

## How to build a happy wardrobe that is finally enough <3

Overconsumption of clothes is not only bad for the planet but also not a lot of fun when you take into account that you most probably end up not having what you need or what makes you happy (if you did, why would you be continuously looking for more things to buy?). A solution to this is a mindful approach to shopping – knowing your needs and your taste well so that what you buy keeps both of these satisfied for a long, long time. The tips in this list are steps towards making your brain familiar with this approach. Doing everything on the list might seem overwhelming at first, but getting it right from the beginning is not the goal. The most important thing is practicing the way of thinking. By doing this eventually you will get to a point where you'll know when, why, how and what to buy so that you have clothes you're happy and excited to wear every day!

### Step 1: Study what you already have

You can find a lot of information about your needs and taste in the way you feel about the clothes you own. Below are some questions to think about.

It might help to have all your clothes in front of you and separate them in two groups – clothes you wear a lot and everything else.

#### 1. The clothes you wear on a regular basis

- What type of garments are they? (pants, shirts, jeans, dresses, etc)
- How are they relevant to your lifestyle? Which situations that happen often in the life you lead call for these clothes? (for example working in an office, doing sports, mushroom picking, anything you do often enough to consider it a part of your life)
- What do these garments look like – cuts, shapes, colours, style, vibe? What do you like about how they make you look? How do they fit your personality?
- What do they feel like – what makes them comfortable enough, what materials feel nice?

#### 2. The clothes you don't wear on a regular basis

Do you like what you look like in any of these clothes?

*If you like yourself in these clothes, then why do you think you don't wear them?*

- Is it that they don't fit your lifestyle? Are they for a very particular occasion that doesn't happen often?
- Is it that they're not comfortable?
- Is it that they're not suitable for the climate?
- Is it that they don't go with anything else in your wardrobe?
- Are they broken, old, worn down?

*If you don't like yourself in these clothes, then how are they different from the clothes you like?*

- Is it that they have shapes you don't like?
- Is it colours?
- Is it a bad fit?

- Is it bad quality?
- Do you find them boring?
- Do you feel like they don't fit your personality?

It might help to compare both groups of clothes between each other. The goal of this step is to understand what makes you want to wear a garment and what makes you ignore it.

## **Step 2: If there's something you need, make sure you know what it is**

What you've learnt about your clothes in Step 1 can give you clues on what to look for (or what to avoid) in order to choose something that you most probably will enjoy wearing. Here are some main aspects to consider before you start looking.

### 1. Make sure you really need to add a new garment:

How many times have you felt its lack? Could there be anything you already own that you can use? It helps to see a new garment as a piece of a puzzle – there must be a hole for it and it should fit with the rest.

### 2. Be very specific about the object you need

- What situations will you be using it in? (the more versatile, the better)
- Type of garment?
- Thickness?
- Style?
- Shape?
- Possible colours?
- Material?

You don't need to have a concrete one word answer to all these questions, but the more you know prior to looking, the better.

If you lack direction or you need inspiration to understand what you might like, you can look for it anywhere: magazines and blogs, pinterest, movies, different eras of fashion, etc, etc. Depending on how much time you have to research and most of all how much interest you have in fashion, getting to know your taste might go very deep.

Knowing what you like on your own body shape is important. Clothes can look very different on different people so it's important to consider your own characteristics. It can be helpful to look for inspiration in other people with similar built, shape, structure, height, weight.

### 3. Do some research on what the characteristics of a high quality item of this sort are

Buying the highest quality possible is one of the most crucial aspects of shopping in a sustainable way. High quality clothes can be worn for many years, but they also look, feel and fit much better.

Unfortunately during the past couple of decades the overall quality of newly produced clothes has dropped significantly. Higher price is also not at all a guarantee that what you're buying is properly made. Knowing how to quickly recognize high quality is very helpful.

Different garments have different characteristics so it's best to look for information about the particular type of garment but some general signs of high quality are:

- The fabric feels good to touch and durable
- High content of natural fibres
- Stitching with many stitches that looks neat and durable
- Hem that is neatly finished and securely attached
- The garment feels well constructed with no fabric spared
- The garment feels like it would hold its shape after washing multiple times

### **Step 3: Sourcing the garment you need**

With the clearest idea possible of what you're looking for you can now try to find it.

#### 1. Look around in your community

This means checking if there is anyone around you who has what you need and wants to pass it on: asking around, checking facebook groups, loppisar, going to clothes swapping events, etc.

If you need a garment for a very specific occasion that doesn't happen often the best option might be to just borrow it.

#### 2. Look for second hand options

Shopping second hand is a giant topic on its own, but here 3 main principles you can go by to have more success.

- Not shopping in the last minute gives you a better chance to find exactly what you need

Checking out local second hand stores regularly with a clear idea of what you're looking for not only makes it more probable for this item to appear but also gives you more time to make a good decision because by mindfully considering the different options you stumble upon you learn more about your need.

- Check out second hand stores when you're travelling

Stockholm has a wonderful second hand 'scene'. With a quick search you can find plenty of second hand stores of any kind: from cheap charity shops (where you can find nice clothes with some digging) to high end boutiques with selected pieces both modern and vintage.

If you travel in general it's always worth it to take a look in the local second hand stores. A garment you've been looking for that you'll cherish can be a nice way to buy something to also remember your trip by.

- Keep in mind that some clothes alterations can be done very easily

If you find an item that you feel would work for you but for example has slightly longer sleeves, they can be shortened. Buttons and belts can be added, elastics can be replaced, clothes can be also dyed, etc. Having some basic sewing skills can help a lot but so does knowing a person who has these skills or bringing the garment to a professional (easy alterations might be worth the cost especially if the garment is of very high quality and you like it a lot).

Apart from being the more sustainable way, shopping second hand has at least two more obvious benefits: 1. The clothes you find will probably be unique and 2. You can get high quality for **significantly** less money and especially if you like vintage clothes: higher quality is easier to spot in clothes that have been worn and still look great.

### 3. Very, very last resort – buying new clothes

Choose the brand you're buying from very carefully.

- Read customer reviews about quality of clothes
- Look for information about the brand's ethics and sustainability
- Keep in mind that most of what brands claim is greenwashing . Truly sustainable transparent brands are few and usually small and expensive.

Only buy when you have zero doubts about your choice and the necessity of the purchase.

## **Step 4: After adding a garment to your wardrobe**

### 1. Make sure you know how to take care of it

Read the instructions on the labels and do some research if it's something special.

*By the way, a lot of garments labelled 'dry cleaning only' can actually be washed by hand with detergent for silk and wool (it's best to look for information about the particular garment).*

It's good to aim to keep your clothes in a condition good enough that you would be able to sell them to someone or give them as a nice present.

### 2. After you've had the garment for awhile pay attention to how much you've been using it.

This way you'll know whether buying it was a good decision which can inform your approach in the future.

### 3. If you're not using the garment for some reason, look for a way to make it useful (to you or someone else)

- If it breaks, look for a way to repair it.
- If your needs change, look for a way to alter it so that you would still wear it.
- If you can't use it yourself but you've managed to keep it in a great condition, do your best to make sure it reaches a new owner (give it to someone who you know will appreciate it, sell it or donate it).

- If it's in a bad condition look for a way to repurpose it – maybe you can use the fabric for another garment, or use it as rags, or some diy project at home.

Seeing every new garment as **your personal responsibility** to make sure it's being used will make it easier to stop yourself from buying things you don't really want strong enough.

### **Some final words**

Remember that going through these steps is about adopting a way of thinking. It's a process that requires getting used to, where some mistakes simply need to be made. As long as you learn from them, after some practicing, being mindful about shopping will become effortless and will save you money and frustration. It will also help you build a collection of carefully chosen precious items that happily serve their purpose instead of gathering dust in your closet or piling up on a landfill. Good luck <333