

Stock up on college wardrobe essentials for less

Prior to starting school, many students spend a portion of the summer scouting aisles of clothes at area stores to expand their wardrobes. Students entering or already enrolled in college may want to make subtle changes in the clothes they select.

College students hoping to make a good impression may want to pay attention to the clothes they choose to wear to school, job interviews, formal functions and networking opportunities. Remember, you can network with everyone from fellow students to professors and other staff. This is why it can pay to concentrate on always looking dapper and well kept when attending classes or being on campus.

College students who already are facing high tuition bills and costs for textbooks and supplies may feel they do not have the funds for a respectable wardrobe. However, it is possible to get professional-looking clothes on a budget.

START WITH THE BASICS

Begin with the basics when assessing your wardrobe. Certain essentials can be used in many different ways. For example, suit starters, consisting of suit jacket, slacks (and skirts for women) and button-down shirts, can be mixed and matched. The slacks can be worn with just about any top, and the same goes for skirts. Pair a jacket with khakis or jeans for a less formal look that is still professional. The button-down shirt can dress up jeans and look crisp but not overly done-up.

SELECT A MUTED COLOR PALETTE

That great floral blouse may look tempting, but something that has a large pattern or is easily recognizable cannot be worn as frequently as something less noticeable. College students have minimal storage space and minimal funds for drawers full of clothes. It pays to find pieces that can be

reused over and over. Basic colors, especially solid colors, are more versatile than more colorful items.

HAVE AT LEAST ONE GOOD SUIT

A well-fitting suit is an asset to a student going out on interviews or participating in internships. Be sure to have one or more suits or formal pairings that will serve well when you need to put your best foot forward. Have the clothing dry cleaned frequently enough so it is always ready-pressed and sharp looking.

STOCK UP ON DARK-WASH JEANS

Dark-colored jeans in a trouser cut look more professional than those that have been acid stained and purposely cut or full of holes or are too form-fitting. When going out, it is alright to wear trendier items, but in the classroom or when representing yourself and the school, you may want to wear more understated attire. A few basic shirts,



Shopping for college wardrobe essentials need not break the bank.

sweaters and cardigans can be mixed and matched to look professional.

SHOP SALES OR AT DISCOUNT STORES

Just because you need to look polished doesn't mean you have to spend a fortune. Many discount stores, consignment shops and big-name retailers have classic styles in off-brands that are not as expensive. Shop at the end of the season when stores are clearing out old merchandise for the next round of clothing. Since classic pieces never go out of style, spend the end of the season shopping for lightweight clothes that can be worn next year instead of paying full price for autumn wardrobes right now.

CHOOSE CLOTHES THAT CAN BE CLEANED IN A WASHING MACHINE

Check the care labels inside of clothes before purchase. Having too many pieces that need to be dry-cleaned can eat away at your budget. Select fabrics that are more durable and can be washed easily.

ASK FOR CLOTHING AS GIFTS

As a child, you may have cringed when you received clothes as a gift. But now that you're older, clothing as a gift can be an asset. If you don't trust the shopping skills of gift-givers, say that gift cards to specific retailers would be much appreciated.

DON'T BE SHY ABOUT HAND-ME-DOWNS

Certain family members or friends you know may have gently worn pieces of professional clothing that they can share. Rather than have these people put items in the donation bin, ask if you can look through the clothing to see if any items will enhance your wardrobe. Do not be embarrassed about asking for quality pieces on social media, either. Browse online auction and retail sites, such as Ebay or Etsy, for low-cost clothing.

While you may not have to retrofit every piece of clothing to create an adequate college wardrobe, it pays to add pieces that will showcase your professionalism – especially to those people who still may judge a book by its cover.

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