

Build a Working Wardrobe

Karyn Starr, cofounder of White-Starr Aesthetic Consulting, is the person you'd want to be your fashion fairy godmother. More than a stylist, she will explore your psyche to help define what kind of style is the most *you*. Here Starr explains how to curate a wardrobe that allows you to get dressed quickly and put on something you love and feel great in—a wardrobe that works in every sense of the word.

The Goal

We want everyone to be able to get dressed in five minutes in the morning. If you have small children pulling on you, maybe that's all the time you have. So less is more. In your closet, have a couple of investment pieces and then your particular basics to mix and match. We want the wardrobe to vie for your attention so every piece is awesome and makes you happy. It should be a hot competition in there, instead of "These three things are great and the rest doesn't work."

If It Doesn't Work, Give It Away

First, try on your own clothes—and really be honest with yourself. If you've gained some weight, keep a couple of nice things that fit you before, put them away, and label them "attainable." In six months to a year, if you feel they may fit, try

them on again. But we're so hard on ourselves. I love fashion, but the imagery can be oppressive. Except for models, nobody looks like the people in magazines and on billboards.

If you haven't worn something for eighteen months, barring that it's sentimental or an amazing piece that you feel will come around again, get rid of it. That's fashion karma: letting go so something new can happen. You want to look at clothes that you actually wear.

Return the keepers to your closet and then make three piles from the rest. One is to give away to a local thrift store. Next, if there are expensive pieces that aren't working for you, take these to consignment. Last, have a pile for the tailor.

Look for Inspiration

Once you've done the closet cleanse, look at what is missing. Are there

pieces that you need to complete your wardrobe? Try finding inspiration images and create a map for your personal aesthetic.

Think about your life. Maybe think of someone's style that appeals to you. It could be a friend or someone in the public eye. Try to figure out what you like. See if it's attainable for you. Is your life at all comparable? If you're a corporate lawyer and you like the way that Kate Moss dresses, it may not work. But there may be a takeaway about the way that she puts her outfits together. People with incredible style—like Moss, Jane Birkin, and Lauren Hutton—never wear anything totally crazy. They just have pulled-together looks. It's how they assemble the whole outfit that makes them look so great.

Shop with a New Eye

When you are ready to go shopping, try on different shapes, even if in the past you might have said, "I don't look good in that." Maybe you haven't tried it on in five years. Try on what you haven't been wearing. If you've worn a wide leg, try on a slim pair of pants. If you've only been wearing dresses, try on pants. Also, patterns and fabrics have changed with innovation. Technology in clothing is amazing. There's a reason that jeans can fit so well. You need to experiment with

shape and silhouette more than anything else.

To really see a lot of different style and shape options, starting at a bigger store can be helpful. Then you can go to a smaller boutique. Also, if you find someone who is helpful, be super-honest with them. You know yourself. You know what you will and won't wear. And tell them your budget.

Make Your Style Work for You

Next is the hardest part: putting it together. Spend some time trying on the clothes in your closet. Stand in front of the mirror, snap pictures, and throw them on your desktop. Actually have some outfits planned so if you have an important meeting, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Think, "What have I worn in the past few weeks that made me feel awesome?" Re-wear that outfit. Then go from there.

Reevaluate

Every three to five years, take time to reevaluate. People often need help when they're in transition—getting married, looking for a new job, having a baby, moving. Women's lives have so many transitions that can affect how we present ourselves to the world. Your clothes matter. You need to keep figuring it out.

Interlude... HEADWEAR

Headpiece adornments made from braided cloth, feathers, bone, and even a gold cobra replica date back to early civilizations. Centuries later, these ancient styles still feel new.



Sarah Sophie Flicker (opposite) wears a crown of ranunculus and callas made by Taylor Patterson of Fox Fodder Farm. Flicker is a performer and feminist activist. Her ensembles, influenced by suffragettes and 1920s flappers, often include the dramatic flair of headwear.

Stylist Karyn Starr (right) in a Jennifer Behr halo. Headpieces shouldn't only be left to the bridal party; Starr even wears the halo to yoga. The Jennifer Behr Margaritte Tiara on Flicker (below left) is based on a brass detail that was inlaid in wood furniture during the twenties or thirties. The Riot Grrrls of the nineties last reinvented the tiara as a feminist punk princess symbol. Eniola Dawodu's (below right) antique brass hairpin from Burkina Faso adds elegance to her twist.

"You have to be a little bit brave to put something on your head," says Brooklyn-based headpiece designer Jennifer Behr. "It's something unexpected, a mark of individuality. It sets you apart from the average woman on the street."

