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How to Work Your Wardrobe Workout Chart

I use this Wardrobe Workout Chart for all of my clients as well as myself. Why? I think it's safe to say that while our closets are stuffed, we don't have enough well put together outfits that we feel great wearing. We've made an investment in our wardrobe and until we've created outfits we feel confident in, it's not paying off.

It will blow your mind and make you deliriously happy to learn that you can change all of that.

Let me tell you how you'll fill in this chart. On the top right of your Wardrobe Workout Chart fill in the season you're working in – spring, summer, winter, fall, or transition (that time between summer and fall or winter and spring when the weather is more unpredictable). I like to write in the date that we create these outfits. Just the month and the year are adequate. You can note the date right under the line for "season."

In the large box at the top left write the key piece around which you'll build one to five outfits. This is a bottom piece from your wardrobe – a specific pair of pants, skirt, shorts – or a dress. If you have three pairs of black pants, distinguish each pair. Don't just write "Black Pant" or two weeks from you you'll be asking yourself, Which black pant? You can distinguish it by fabric content (cotton, linen, wool, silk), function (dressy, casual, play, work), designer, or the store it came from.

There are five columns to accommodate five different outfits. On the left margin you'll see a box for every part of the outfit – top, outerwear, footwear, underwear, accessories. Once completed, you'll have up to five outfits using that same bottom. If you're working with a dress, put the dress in the box and fill in the whole Wardrobe Workout Chart except for the row for "top."

As you create an outfit, you might want to note at the top of each column the occasion you'll be wearing it. For instance, two columns of outfits made with your lightweight wool black pants may be for work and three columns for dates. Otherwise, you can create one Wardrobe Workout Chart just for "work" that uses the lightweight wool black pant as the key piece and one chart with "date" outfits made from the same pant if it's that versatile. You can note "date" or "work" under "Season."

Once you've worked through the bottoms in your wardrobe and the charts are filled in, slip them into plastic sheet protectors and put them in your binder. You can also separate your Wardrobe Workout Charts by occasion. Use your dividers and make categories that work for you. You can divide your charts by activity – work clothes, play clothes, social/event clothes, weekend clothes, or divide by season – fall, winter, spring, summer, and transition. You'll refer to these charts all season long and then make new ones next season or anytime you buy some new clothes.

Your binder full of outfit charts will be a lifesaver! If you've written an outfit down, you know it exists. All of us wake up some mornings and our brains can't figure out what to wear. That's when it's great to flip through your binder and effortlessly choose an outfit that's already been tested and approved.

Simple Steps for Creating Outfits from Your Closet

1. Grab a Wardrobe Workout Chart. Pull a pant or skirt from your closet. Try it on. Does it fit and flatter you? Great! Let's make outfits with it. Name that item and write it in the "key piece" box.
2. Go through your closet and pull out tops that you might wear with that bottom. Choose several. Start trying them on. Be open to surprises. Once you have a pant/top combination that you like, write a description of the top into the first column in the "Tops" box.
3. Now figure out what jacket, coat or cardigan sweater goes with it. A different outer piece (what I often refer to as the "third" piece) can definitely change the look of the outfit. There's a big difference between a motocross leather jacket and a vintage sequined cardigan sweater. If they both work create a separate entry for each combination (moving into the "2" column). As you see, you could have lots of different looks with only slight variations in content. Fill in the "Outerwear" box with your selection. Remember, we're completing one outfit at a time.
4. Try on several pairs of shoes with the pant/top/jacket combination. Note what socks or hosiery you'll wear. Write your approved choices in the "Footwear" box in that first column.
5. Next you want to consider underwear or undergarments. Some pants need thong underwear to work or they don't work at all! Some skirts need "smoothies" or Spanx, those undergarments that have built-in panels that smooth out body parts. Some knit tops need smooth cup bras so the knit looks smooth and not bumpy (from patterned lace bras). Make those notes now so you won't forget when it comes time to wear that outfit.

6. Now look at your accessories. How are you going to finish this outfit? Accessories add personality and polish to an outfit. So what earrings, necklaces, or bracelets are you going to wear? Will you add a scarf? What handbag will you wear? You may have tried on several different combinations before you've pulled it all together and you're satisfied. Write all those items in the "Accessories" box in column one. (Sometimes if I am using a lot of accessories and I haven't needed to use the "Underwear" box, I'll spill over into that section of my chart for more room.)
7. View yourself in a full-length mirror. This step is not optional. You need to see yourself from head to toe, front to back, taking in the wonderful work of art you've just created. Make a note at the top of column one to remind you wear you would wear this outfit. I hope it's within two weeks!
8. Now take off all the pieces except for the pant and make your next outfit. Using column two, create another whole outfit. Write it all down. And now repeat. You have space on this one chart to make five complete outfits. You may end up spilling onto a second chart with that same bottom. That's great. Do you see how you're maximizing your wardrobe investment by creating ready-to-go outfits for your wearing pleasure?
9. Create new outfits at regular intervals. I go through periods of time when I make three new outfits on the weekend. It's soothing to me to know I have outfits for the coming week or for upcoming occasions that I'm totally satisfied with and can't wait to wear. I know I won't be in a panic to get dressed and that brings peace of mind. Create a habit of building outfits and charting them that works for you.
10. As you're building outfits you will discover gaps. Fantastic! This is your shortcut to figuring out what you really need to put on your shopping list. You will be solving some mysteries, like why you never wear that tweed pant – because you really need an olive shoe or short boot to go with it! Or you'll discover a certain accessory is about to fall apart – because it goes with everything in your wardrobe. If this is the case, you may want to start looking for a replacement. Add it to your shopping list.

Let me know how this works for you! Enjoy!