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# *a working woman's wardrobe*

*by Sharon Twiss*

*Do you spend what could be lovely morning moments in front of your closet asking the continual question, "What the hell am I going to wear today?" I do. All I want to do is get dressed so I can deal with more important things. How can I simplify my life, clothing-wise?*

"No, a uniform will not do," says Laura Twiss, fashion design graduate of LaSalle College in Montreal and my youngest sister, upon hearing my first solution. Now that I live three thousand miles away, closet cast-offs from my sisters are no longer so easily available. I'm being forced to choose my own clothing and I need help. "Assemble a basic wardrobe and you won't have to be pre-occupied by clothes. A basic wardrobe is a couple of pants, a couple of skirts, a jacket, and a few tops," advises Twiss, who agrees to be my saviour.



*Every Goddess needs to get dressed. You can photocopy, colour, and cut out a basic wardrobe for Venus.*

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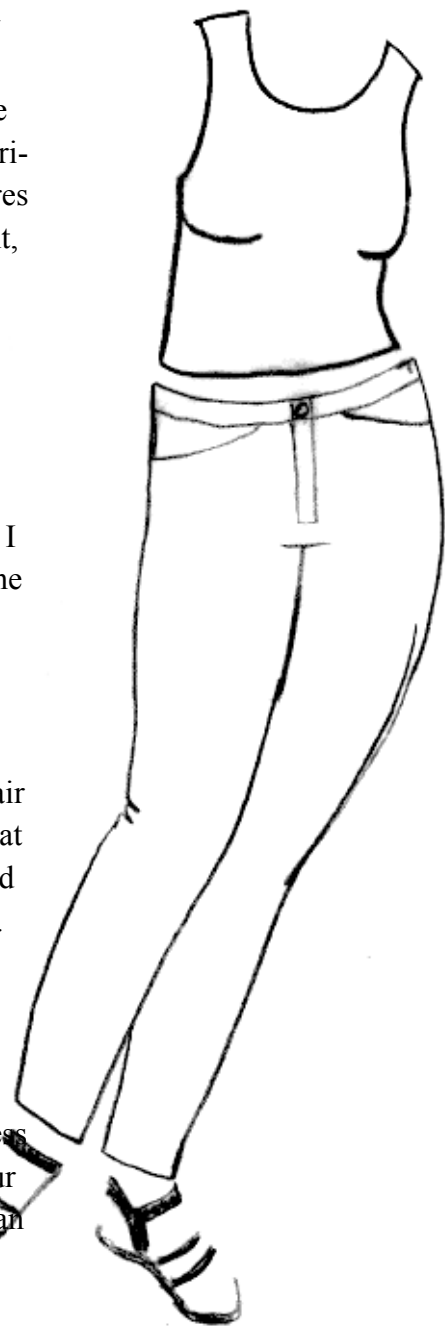
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## *Your wardrobe is an investment*

“First of all, you have to accept that assembling a basic wardrobe is going to cost money,” she tells me. No matter how much it costs, it will seem expensive after shopping at Value Village. When I realize how much I’ve already invested in my education to pursue my career, the added expense of dressing appropriately for it seems minor. She assures me that it will be money well spent, that I will achieve the simplicity I desire, and portray an image of efficient confidence.

Although I’m greedy for peace of mind and grateful for her skilled assistance, I still have to ask what I would be paying for. “Quality,” she replies. Clothing made from good quality fabrics and designs costs more, but it also lasts longer, and looks better than the cheap stuff. Yes, but a hundred dollars for a pair of pants? Then I look down at what I’m wearing. A \$50 pair – the third I’ve bought this year, all the same. Hmm, I’ve already spent \$150 on pants, and these still need to be replaced.

Of course there are ways to pay less for high quality. You can keep your eyes peeled for bargains, or you can sew your own. Both options may



save you money, but they won’t save you time.

## *The boutique, not the mall*

Twiss suggests purchasing the basics of a wardrobe from a designer boutique, where a fashion designer produces clothing and sells it directly to their clientele. “There are boutiques in every major city,” says Twiss. “Shop Canadian, ok? Support the designers that live in your community, and put money back into the local economy.”

Although a boutique is more expensive than a fashion outlet in the mall, you can be assured that the designer boutique offers far better quality, much better service, and certainly a more inviting environment. And all your hard-earned cash will be spent on the quality of the design and the fabric, rather than the advertising and marketing campaigns that the large fashion stores must maintain.

“You can find one that makes clothes that are affordable, and in a style that looks good on you,” says Twiss. You can also develop a relationship with the sales person who’s skill is knowing about clothing style, body types, colour, and silhouettes. They are well versed in this “language” of fashion. They can

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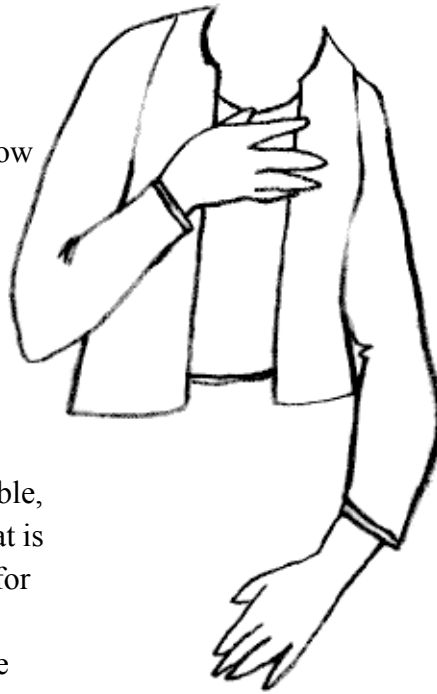
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help you with the translation – how all these things blend together to “say something” about you, and how you can manipulate certain aspects to portray an image.

### *Fabric*

“What you’re looking for is something that is durable, washable, and that travels well. A fabric that is easy to maintain makes it easier for you in the long run,” says Twiss. She suggests that you first decide which fabrics you want for the standard pieces of your wardrobe. Be sure to choose a fabric that has a 5% spandex content in it. A bit of spandex in the fabric mix ensures a good fit because it reduces the amount of ease (the extra fabric needed so you can move around) in the clothing, which gives you a tighter fit and a crisper look while still allowing you to move comfortably.

Polyester is much improved since the eighties, and when it’s blended with other fibres, it adds strength, durability, and longer-lasting good looks. A polyester crêpe is an excellent choice for pants, skirts, and jackets. As is a light-weight cotton twill, particularly in a pant, because it won’t look like denim if you choose blue as your colour. Another versatile fabric is a



polyester viscose. This fabric looks like a masculine fabric, that is, like a classic men’s suit fabric, but when cut in a feminine style, it adds a quality look to the wardrobe.

### *Colour*

Choose a single colour for the backbone of your wardrobe, which would be at least one pant, one skirt, and the jacket. “Black is always best,” says Twiss. “It’s consistently available, never goes out of style. It’s always elegant, always hip. And it goes with everything.” However, when choosing black, the polyester blend become an even more significant choice, since black in a natural fibre, such as cotton and silk, fades easily with repeated washing.

If you’re still caving in to your mother’s “black is too severe for you” routine, then choose a main colour such as navy blue, brown, dark purple, or dark grey. But note that the colours offered year after year do differ – one year it’s chocolate brown, the next it’s rose-brown, or even no brown at all. Unless you’re buying your complete wardrobe in one go, swatches (little snippets of fabric taken from the hems) carried around in your purse might help you avoid a mistaken match. Too complicated. Choose



black. You can add colour with shirts, blouses, sweaters, and accessories, like belts and scarves. Your backbone wardrobe pieces will tie your whole look together.

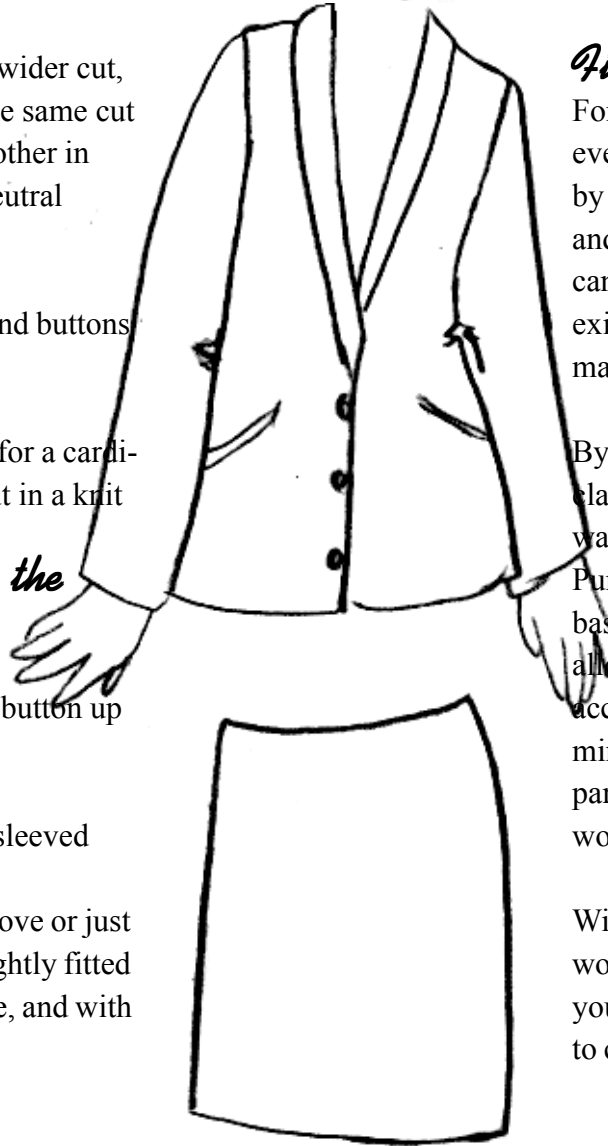
### *Working wardrobe basics*

Twiss suggests these items for the basic wardrobe:

- ◆ **Long black skirt**
- ◆ **Short black skirt**
- ◆ **Two pants**  
one slim cut and one wider cut, both black; or both the same cut but one in black, the other in gray or some other neutral
- ◆ **Black turtleneck**
- ◆ **Classic white shirt**  
long sleeves, collar, and buttons
- ◆ **White t-shirt**
- ◆ **Jacket**  
in a woven fabric; or for a cardigan look, the same cut in a knit

### *Great additions to the basic wardrobe*

- ◆ **Sweater set**  
a tank with matching button up sweater
- ◆ **Assorted tops**  
tanks, short- or long-sleeved
- ◆ **Little black dress,**  
hemline either just above or just below the knee, in slightly fitted cut, a simple neck line, and with or without sleeves



How versatile is the little black dress?

“You can wear it with a sweater for work. Later, add a strand of pearls or a scarf and go out for dinner,” says Twiss. “Or you can throw on a jean jacket, and go do your groceries. It’s the accessories that change the look.” It’s a go-anywhere dress for a go-anywhere girl.

### *Finally*

Fortunately, you don’t have to get every item right away. You can start by purchasing one pant, one skirt, and a couple of the tops. And you can use items from your already existing wardrobe until you can make more additions.

By choosing wardrobe pieces in a classic and simple design, your wardrobe will be trend-proof. Purchasing high quality wardrobe basics will free up your clothing allowance to spend on fun accessories, if you like, and in-the-minute fashion items for the other part of your life that doesn’t include work.

With a closet containing a working woman’s wardrobe, at least part of your lovely mornings will be yours to claim once again.