

Jacket Required!

Fashion advice from Clare Spiegel, *America's Image Coach*

True or False?

Being taken seriously in your career is enhanced a great deal by wearing a jacket.

This statement is true for men and for women regardless of one's career. A jacket conveys respect, prosperity and professionalism. One of the greatest ways to add a wonderful jacket to your wardrobe this year is to add a suit. Let's concentrate on the female species for the moment. Wait, don't run out to buy just yet! Knowing exactly what to spend your money on when updating your wardrobe is of utmost importance. You wear what you buy, so let's plan what to buy before spending any money. Sounds simple, yet how many outfits or pieces of clothing do you have in your closet because you were enchanted by the display or you couldn't resist a bargain. You need to know what you are looking for before you will make wise purchases. Always buy and wear the clothes that project the image you want others to perceive!

Lets consider the following when selecting a suit:

The Fabric

First and foremost, your suit should be of a **global fabric**. You've chosen a global fabric if you know your suit looks right any place in the world any month of the year. (Accessories and layering can adjust you suit to cooler or warmer climates.) Enduring and easy care global fabrics begin with a wool base. Light weight wool crepe, wool gabardine and light wool twills are classic choices as well as marvelous blends such as wool and silk, nylon, polyester, spandex and rayon. Texture plays a major part in newness this year. Choose a plaid, tweed, herringbone, bird's eye, small houndstooth, or mini-check to add diversity to your purchase.

The Elements

Jackets, slim cut pants, skirts of varying lengths and vests to match or coordinate are the key elements to suit dressing for this year. **Coats** replace the jacket in some better looks. Ensemble looks are elegant and create an upscale feeling. The piece you are wearing under the jacket is also of great importance.

Design

The silhouette is shaped and finely tailored but allows room for real women's bodies. Pant suits are fashion highlights this year. Buy a matching skirt along with the pant for diversity and maximum flexibility. Jackets have shape through the use of darts and more pattern pieces within the silhouette. Look for narrower sleeves in long and short jackets because this detail creates a modern new look. Details create the newness beyond shape. Look for detail ideas such as a newsy stand up Moa collar, a fly front jacket with concealed buttons or zipper, velvet, metal, leather and knit trims, stretch insets, pockets and zipper treatments. I'm not talking gimmicks here, but refined design incorporating news. Military inspiration is being emphasized - just make sure your are choosing pockets, buttons or epaulets that are subtle and long term. Pants follow the body but are not skin tight. Darted no waistband models provide a smooth flat foundation for closer fitting jackets and tops that fall just beyond the waist. Boot pants flare slightly at the bottom to fall over the shoe or boot. Other slim legged pants may have a 3 inch slit to accommodate falling over the shoe. A long lean look is created by the well designed pantsuit. So, enhance your height by purchasing a smart pantsuit this year. Skirts are slim and short, knee, low calf or ankle length. Skirts are the completion piece

Your New Image

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for your suit but are not the design element of the look this year. Vests are a wonderful additional piece one may choose to create uniqueness to your suit. Vests may match or be of a companion fabric creating mix of texture. Vests may be the underpiece worn on the body or may be worn over a turtleneck which is the #1 layering piece for the season.

The Occasion

The suit chosen for career can generally be expanded to work in your spectator casual and active wardrobe by using it's parts with other wardrobe pieces you already own. Suits for dinner and special occasion are a wise choice for evening attire. Global fabrics and quality tailoring are primary here as well. Glamorous detail such as matching beading, embroidery, rhinestones, velvet trims and fur, real and faux, all portray class in this category.

Color

Red, camel, chocolate, cocoa, olive, oyster, many shades of eggplant, rust, orange, sienna, and cinnamon seem to be the news. Wearing matching or monochromatic color from head to toe is a designer touch we are seeing this year. Wearing the proper colors to enhance your skin, hair and eye color is the key to choosing color for you. Never spend money on a fashion idea that is not in keeping with your body, your coloring, or your lifestyle.

Last thoughts

- Suits make one feel upscale. Respect is earned when wearing a suit. One looks expensively dressed in a suit.
- I recommend creating a suit from coordinated separates made to match rather than a matched one price suit.
- If you are 18 or older, you should be wearing misses sizes which are even sizes, 2-18. You should no longer wear junior sizes, 3-13, even if you can fit into them. Therefore, make sure you are shopping in the right departments. The contemporary and misses market features upgraded quality in fabric, design, and tailoring vs. the junior market. Once you are out of high school you need to be building a long term investment wardrobe which is best honed from the contemporary and misses market.
- This is not the season for basic styling, solid fabrics, or strictly basic colors. We need to purchase the strengths of the season which this year include detail, diverse and newsy fabrics, color, texture and fine tailoring.
- Using the jacket, pant or skirt from your suit in multiple ways is what investment dressing is all about. Think of the combinations you can create before you say "Yes" to the salesgirl.
- When your new suit fills all of the specifications above, pass the plastic. You've made a great investment and your price per wearing will be nominal regardless of the price tag.

Clare Spiegel is a national authority on fashion and image. She is an accomplished fashion merchant, television personality, public speaker, model and fashion consultant to corporate America. Her fashion videos and her book, Your New Fashion Image, are considered "must-have" resources for all who want to look their best, feel their best and be their best! She is available internationally for warm, detailed and educational fashion and image seminars, fashion shows and training workshops. For more information, call 352-245-9350, or visit her website www.ClareSpiegel.com