

Boring wardrobes revitalized without breaking the budget

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Clothing styles change on a whim according to what trend forecasters see as the “it” items of the season. People looking to keep abreast of certain styles or just maintain a fresh supply of different wardrobe options may find that replenishing a closet can be an expensive venture. But it doesn't have to be.

Those without a set budget may be able to afford monthly shopping trips to add new pieces to a wardrobe. However, the average person lives on a tighter budget, and there may not be as much room for discretionary spending on clothing and accessories. According to [VisualEconomics.com](https://www.visualspend.com), a family of three making about \$64,000 per year can expect to spend roughly four percent of those earnings on apparel and services.

People interested in refreshing their selection of clothing more frequently should consider alternative options to buying retail. Here are some ideas to think about.

Clothing swap

A good way to socialize and switch up a wardrobe is to host a clothing swap party. Invite around 10 friends or family members to be part of it. Be sure to have at least two or three of the same-sized people so there won't be an abundance of items to fit one person and not enough to fit another. Shoes and accessories are also acceptable.

Set the rules for the event, where each person is entitled to take as many items as she has brought. Encourage guests to bring clean, gently used items that are in good condition. Because this type of get-together involves some advanced work of sorting through clothing, be sure to give guests ample advance notice.

Have refreshments on hand and opportunities to chat over styles and options. Whatever clothes are not taken by others can be donated to charity.

Consignment stores

It used to be that consignment stores were the stepchildren of the retail world. Many people viewed them as glorified tag sales and didn't think they were worthy of investigation.

Nowadays, consignment shops are big business and good places for savvy shoppers to visit. Much like overstock stores sell items on discount that are on par with department stores, consignment shops often offer new or very lightly used items for resale—at a fraction of the original retail price. Plus, they're an ideal place to look for unique pieces and accessories that might otherwise have been out of budget.

Shop basics

When buying new items at a store, buy pieces that can be put together in a variety of combinations. Stick to similar colors and themes so that each piece will work seamlessly. Consider multi-layered items that can be worn with a cardigan or without; or go from the office to a dinner date afterward. Remember, items that blend can be worn more often because they won't stick out in the minds of others as something flashy.

Consider shopping online

Shoppers are often amazed at the wide variety of items that can be purchased online. If a shopper doesn't see something in a store for the price she wants, she can comparison shop online. Although she can't try on merchandise, with the exception of some sites that offer a virtual model, many online retailers offer free shipping on returns.

Online shopping also takes the hassle out of visiting several stores, finding parking and dealing with crowds. Plus, a shopper can purchase things on her own time, whether that's early morning or after the kids have gone to bed.

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Explore tailoring

Think about how Molly Ringwald's character turned pieces of fabric into new creations in the cult 1980s film "Pretty in Pink." With some simple tailoring, just about anyone can modify items to make them look brand new. For those who don't know their bobbins from their seam-rippers, make friends with someone who does and enlist some help with fashion redesign.

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