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Five Steps to Wardrobe Versatility

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Utah State University
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CLOTHING MANAGEMENT FACT SHEET

“Five Steps to Wardrobe Versatility”

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Clothes are an essential necessity for all of us. The first thing we do in the morning for school, work, and other activities is get dressed. Getting dressed may be a major frustration if the clothes in our closet don't take care of our lifestyle needs. Mornings can easily begin in turmoil when we can't find the right thing to wear.

Our clothing decisions are dependent on our own lifestyle, personality, values, coloring, and body proportions. It is difficult for another person to determine what our individual clothing needs are. To achieve a **versatile** wardrobe that is suited to individual needs, the following five steps are safe guidelines for successful wardrobe management.

Step 1 - Design

- a. Choose garments with clean and simple lines to insure versatility.
- b. The design of the garment should look good on you and enhance your personality and physical features.

- c. Garments should be simple enough so that **you wear the garment**, rather than **the garment wearing you**.
- d. A well designed garment can stand on its own or be mixed and matched with many other pieces of clothing and accessories.
- e. Classic clothing fits into the category of versatile and well designed clothes. Examples would be such things as: cardigan or blazer jackets, straight or A-line skirts, tailored or camp shirts, t-tops, shirtdresses, etc. All of these are great selections for versatile mixing and matching.

Step 2 - Color

- a. The colors selected for your wardrobe foundation pieces should enhance your personal coloring as well as be flexible enough to match with many other clothing items.
- b. Choose two or three basic colors for wardrobe foundation items. Example: Black,

white, and navy or marine blue, tan, and charcoal. Red, khaki, and Hunter green are different basics but considered good foundation colors if they work for your personality and clothing needs.

- c. As you shop select clothing to coordinate with garments in your closet so you build a versatile clothing **collection**.
- d. Mix colors creatively using scarves and accessories to pull unusual combinations together. Experiment with a variety of pieces or watch the media, magazines, store displays, or fashion leaders for unusual color ideas. Many exciting combinations can be copied from the colors in printed fabrics.
- e. Bright colors will draw attention to where it is worn. Color placement can be used for emphasis or create illusions of vertical or horizontal line direction.

Step 3 - Fabric

- a. Fabric choice will make a difference in wardrobe versatility.
- b. A versatile fabric should cross over seasonal boundaries and mix well with other fabric types. A **good rule of thumb** for flexible wearability is if a fabric can be worn two-thirds of the year.
- c. Natural fibers such as wool, silk, linen and cotton are **almost** seasonless, depending of course on the weave and surface of the fabric. A simple guideline for combining fabrics of different fiber origin would be to consider the surface. Hard surface fabrics like twill, such as gabardine, or plain weave, seen frequently in linen look, are more versatile than plushes and woolens. Combination fibers are also good versatile choices.

Step 4 - Function

- a. When, where, and how often a garment can be worn adds to its versatility. Jackets for instance can be paired with jeans, shorts, slacks or a dress.
- b. Basic garments can be dressed up or dressed down. Consider a black t-top that can go under a jacket, mixed with a knit skirt and belted to achieve a dress, combined with jeans for casual occasions, or accessorized with pearls to wear in the evening, coupled with a sheer flowing skirt or satin trousers.

Step 5 - Care

- a. Read care labels to determine whether you are willing or can afford to care for the garment according to the instructions, such as hand washing or dry cleaning.
- b. Dry cleaning will add to the initial cost of a garment which should be considered for versatility. Special handling such as "hand wash" requires extra time and care to keep a garment good looking.
- c. Some garments, although versatile in many other categories, may take extra time, knowledge or expense for proper care.



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