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Anna Walker

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Good Taste in Dress



AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Good Taste in Dress

By

Anna D. Walker

Extension Clothing Specialist

Successful clothes depend on your knowledge and imagination—not your pocketbook. Good taste is the keynote to being well dressed.

Since customs and habits of dress vary in different places, it is never possible to lay down hard and fast rules for correct dress. Local practice and your personal feeling towards clothes influences correctness of dress.

However, one can observe some general rules for good taste in dress which can be adapted to meet your needs.

Individual good sense is the best guide in wardrobe planning.

You need to know the difference between **style**—which is fleeting—and **fashion**—which is universal. Think how the garment you are selecting will look two years from now. Watch out lest your wish to be like others hampers your judgment and good taste.

The poets advice, "Be not the first by whom the new is tried nor yet the last to lay the old aside," is well worth considering.

In considering good taste in dress here are some things to think about: unity of idea expressed in color; harmony, proportion, and scale; texture combinations that go together appropriately for the occasion, the season,

time of day, the spirit of occasion (formal, or dignified, gay, informal or conventional, or conservative).

Do you feel comfortable and relaxed? Are you so confident that your clothes are right that you can forget them? In the last analysis, this is the test which proves how well you are dressed, whether you are at home, in business, at a picnic or at a formal occasion.

A feeling of freedom, comfort and poise goes with being well dressed and knowing that you are. It will pay you to take a critical look at yourself in the mirror.

Women were asked, in a recent study, how they felt about the way they were dressed. 1.8% of them considered themselves very well dressed; 40% of them thought they were dressed better than the average woman; 91.9% of the women said they felt they were dressed about as well as the average; 1.3% thought they were dressed poorer than the average, and none considered themselves extremely poorly dressed.

How do you feel about the way you are dressed? This is the most important consideration, isn't it?

First, let's think about clothes in relation to the occasion.

Clothes for the Occasion

School and Business

Choose casual clothes for school and business. Skirts, blouses, sweaters, suits and tailored dresses come under this class. Be sparing with accessories and keep them simple. You will want to have shoes with low conservative heels, and a roomy purse. Bright scarves, collars, and simple jewelry will find a place in the school or business wardrobe. Jeans don't belong in the classroom.

Sportswear

Your sportswear will depend upon whether you are participating in sports or just a spectator.

Slacks, jeans, shorts of various lengths, and pedal pushers are generally considered suitable for active sports or for casual wear at home. You consider your figure and how you feel. If you don't feel comfortable in shorts don't wear them!

Clothes which you would wear to school or business may be considered good for spectator sports. Hats and gloves may be worn but are not necessary unless you are attending a big sports event. Then you will appear better groomed with hat and gloves.

Travel

A suit and blouse costume or a dress with jacket are wise choices for travel. If you are traveling by car, the jacket can be hung up. Most trains, buses and planes are air conditioned so a jacket is generally welcome. Choose a dark or medium dark plain color. A gored skirt will hold its shape better than a narrow skirt because it will give you more knee room and will wrinkle less. Wear conservative accessories with your travel outfits.

Afternoon Teas, Luncheons

In the spring, wear a pretty daytime dress or suit with a dressy blouse. You will probably want to wear a hat. Most people do. It may be quite elaborate. Wear pumps or sandals, carry a dressy bag, smaller than the one you carry for shopping and be sure to wear your gloves. This is an occasion for you to look pretty.

For an afternoon tea in fall or winter you may want to add a touch of elegance or formality—maybe a velvet hat or a rhinestone necklace. In the summer wear one of your pretty cottons or nylons with an uncluttered hat of straw or cotton. Wear your gloves, carry a small purse and slip into breezy shoes.

The clothes you wear for a tea are equally well suited to wear at a luncheon.

Church

For church, wear a basic suit with dressy or semi-dressy blouse, or any pretty dress with hat and gloves. It is generally considered not good taste to go to church bareheaded.

When attending a funeral your dress should be conservative both in style and color. Be sure that you wear hat and gloves. Quiet simplicity is the keynote here.

Weddings

In our part of the country, women guests at a wedding are appropriately dressed in street length dresses with hats and gloves, whether the wedding is semi-formal, formal or informal.

In some localities a formal wedding calls for the women guests to wear formal attire after the manner of the gowns worn by the mothers of the bride and groom. This is seldomly done, however, in our part of the country.

Banquets

Guests of evening banquets are usually informed whether dress should be formal or not.

Generally a pretty street or afternoon dress is correct. Hats are not often worn but gloves may be.

Now let's consider some of the principles which would be helpful in assembling a costume.

Assembling Your Costume

In assembling a costume remember that contrasting colors or textures may be used in two or no more than three places on the costume. These costume accents are achieved by using accent colors in scarves, jewelry, gloves, hat, belts, flowers, etc. The law of scale and related sizes demands that every woman wear clothes in proportion to her size.

Heavy fabrics, large cumbersome accessories and large prints have an overpowering effect on the small dainty figure, while delicate fabrics and colors and frivolous accessories are not suitable for a large, mature figure.

Dress according to your age. If you are a mature woman, it isn't good taste to wear clothes that are "little girlish." Your best choice should be clothes that are smart but simple—neither too young nor too old for you.

To help you to that smart look, let's examine the parts that make up a costume.

Accessories

Accessories are important items in your wardrobe and they can do much to give your appearance an air of distinction. So don't buy accessories in a "willy nilly" fashion. For the most pleasing effect, see that they relate to the rest of your costume in design, color and texture.

Decorative accessories are a key to your good taste and individuality. A Frenchman once said: "The American woman nearly always adds just one superfluous detail,—one piece of jewelry that should have been omitted, a fur that burdens the costume in spite of its beauty, or a flower or piece of jewelry that might better have been left on the dressing table."

Your watchword for using accessories should be "restraint." Take a look in a full length mirror so you can see the complete effect of your costume. Then, add only the accessories which will give the costume a harmonious effect. When in doubt "don't!"

Hats

Your hat helps tell the purpose of the costume.

Choose a solid colored hat with perhaps a note of accent if you wear lots of multicolor print dresses—unless you can afford lots of hats. Your hat should either match, blend or contrast in color with your dress.

Don't buy a hat just for a lift. Unless it fits into your wardrobe, the lift may be short lived. Choose your hat remembering that if it is to be a part of your costume, it should be right for your size and personality. Look in a full length mirror when buying a hat.

Veils

Veils are generally considered a little dressy for morning wear, but they can be worn to church. They are considered appropriate hat accessories for afternoon and evening use. They are sometimes worn by themselves with evening wear.

The use of veils varies with the mode of hats and the current fashion. Some years we wear them—and some years we don't.

Gloves

Gloves are an important note in the wardrobe ensemble.

They make the gesture of good taste in their harmony with the costume in idea, color and texture.

Gloves and hats should be worn at all public functions and all formal social gatherings—like church, teas, luncheons and weddings.

Hats are optional for gatherings after 5 p.m. or with formal clothes. Gloves should be worn for evening parties, dinner and dance.

Wear gloves with a hat. Wear them or put them in your bag. Don't just carry gloves. Don't match a bright hat with bright gloves unless you want your costume to appear spotty.

Greyed-tone gloves or white gloves are good choices to wear with a light colored hat.

Gloves may be worn without a hat but never wear a hat without gloves. Immaculate white gloves are required for all formal occasions. For most dresses, the gloves may either be a neutral or matching color. The plainer your gloves, the better. Fabric gloves are popular and satisfactory. They are inexpensive and easily laundered.

Shoes

Shoes should look as if they belonged to the costume and to the wearer. They should never give the foot a vulgar or abnormal line. Shoes should never make the foot conspicuous, either by extreme design or by a spotted coloring.

Over-ornamented shoes are not considered in too good taste by most people. Plain pumps are a good investment because they flatter most feet and can be worn with many outfits. Your shoes should show by texture and style that purpose has been carried out from top to toe in your costume.

Shoes with straps shorten the instep. They make the ankles look thicker and the wearer look shorter and wider. So if you are plump and have a short foot, and if you must have a strap for support, buy a shoe with a very narrow single strap.

White shoes are not the best choice to be worn with a dress of a darker shade. If you must wear white shoes, wear them with your white and pastel dresses.

Shoes which stand out as the most important part of the costume take away from its unity.

Hosiery

Take a look at your hosiery. A good smart stocking is nicely proportioned so that it will be smooth, unwrinkled at the ankle and be comfortable to wear. For comfort it should neither slip nor bind. Wrong hosiery may ruin an otherwise perfect ensemble. Be wary of dark or decorative heels. Some women feel that dark seams make the calf appear smaller, seamless—larger.

Bags

Bags should be selected in proportion to your size. Bags may match or harmonize with shoes.

A very large bag carried by a small person has an overpowering effect.

Scarves

Scarves do not add to your appearance when worn over the head. You seem to lose your identity. They are worn over the head only for warmth or protection. A scarf is a useful accessory when used with imagination. It can add just the right note of color a costume needs. Experiment to find the most becoming way to use a scarf—at the neck, waist, or tucked in a pocket. Avoid overdoing it!

Belts

An interesting belt can dress up a

simple costume but it should never dominate it. Self belts often look best, especially if you do not want to call attention to the waistline.

Flowers

Flowers are a very feminine kind of accessory and must be used with care. Add flowers for ornamentation only where there are plain spaces. Wear a flower upward—the way it grows. They are sometimes worn at the waist, and often on the shoulder. Wear them high enough so that they can peek over the shoulder and can be seen from the back. Remember that the artificial flower you wear should always appear just as fresh and crisp as a real one from your garden.

If you are very plump, avoid the use of large showy flowers. If you have very large shoulders, an illusion of slenderness can be created by wearing flowers all in a straight row over your shoulder.

Jewelry

Restraint should be your guide in choosing and wearing jewelry, lest you take on the appearance of a Christmas tree. Whether a valuable heirloom, or a piece of costume jewelry, a jewelry piece should blend and harmonize with your costume. Never wear a lot of different pieces of jewelry—unless they belong together.

Good advice is to avoid slavish matching but, in contrast, also beware of wearing unrelated textures together such as ceramics and rhinestones, copper and gold, etc.

Many women of good taste avoid wearing "glitter" before 5 p.m. To them rhinestones and the like are not for daytime wear.

Stout women should avoid wearing large, round beads in a choker effect. This arrangement is for a slender,

youthful neck. Long strands, weighted by an ornament a little below the breast, give a more slenderizing effect. Choose your earrings with the shape of your face in mind—large, round earrings accentuate a plump face long dangling ones can make a thin face appear more so. Choose them with the type of costume in mind.

Glasses

Don't choose too decorative frames for your glasses if you want to wear jewelry such as earrings. Watch the color, too, unless you can afford a number of pairs since you may find to your disappointment that they do not go well with many of your clothes.

What Does Your Outfit Score?

So that you may know that you are not overdressed, let's use the classic rule of 14.

According to fashion principle, no lady should own a costume that has more than 14 eye catching elements—12 may be better.

Women who are over-weight, curvaceous or with strong colored hair in red, yellow or black should go easier on points than the more slender types of women with subdued coloring. If your personal coloring is aggressive, keep the count under 14—nearer 11 and 12.

Personality does play an important part, however.

If you are well dressed, your total score must not be more than 14 points: 12 points may be better.

Articles of Apparel	Point Value	Your Score
Dress	solid	1
	figured	2
	buttons—if not self-fabric	1 more
	belt or buckle if not self-fabric	1 more
	collars and/or cuffs, if color different from dress	1 more
Suit		2
	buttons, if not self-fabric	1 more
	belt, if not self-fabric	1 more
	pipng or other trim	1 more
Blouse	unless same color as suit	1
Shoes	plain	1
	with heels or toes out	2
	bow, buckle, strap	2
Hose	plain	1
	colored heels or seams	2
Necklace		1
Brooch or pin		1
Lapel pin		1
Earrings		1
Glasses	plain	1
	colored or decorated	2
Bracelet		1 for each
Wrist Watch		1
Rings		1 for each
Flowers		1
Gloves	plain	1
	different stitching or decorated	2
Hat	self trimmed	1
	other trim as ribbon, veiling, flowers, feathers	1 more for each trim
Scarf		1
Purse	plain	1
	clasp, trim or frame different from purse	1 more for each
Handkerchief	if shown	1

YOUR TOTAL _____

25M—10-57—4783

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