

The Little Black Dress

While in New York City for the fall 2008 'ready to wear' shows, I couldn't help but notice that just about every collection had at least one or more versions of "the little black dress". You could say that this was proof positive of the everlasting, and yes, seasonless appeal of this fashion staple. It can go from day to evening with just a change of accessory or, take on the aura of full out glamour when done in sequins or paillettes. When shopping at a Goodwill Store & Donation center you'll find an astounding variety of the most indispensable garment in a woman's wardrobe. Let me briefly touch on three styles of the "little black dress."

Style 1—Black Sheath

In its most classic sense, a black sheath dress made of linen, fine wool or cotton. Think 'Audrey Hepburn'—It's tailored (but not tight), sleeveless, round neckline and hits at the knee. Its simplicity brings all eyes to the wearer. This is the dress that will stand up to any event. When paired with understated jewelry and accessories it's a daytime staple. With a dramatic pearl necklace, evening bag and metallic sandals, it's the perfect party dress. The key here is the proportion and tailoring. Spending some time looking for a dress like this is a very wise investment, as it will remain in style year after year.



Style 2—Pullover, Wrap or Shirtwaist

Pullover, wrap, or shirtwaist dress made of silk, rayon, or a synthetic knit is our next style. In lengths from knee to calves, it's great for camouflaging and balancing larger hips, and for giving smaller gals the look of a curvier figure. Being able to adjust the fit easily by using a belt makes this dress forgiving in all the right ways. Look for a sleeve treatment that will compliment your figure such as, capped, ¾, or long. This silhouette can be a quick 'change artist' as well by pairing it with flats for day, and high heeled pumps and a sparkly bag for nights on the town.



Style 3—Strapless

The final style is strapless or "negative space" dresses (in other words those that show a little skin). Find a dress with a line that is flattering, slimming, and sexy, without being over the top. Usually these types of dresses are for evening wear only. When done in shiny satin, sequins, and luxurious beaded accents, they become the quintessential "cocktail dress". Shorter to longer skirt lengths vary from season to season. Perfect for parties and formal occasions, they are usually regarded as more of a statement piece. Keep accessories simple if the dress is beaded to let the drama of the dress itself carry the look.



All of the dress styles mentioned above are the perfect backdrop for the accessory lover. Rich looking shoes in patent leather, satin or metallics all add to the sophistication factor. Jewelry of all kinds looks fabulous against inky shades. What about color? A little black dress is a great excuse to purchase a lovely silk scarf in today's prints and trendy colors. Virtually everything looks great with black! A fabulous purse or oversized handbag becomes the center of attention when the texture or color is in direct contrast to the simplicity of the look.



The possibilities are endless and we have only covered a few variations, but one thing remains true—whatever you put on your body should be an extension of yourself, not some trend that someone wants you to follow! Stick to these rules:

1. Purchase a simple black dress in a nicer fabric that fits well.
2. Don't be afraid to be bold in your accessory choices.

These tips and rules, plus the Goodwill Store & Donation centers are a fool proof formula that can bring classic chic to any woman at a very smart price!