, but their size also sells out the fastest, she said.

Angular body types are tall, slender and long-boned. Curvy body types are more rounded.

Carol Mehlhoff, professor of textiles, clothing and design at UNL, said you should dress to accentuate your figure assets, not your figure flaws.

For instance, Mehlhoff said, if you're larger on the bottom, use

scarves or a pattern on top to draw attention to your face instead of your hips or stomach.

Balance is the important word to keep in mind when dressing or shopping for clothes, both Mehlhoff and Heath said.

If you are big-boned and larger all around, small accessories and prints will be lost on you and won't be flattering, and the opposite holds if you have a small figure, Heath said.

When buying clothes, look for comfort and a good fit, Mehlhoff said.

While high heels make the legs look longer and leaner, comfort may be lost if they are too high, Tondl said.

People with a slight stomach bulge, Heath said, should avoid tight clothes and high waistlines. Non-fitted shirts also cover up round stomachs, she said.

Keep fabrics loose if you are overweight, both Heath and Mehlhoff said, so you can move and sit with ease.

Roomy sleeves not set in the shoulder give more room for the larger-framed person and add fullness to the thinner person, Heath said.

Another garment that can either create or minimize fullness is the double-breasted jacket, Mehlhoff said. The placement of the buttons adds width, she said.

The experts said color analysis is becoming more popular. More people are seeking color analysis to help them look good and to coordinate their wardrobe, Heath said.

"Color gives a psychological comfort as well as pleasing our aesthetic sense," Mehlhoff said.

But, she said, you should wear colors you like, despite your body type.

Mehlhoff said it is better to let the style of the garment slenderize or add fullness rather than to wear a flattering color.

Tondl agreed. If you like a color, it probably looks good on you, she said.

But Heath said it is important to choose colors that enhance your coloring. To find those colors, you must either have an analysis or ask a fashionable friend to help you experiment, she said.

Heath said people fall into one of the four season color categories. Spring and fall people have a warm, golden skin tone, she said, while winter and summer people have darker hair and eyes, and cool pink or blue skin tones.

Generally, Heath said, spring people look good in brighter colors, while the summer palette pales those tones down. Fall people look best in neutral browns and beiges, and winter people look best in black, white, red, navy and gray, Heath said.

Heath said having a color-image analysis will save you money because you will buy clothes that you know will look good and will match other pieces of your wardrobe. She said it is easier to buy less but get more ensembles out of a color-coordinated wardrobe.

Mehlhoff said color coordination is essential if you don't like to take a lot of time getting ready in the morning. Many outfits can be put together quickly because you know the colors match.

Mehlhoff said colors can work together to combine into a new ensemble. Clothes do not have to look prematched, she said. She suggested experimenting with mixing and matching colors.

"Choose one basic color," Mehlhoff suggested, "and work

around that color to develop other aspects of the wardrobe."

You can use value contrast, where one color or part is emphasized to detract from a figure flaw, Mehlhoff said.

Many garments already in your closet can be updated simply by adding accessories or changing a garment detail, Tondl and Mehlhoff said.

The next step in taking a closet inventory, Heath said, is to place all your clothes into piles marked "yes" for clothes you wear all the time, "no" for clothes you never wear and "maybe" for clothes that do not

match anything else or are for special occasions.

From there, Heath said, sort them into colors and discard all worn-out and poorly fitting clothes. She said this lets you know what you need to buy.

Then you can begin to experiment to see what styles look best on you. "Forget about what New York and your friends say — wear what looks good on you," Heath said.

If you like the new shorter skirts, but are not quite sure which length is right, Tondl said, look at your age and position.

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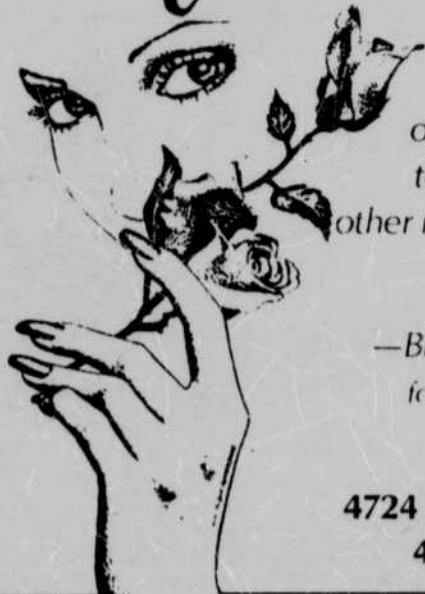


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