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Dressing by Design Your Accessories
Michigan State University Extension Service
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Dressing by DESIGN

YOUR ACCESSORIES

Cooperative Extension Service Michigan State University

EXTENSION CLOTHING PROJECT

PICTURE A SPARKLING PIN . . . a chain necklace . . . a strand of beads . . . a patent handbag . . . a leather belt . . . a flowered hat. Visualize perhaps particular colors, shapes, sizes and textures which make each one of these fashion accessories different. Accessories are an art unto themselves, with characteristics of their own. As such, they are capable of adding new meaning to your habits of dress, of offering new modes of personal expression, of helping develop greater appreciation for beauty in everyday life. What are the ways you can use them?

They can —

- make an outfit more becoming
- create a spot of interest
- add accent
- make an ensemble multi-occasional
- bring an outfit up-to-date
- lend individuality
- be the "spice" of a wardrobe
- complete an outfit for a particular occasion.

Accessories belong in every outfit you wear. You cannot escape them. And you have a key to their successful use. You fix your new hat, adjust the strand of pearls, and take a last look at your hemline. You like what you see. Everything seems to be just as you planned it. Your figure, your personality, the time, the place, the occasion, the dress and your accessories all seem to fit together. You have *dressed by design*. You are pleased with yourself, and off you go!

Accessories are today a vital part of your *total* appearance picture. Their use is determined by the process known as *Dressing by Design*. Design in any activity means planning in terms of a desired result. In this case the result desired is a pleasing appearance (unless of course one deliberately sets out to startle or innovate). This means that everything seems to be just right — everything is there for a purpose. Nothing seems out of place. The look is one of unity but provides enough variety for interest.

The characteristics of accessories — color, texture and shape — contribute to the harmony of a pleasing appearance. Some accessories seem to "tie" an outfit together. They are similar or related to it in color, texture and shape. A sense of rhythm is felt as the eye moves smoothly from one part of the outfit to the other.

Other accessories are used for accent — they focus attention on their colors, textures or shapes which contrast to the background or to the rest of the ensemble. Variety balances similarity. Major accents or contrasts which are kept together or used near each other create a desirable center of interest instead of scattered small interest spots which distract the eye. It is helpful to many people to visualize an ensemble as a "production" much like a stage setting. When the overall stage is pictured objectively, the sense of unifying rhythm and accent spots becomes clear.

And elements of a pleasing appearance are the same as those which create harmonious effects in other designs — in the fine arts, commercial art and interior design. These are the elements that can serve as a basis for developing "good taste," not to

replace the opinions of an individual but rather to be considered as choices supported by reasons. "Good taste," it is said, "bridges the gap between art and the current fashion of the day." The following guidelines are tried and true ways of using these elements to create harmony.

The role of Color

Color is generally noticed before other characteristics of dress and accessories. The dimensions of color which can work for harmony are:

HUE – Name of a color such as red, yellow, blue.

VALUE – Lightness or darkness of a color. A shade is a deep or dark value such as a navy blue; a tint is a pale or light value of a hue like pink.

INTENSITY – Brightness or dullness of color. A bright color is one of high or full intensity; a dull color is soft, grayed or of low intensity.

Guideline: Related colors or colors having a hue in common give a sense of unity.

How guideline is used: One color or one color idea generally dominates although variations in values and intensities are desirable.

Examples: Warm colors such as brown, beige, orange (which have yellow in common) are used in accessories and dress.

Guideline: Complementary colors (colors which have no hue in common) emphasize or accent each other.

How guideline is used: When complementary colors are used together in clothing, one of the colors is usually of low intensity for a pleasing appearance. Complementary colors are generally used in unequal amounts.

Example: Red accessories are selected for a grayed green outfit, gold accents for a blue outfit.

Guideline: Closely related values provide a sense of rhythm or unity.

How guideline is used: Tints harmonize with tints; shades harmonize with shades.

Example: A light hat is worn with light print dress.

Guideline: Contrasting values provide variety at the area of contrast.

How guideline is used: A small area of contrasting value adds variety or interest to a larger area.

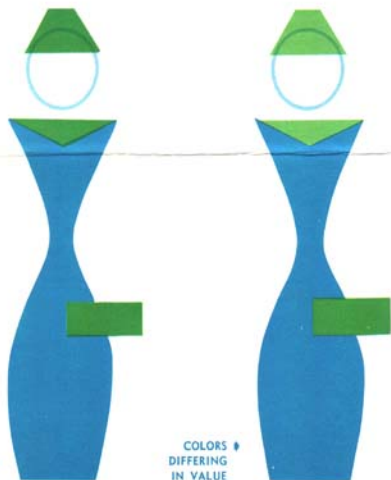
Example: A light pink scarf (a high value of red) accents the neckline of a dark red dress; a white neckline accents a dark dress.

Guideline: Colors which differ in intensity, will contrast or accent one another.

GUIDELINES

To effective use of ACCESSORIES

... some examples



How guideline is used: Small areas of bright color accent a large expanse of a dull color if the dull color is approaching a neutral and if the colors are used in unequal amounts.

Example: Bright orange beads are worn with a beige dress.

Take a look at your wardrobe and your accessories. Group them by colors. What pleasing color combinations do they offer you? Do you find colors which accent and add interest? What are some new possibilities suggested by the guidelines?

The role of Texture

Texture is the feel and the "look" of things. It appeals to the eye as well as to the hand. The way materials look and feel, the way they hang or handle affect harmony in appearance.

Guideline: Textures similar in the ideas expressed create a feeling of unity.

How guideline is used: Textures similar in the casualness or dressiness which they express are used together.

Examples: Wooden beads, copper jewelry, gold chain necklaces suggest the informality of corduroy, bulky knits and tweeds; pearls, gold and silver jewelry are associated with crepe and velveteen.

Guideline: Contrasting textures, although similar in the idea expressed, provide interest or variety.

How guideline is used: Textures contrasting in roughness and smoothness, luster and dullness can be combined.

Example: Pearl buttons are used on a linen outfit; a patent purse is worn with a wool outfit.

Now take another look at your accessories for possible combinations of textures.

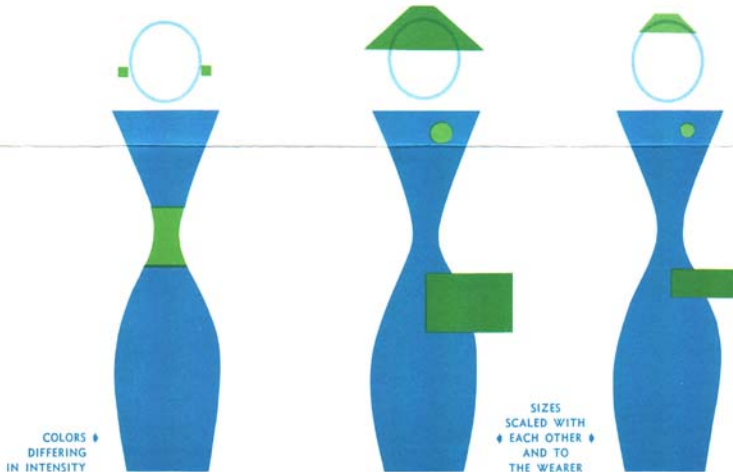
The role of Size

Size, of course, is relative, and current fashion often determines the degree to which accessories are considered large or small. The fashion of a season may emphasize either largeness or smallness of accessories such as in hats and handbags. Accessory size is an important factor affecting total appearance; it affects proportion, the weighting given to various areas of the figure or ensemble.

Guideline: Sizes in scale with each other provide a sense of unity.

How guideline is used: Accessories scaled in size to the wearer help to unify an outfit; they are flattering to the wearer.

Example: A large person may prefer to select a hat in scale with her figure and the size of her head, rather than one that accents her size.



Guideline: Contrast in sizes provides variety or interest.

How guideline is used: Accessories contrasting in size to the background against which they are worn provide a focal point of interest.

Example: An unusual shaped pin is selected for a plain background.

Note "size up" your accessories. How many different forms and shapes do you find? What different combinations do you see possible with the colors and textures of your clothing?

These guidelines are only some of the ways accessories can be part of a pleasing appearance—other possibilities exist through using one's own ideas in creativity. *Dressing by Design* can not easily provide formulas for appearance because accessories must express personal preference—accessories must be appropriate to the wearer. Selection and use you make of accessories must fit in your way of life.

Your Personality

Accessories may express the wearer but should not overwhelm her. Accessories add contrast or interest. Sharp contrasts are associated with the dramatic; quieter, less striking contrasts with the dignified. Accessories can create a mood—do you feel at ease and comfortable with the effect which your accessories give?

What effects do your accessories and dress give?

Your Figure

A good figure is usually considered less a matter of actual height and weight than of proportions. Your choice of accessories will affect proportions. Attention will be focused on those accessories which contrast with the outfit. Because of this influence, you should analyze the effect contrasting accessories will have on your figure. Do some accessories seemingly change your proportions? Consider the effect which light gloves worn against a dark background had at the hipline or the effect of a belt contrasting in color to an outfit.

Generally speaking, light colors tend to give the illusion of increased size; medium to dark colors may tend to give an impression of reduced size. Visualize the difference in apparent size of hands when white gloves and black gloves are worn.

The lines of accessories can create optical illusions. A choker of beads tends to emphasize the roundness of the neck and face; it may make a neck appear shorter. Several long strands of jewelry seem to add length to the shape of the face. The silhouette of a hat affects apparent height. Do the lines of a hat carry your eye upward, downward or do they follow the horizontal lines of a brim? A turban usually appears to add height; the coolie hat seems to decrease height. The horizontal effect of a picture hat may appear to cut height.

Stand off and look at yourself as a picture. Do you like what you see?

The Occasion

A person's viewpoint on a pleasing appearance not only reflects herself but is influenced by the people and events around her. The expectations which others have of the "right" dress and accessories vary from community to community. They vary also for activities within the same community, work or profession and organizations to which a person belongs.

Some accessories are associated with dressy occasions, others for casual ones. Traditionally, sparkling jewelry is more often associated with formal or dressy occasions. The dramatic effects of some accessories may be more appropriate for some occasions than others. A hat unusual in color as well as in style may be considered more appropriate for a dressy occasion than for everyday wear.

Does your inventory provide you with accessories that will fit all occasions you're likely to encounter?

Summing It Up

You can use accessories to create a pleasing appearance through *Dressing by Design*. Accessories are part of the harmonious picture—use them to unify, use them to add variety.

—Are accessories working for you the way you'd like them to—are you getting the result you had in mind?

—Are your accessories appropriate for you—do they fit your situation, the kind of life you lead?

—Do accessories compliment you—your personality, your proportions, your personal coloring?

—Do your accessories express the mood or theme of your outfit—the informality, casualness, formality you wish?