

Dress Better Now!



Everyone knows a fashion crime. Whether he wears all the trends at once, or nothing that has been in style in the last ten years, he's a victim. And he needs help.

This is an intervention.

The key word to remember when developing a personal style and turning from fashion crime into fashion plate is balance. Balance is the key to most things in life, and fashion is no different. Balance funky with classic, patterns with solids, soft fabrics with hard-lined silhouettes. For example, each season and year brings with it a flurry of new trends and "must-have" items. The key to these items is to integrate them into your wardrobe, not don them head to toe. Velvet blazers in rich jewel tones are hot this fall. But pair one with a shearling coat, military inspired slacks, black motorcycle boots, and a ruffled oxford (all things that are hot-hot-hot this season) and you quickly go from fashionable to passé. Pick one key item, like the shearling coat, and put it with jeans and driving moccasins. Or wear the velvet blazer over a T-shirt. The key is to pick and choose, not throw together everything that is en vogue at the moment.



Of course, there are also the men who still wear the clothes they wore when they graduated from college ten years ago. To them we say - change is good. Sure, you can keep your perfectly faded pair of jeans or the really-expensive black dress-pants that you splurged on a few years back, but update them with things that are of-the-moment and now. Everything looks fresh when you pair it with new, chic separates. And remember that not everything is

worth keeping. Things that you have not worn in two years need to be tossed. They are just clutter, and getting rid of them frees you to try out some new looks.

Not all trends are right for all men. For example, not every man will feel comfortable in a velvet blazer or a flowered pattern shirt. While they may be in, if they are not for you, then you will never feel comfortable wearing them. However, every year has certain great and versatile trends that can work with almost every sensibility. For example, peacoats and toggle-closure wool jackets are very "in," and can be found in navy, black, and other neutrals. And military details are also very in style. While you may not be comfortable in head-to-toe fatigues, pants with subtle military detailing on the buttons or back pockets allow you to embrace the trend without being ruled by it. Balance these trendy items with what you have in your closet, and voila! Instant style update.



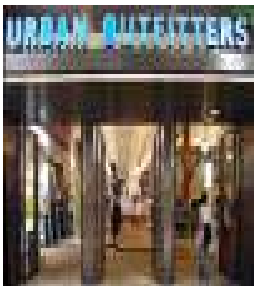
A serious fashion crime may need help from the ground up. To you we say to start, literally, from the ground up. Think about socks, shoes, boxers or undergarments, pants, shirts, and even hair and grooming.



A great place to start to learn about fashion is online. There are many free websites that offer tips and tricks on the newest and hottest styles around. Regular visit to www.mensflair.com will surely do the trick. Also, magazines from GQ to Playboy have style sections, with the latest trends outlined and pictures of how to wear them. It doesn't necessarily means you should follow new styles suggestions like a religion. Sometimes just adding a new signature piece, like a cool belt buckle or a jacket with military detailing, can take a look from outdated to hip.



Once you have taken a look at some ideas and some photos of the new “in” looks, you are ready to select which things seem like “you.” You do not need to embrace each and every trend that comes out; sometimes, doing so makes you more of a fashion victim than a fashion success story. Pick out things you like, that fit in with your sensibility and your personal comfort level. Select items that you know you will wear, and remember that you can adjust items to suit your needs. For example, you may not be comfortable in a velvet blazer in a jewel tone. But a navy velvet blazer might feel more like “you.” You can embrace the velvet blazer trend without the jewel-tone trend and still come out looking fresh and hip.



After you have found things that appeal to you, you are ready to hit the stores armed with ideas for a hipper you. Go to stores that fit into your budget. Most online or glossy fashion magazines highlight very expensive clothing makers and designers, but that doesn't mean that you will not be able to find the same trends at more reasonable prices. Stores like Urban Outfitters carry tons of trendy options at lower prices than say, Prada (not that we don't like her, au contraire). And thrift stores are no longer just dusty old places only frequented by bums and “alternative” teens. They can be a great place to find cool accessories like belts and watches for drastically lower prices than you will find at the mall. But even the traditional mall can be a great place to start. With tons of choices, from off-price stores to high-end department stores, to sneaker stores, you can often grab bargains and splurges all under the same roof, something very appealing if you are one of the traditional men who think that an afternoon of shopping is akin to an afternoon of torture in a Cuban prison. Also, many department

stores have on-site tailors to perfect the fit of your new digs.



The biggest problem men have when selecting clothes is getting the right size. The wave of huge, oversized gear that peaked a few years ago has not yet broken, but it never was and still is not flattering to a man's physique. Even if you are a slightly more...portly fellow, a giant shirt and huge pants do nothing to diminish your size, and if you are a bit slighter, you end up looking like a mop with a sheet thrown over it. The best look is not tight, but tailored. Well-fitting clothing will highlight your slim areas and tone down problem spots, balancing out your shape. Balance is key here. A bulky sweater or jacket will look best with a tailored and fitted pant, and vice versa. This way you can still hide a trouble spot without looking like a tent. Also, go for flat front and straight-legged pants and jeans. A tapered look will only make your larger middle the focal point by minimizing your legs and feet. A straight leg creates the illusion of a longer, leaner you. And try things on in the store! It's a bit of a pain, but it is worth it. If an item is too big or too small, do not buy it. If you do not try it on, you will be stuck returning it, or worse, throwing in the back of your closet and never wearing it. Also keep in mind that good tailoring can make a thrift store find look like a hot designer label, and that even jeans can be shortened, so if you must buy something off-size, go larger.



Another flaw in the collective fashion sense of man is the fear of color. Many men, even very stylish men, shy away from colors other than brown, navy, gray, white and black. While neutrals are flattering and some (particularly black) can be very slimming, they are not eye-catching or unique. This is not to say that you have to run out and buy Prince's purple velvet suit (although velvet blazers are tres chic for fall). Add a pop of color to an otherwise neutral

outfit, and watch it light up your skin or eye color. Nothing is sexier than a man with blue eyes who knows how to wear a blue shirt, or even scarf or tie, to make his eyes look like swimming pools. There are colors to compliment every tone. Warm and olive skins look best in yellows, reds, coppers, and other "warm" shades. Cool, blue-toned skin looks great in greens, blues, purples, and other "cool" colors. If you need help figuring out what you are, ask a salesperson - they are there to help you. The right color under your face can really flatter your undertones. Don't be afraid of pink and purple either. Both look great as an oxford shirt under a grey or navy suit.

Remember to try things on, and imagine yourself wearing the items. If you try on a hat, and can never see yourself leaving the house in it, do not buy it. You are likely to never wear it. You have to be realistic; even if your girlfriend thinks it looks great, and GQ thinks it looks great, you will not feel great wearing it if you hate it and feel like an idiot.

Once you have found some items to update your wardrobe, you can start integrating them into your daily life and seeing a new, more updated you. Remember that wearing all of your new finds at once is a bad idea. Choose one thing, and add it to a classic style that you already own and love. This will make the transition from "style mess" to "style icon" a lot more palatable. Balance your older clothes with hot new trends and get instant updates. And let your personal style shine through. If you are a rock star at heart, then throw your new peacoat over a hot, vintage Rolling Stones T-shirt you have had since the 70's. If you are a cowboy, add your favorite hat to your new shearling jacket. You want to look like you, but better.



Also, it's not a bad idea to take your new look to the next level. Get a manicure and pedicure (yes, heterosexual men get them, and you will attract a lot more heterosexual women afterwards), and cut and style your hair. Find signature cologne that makes you smell sexy and fresh. Take a little more time exfoliating your skin before shaving, and using a moisturizer afterwards, to make your skin look its best. All these little changes can lead to a fresher, better, you.

Whether you have a woman or want a woman (or women), "look" certainly helps much in that area, since you will feel better about yourself and walk with a new air of confidence if you look and feel your personal best. It seems superficial, but we are judged first by appearances in most situations, and having confidence can go a long way towards "appearing" in charge. Just remember to keep a balance between the old you and the new, hip, stylish you. And remember one lesson about trends...don't lose yourself; improve yourself!

We wish you a great style,

MensFlair Team

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