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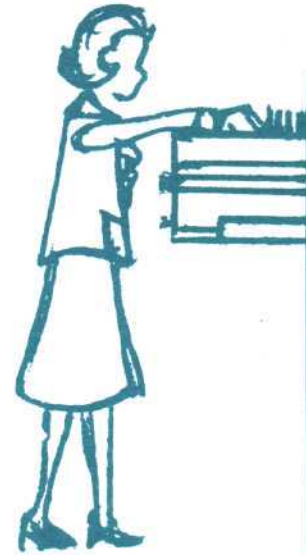
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# Clothes

## in your career

### *Planning Guide for Office Workers*



**By Isabel Jones**

*Extension Specialist, Human Environment and Design*

MANY WOMEN entering the world of work have not had the experience of putting together a wardrobe suitable to their chosen profession. Banks, restaurants, airlines and others have solved the "what to wear" problem by having uniforms especially designed for their staff members. For the great majority of careers, however, you are on your own but expected to dress appropriately regardless of cost and up-keep of clothing.

To be sure, fashion and standards of dress are more relaxed than they were some years ago. Still, never underestimate the value of being appropriately dressed for a particular job. Clothing is a communication tool. People see your **clothing before they see you.**

The purpose of this Extension publication is to help career women with limited budgets select appropriate job clothing that provides satisfaction and a sense of well-being.

#### **WHY HAVE A CAREER WARDROBE?**

A functional, attractive career wardrobe allows you to take your mind off your body and concentrate on your work. You can feel at ease, knowing that you look your best. Other justifications include:

- Knowing that you have a variety of well-planned outfits which can reduce stress and anxiety
- Creating a sense of identity and belonging
- Fulfilling job requirements
- Enhancing the advancement potential in your career
- Providing comfort and security

**In brief:** a career requires a career wardrobe.

#### **PLAN FOR VALUE, SATISFACTION**

It usually takes time to acquire a good wardrobe. If you are on a budget, it is essential that you plan your spending. Identify your needs, and spread your purchases out over a period of time. The idea is not to panic and go out and buy several cheap garments and accessories which you and everybody else will tire of or that may wear out before you have paid for them.

An ideal basic wardrobe should include, at a minimum, the following items:

- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| — coat                                   | — boots            |
| — suit                                   | — rainwear         |
| — two dresses                            | — innerwear        |
| — pant suit or jeans<br>or slacks outfit | — hand bag or tote |
| — four blouses                           | — hose             |
| — two skirts                             | — headwear         |
| — two pairs of shoes                     | — accessories      |

The list looks like a big order, but you needn't buy everything all new, or all at once even if you could afford it.

Very few women entering the working world can afford to buy an entirely new wardrobe. You don't have to "start at the top." Start with what you have.

Start by planning your wardrobe around your most expensive or important single item — a coat, suit, dress, pant suit, boots, or shoes! Any one of these is part of the basic wardrobe list.



## COORDINATE FOR CONFIDENCE

Coordination is the key to converting the list into an interesting, exciting, appropriate career wardrobe that will make you feel good about your job and yourself. Coordinating your wardrobe in color, fabric and design carries planning to its best possible effectiveness.

Think C-O-L-O-R along with coordination. **Learn to combine colors.** When you start purchasing your wardrobe, buy or add only pieces that go with the colors you already have.

As you should start with what you have, you should also start from where you are. If it is summer, concentrate on summer and fall clothing. Buying for winter in May or June will break you and still leave you with nothing to wear. Also, do not be tempted to buy only summer sales merchandise. Your clothing allowance will be used up, and you will enter the fall season wearing summer clothing.

## COLORS, DESIGN, TEXTURE

If you have a closet full of clothing and nothing to wear, first **check out your colors.** They should look well on you and make you feel good. Colors should complement your skin, hair, eyes and physical size.

If you are unsure about your choices, seek help from authorities. Books and reference materials are available for a wide variety of skin colors and encompassing many cultural groups. Study colors. Try color swatches, examine yourself in the sunlight, experimenting with a variety of color values.

- Study but don't blind yourself to one color. If you are heavy or overweight, don't just wear gray or navy. Your personality, too, is an important aspect.
- Remember also that clothing manufacturers select colors for ready-to-wear at least one year in advance. You may be all set to buy a fall wardrobe of burgundy only to find the color is not being featured. People who sew have greater flexibility in terms of color choice.

**Find YOUR design:** Regardless of your physical size, there are styles and special designs to flatter your figure. If you experiment with garments (try them on) in better clothing stores, your chances are better for getting quality items in your size.

Textures are described as smooth, slippery, firm, fuzzy, crisp, harsh, glittering, rough, etc. The texture of a fabric suggests different occasions and seasons as well as different people. When combining texture, keep in mind its distinctive characteristics. Combine textures that are different (e.g., rickrack goes with gingham; leather with wool or tweed). Do not combine those which present conflicting ideas of occa-

sions, durability, and personality. It is the contrast that makes for interesting combinations. Some textures (corduroy, for example) appear to change the dimensions of the body. Choose those that are most flattering to your figure type and compatible for the occasion.

## EMPHASIZE QUALITY

Always think **QUALITY** too. A limited budget gives you your best reason for buying the **best quality you can afford** and choosing items that are simple in design.

People have a tendency to remember flashy items. Others will notice that same bright red dress, for example, much more than the navy dress — and it is more difficult to accessorize and disguise under outerwear.

The major portion of your clothing budget should be spent on career clothing, but there is no reason why this wardrobe can't accommodate church, social and family functions.

In planning your purchase, ask yourself these questions about the articles listed below:

### COAT

- Is it a basic color and style?
- Is it warm?
- Is it large enough for my suit and dress?
- Is it long enough?
- Do I need a zip out lining?
- Are the buttons and other fasteners durable?
- Any extra buttons attached?
- Will it look well with most items in my wardrobe?
- With good care, will I be happy with this coat 3-4 years?
- Is the fabric sturdy?

### SUIT

- Is this the best quality I can afford?
- Is it large enough?
- Is the fabric durable?
- Does this color look well on me?
- How many blouses can I wear with it?
- What accessories that I already have can be worn with it?
- What items do I need to purchase to wear with it?
- How will I care for it?
- Is it a classic style?

### DRESSES (2)

- Are both of good quality and design and of sturdy fabrics?



- Are they suited to your figure type?
- Are the colors coordinated with coat and boots?
- Are the necklines appropriate for office wear?
- Are the necklines conducive to wearing scarves and other accessories?
- Is one dress suitable for evening or after-work affairs?

### FOOTWEAR

- Are they comfortable?
- Are they smartly tailored?
- Are the colors basic so they coordinate with suit, coat and dresses?
- Do you have an extra pair for change and to allow boots and shoes to rest between wearings?
- Are they made of good quality leather and/or vinyl?
- Are bag and shoes coordinated for maximum use?

### SKIRT, SWEATER, PANTS, BLOUSE

- Will they blend, and can they be coordinated to look like outfits?
- Will the jewelry, handbags and other accessories coordinate?

### INNERWEAR

- Do the items have variety in color and design?
- Adequate supply?
- Easy to care for?
- Good quality?

### HANDBAG, ACCESSORIES

- Will they add the variety needed?
- Are they the right size and color for me?
- Are they durable?

### CAREER CLOTHING PRINCIPLES

- Proper care will give your clothes longer wear.
- Your clothing choices should include a variety of weight and densities. There is usually a transitional period at the end and beginning of each season. Your clothing must meet this requirement.
- Your shoes will wear out faster than your purse.
- Shoes and purses will last longer if they have a rest period.
- Dark and/or basic items are easier to replace than are trendy items.
- Career clothing gets hard wear.
- Plunging necklines, too light shorts, jogging suits and fashion extremes should be worn on your personal time — away from work.

### GUIDES FOR SPECIAL PROBLEMS

**Extra large bust** — wear loosely fitting jackets or cardigans. Softly ruffled things are also good. Avoid T-shirts. (See **B** on page 4.)

**Wide shoulders** — Emphasize vertical lines. Shoulder yourself with vest, tunics, jumpers and tailored things. Wear halters at evening and sport occasions. (See **A** on page 4.)

**Heavy arms** — Camouflage with easy-fitting sleeves. This is also a good idea for flabby arms. Full off shoulder types also work well for after work.

**Short, thick waist** — Since this means “hard to fit,” try the “no waist” dresses. Avoid horizontal lines and wide belts. Your skirts and tops should match. (See **C** on page 4.)

**Heavy legs** — The right type shoe is *sturdy*. Avoid the gimmicky, cute type. Choose close-toed types — pumps or wedges, sandals with 2- or 3-inch heels, hosiery to flatter and no very dark or light shades.

**Heavy hips** — Wear long-waisted, flowing garments, full or A-line skirts, and pants.

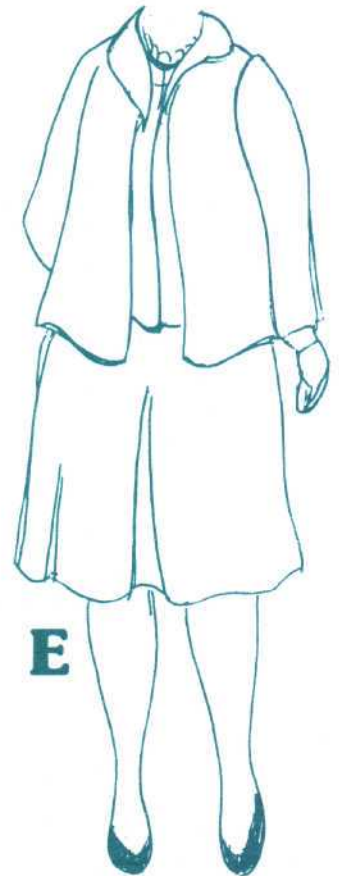
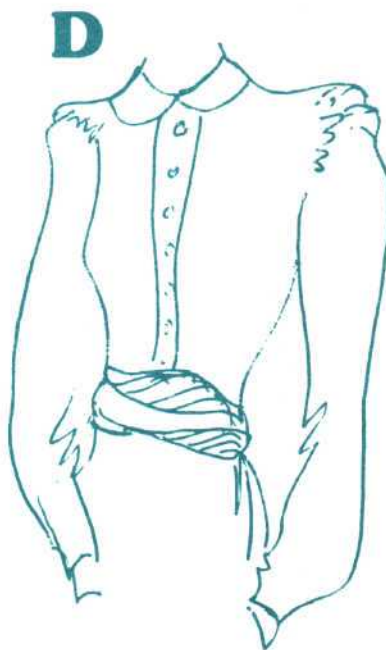
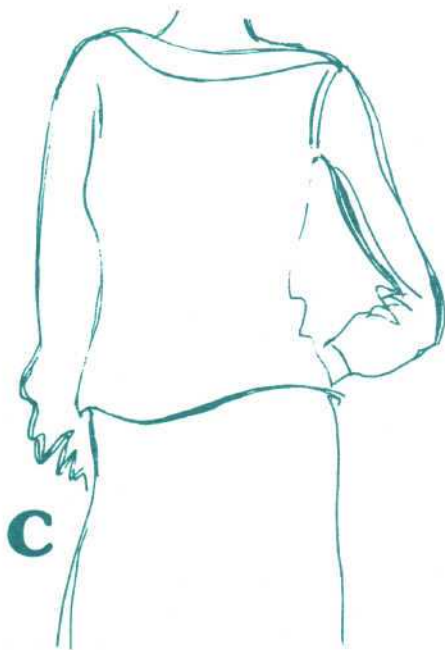
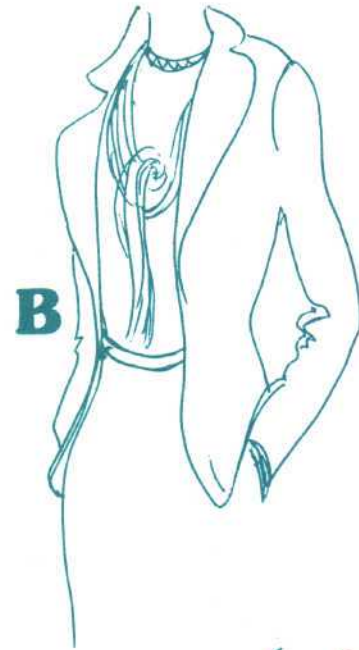
**Narrow hips** — Overblouses flatter narrow hips. Slightly full pants that have pleats at the sides and pockets help.

**Overweight** — *Buy the size that fits.* Don't try to squeeze in a too tight size. You have many choices. Caftans are great for tall heavies, as are empire styles, skirts that flare, amply proportional pants, overblouses, or loosely fitted jackets. Leave dainty, cute things, shorts, and sleeveless tops for your skinny friends. (See **E** on page 4.)

**Narrow Shoulders** — Puffed sleeves will do the trick. (See **D** on page 4.)

Today's career woman has many demands placed upon her. She must be able to assume responsibilities, make decisions, abide by others' decisions, accept frustration and criticism. Those who have not worked outside the home previously, as well as those who have worked all of their professional life, need identity, encouragement, support, security, and confidence. Appropriate clothing can help provide these supports.

# Guides for Some Special Problems



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