

3. WARDROBE ASSESSMENT



Extract

OVERVIEW

In this module, we will cover the following topics:

- Introduction to conducting a wardrobe assessment
- What to look out for in a wardrobe assessment
- The big dos and don'ts
- Building a basic wardrobe
- How to set up a whole new look

INTRODUCTION TO CONDUCTING A WARDROBE ASSESSMENT

WHAT IS A WARDROBE ASSESSMENT?

A wardrobe assessment should be one of the first things that you, as an image consultant, carry out when you are working with a new client. Looking through their current wardrobe, you will learn a lot. It will tell you all about your client's style. But it will also highlight any image issues that seem to be underlying their choice of outfit or accessory.

Bear in mind that a wardrobe assessment does not simply mean looking at a few of the most popular outfits. It also includes analysing the barely-worn items and the accessories your client uses with their outfits and overall look.

Before you conduct a full wardrobe assessment, you may find it useful to ask your client to locate some key outfits for you. These could include:

- The outfit they feel best in for a glamorous party
- The outfit they prefer for a work day
- The outfit they wear most
- The outfit they wear around the house on a leisure day

This is a great way to start the assessment. Firstly, because it asks the client to focus on and really think about what they currently wear. But it will also allow you to gain a greater understanding of their current style.

COMPLETING THE WARDROBE ASSESSMENT

Once you have met with your client and looked at their outfit choices, it is time to dig a little deeper. Remember, in most cases, people wear 20 percent of their wardrobe for 80 percent of the time.

Therefore, it is likely you will only be presented, initially, with a very small part of your client's wardrobe. This is unlikely to be deliberate concealment. In fact, it is more likely your client has simply forgotten about the rest of their wardrobe.

Delving further back into a wardrobe may produce some excellent opportunities for the 'new' look, so make sure you go through absolutely everything.

As you systematically go through the wardrobe, ask your client to put their clothes into several different piles, such as:

- No longer fits (either too small / too big)
- No longer like the item
- Do not have the occasion to wear the item
- Like the item, but had forgotten it exists
- Currently wear the item

This is a very useful exercise for both you and your client. For clients, it allows them to see exactly what they have in their wardrobe. For you, it enables you to see their pre-conceived ideas on how they should look and what they prefer to wear.

EXERCISE 3.1

Make a list of all of the items you are likely to come across as part of a wardrobe assessment. Don't just include the obvious 'tops and bottoms'.

Suggested answers can be found at the end of the module

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN A WARDROBE ASSESSMENT

Having completed the wardrobe assessment, you are ready to move on to assisting your client with possible enhancements and improvements.

Do not forget that, in many cases, your client simply does not have the financial resources to 'start again'. This means you will need to be inventive with what already exists.

HOW TO LOCATE THOSE WARDROBE GEMS

Remember that more often than not the items your client is extremely attached to are the very items that should be discarded. In fact, the items you are most likely to be able to use are those your client has either forgotten about or can find no occasion to wear. This is where you should concentrate your search.

Look out for items that seem to be suitable for multiple purposes. For example, look for a top that could be used with a plain pair of trousers for work or a slinky skirt for eveningwear. Place these to one side so they can be considered to pair with the plain skirt or trousers.

Every outfit has a foundation and this should normally be a pair of trousers or a skirt in a plain neutral colour. By starting from the base and

keeping this firmly in mind, it is easier to envisage the ancillary items such as tops or shoes to complement it.

CREATING THEMES

Having revealed the main substance of your client's wardrobe, it is time to consider the themes that you will be working on. In most cases, there will be four main elements to a wardrobe:

- Work clothes
- Going out or socialising clothes
- Smart day clothes not for work (although these will often overlap considerably with work clothes)
- Comfortable 'at home' clothes.

Consider aspects of the wardrobe such as shape, silhouette, style, colour and overall look.

It's important to recognise (and for your client to recognise) that what they wear for work may not be the person's own style, necessarily. But it is needed, nevertheless, in order to conform to the relevant professional image. Freedom of expression through your wardrobe is best left for socialising or non-work days.

Ask you client which image they wish to portray in each of the four subsets of wardrobes mentioned above. This will give you the information you need to start piecing together appropriate outfits.

EXERCISE 3.2

Answer the following questions to help understand your wardrobe assessment:

- What are the main ways that an individual can create a professional look?

- How can an individual create a professional look whilst also retaining a young and youthful feel?

- Consider the main items that you would see as part of a casual day time wardrobe:

- Choose three main items that will refresh a tired wardrobe:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Suggested answers can be found at the end of the module

THE BIG DOS AND DON'TS

No matter what age your client is or the type of style they are trying to create, there are always some key dos and don'ts which should be followed. Certain fashion faux pas are NEVER acceptable and other wardrobe options are ALWAYS safe.

Obviously as an image consultant you will be looking for individual styles and ideas for your client. But it does really pay to have a clear idea of the basic rules you can use with every client you come across.

WARDROBE WINNERS

Certain items and types of clothing are always going to work well in a wardrobe. These basics should be considered whenever you are offering advice to a client.

By sticking to these winning rules and then simply adding your own touches, you are always likely to come away with a very successful wardrobe for your client.

RULE NUMBER ONE

All clothes should fit. This may seem very obvious but how often do you see people with clothes that are either too tight or too loose? There is nothing more unflattering than poorly-fitted clothes.

If they are too tight, they are likely to make you look larger than you are. If they are too baggy you will look scruffy, no matter how smart the item of clothing.

If the clothes do not fit, either remove them from the wardrobe or get them altered.

RULE NUMBER TWO

Black is a good staple colour, particularly for skirts and trousers. A little more caution is needed when using with black as a top colour as it can make a pale complexioned individual look 'washed out'.

A good pair of well fitting black trousers will be an absolute must for any wardrobe and if your client does not have a pair, this should be their first priority.

RULE NUMBER THREE

Revealing clothes should be used sparingly. Even with a young shapely client, it is important to use revealing clothes in moderation.

One rule that many celebrities follow is that they can show legs *or* chest but never both. This is actually quite a safe rule and is a good one to exercise when putting outfits together (particularly work or professional outfits).

RULE NUMBER FOUR

Use one main bold piece only in your outfit. If you have a bright red top, resist the temptation to wear it with a brightly coloured skirt, as this can be too distracting to the eye.

Try to see the body as two halves. If one half is attracting attention, allow the other to take a back seat. (Of course with a dress or all in one outfit this is not possible).

RULE NUMBER FIVE

Do not overlook the underwear or foundation garments. Poorly fitting underwear can ruin the look of a wonderful outfit. If your client cannot go without a bra, then they should not wear any strapless tops unless they have a suitable strapless bra.

This may sound obvious but you would be surprised how many people purchase items without considering what underwear they could wear with them.

EXERCISE 3.3

Collect five pictures from a magazine of celebrities and analyse critically their choice of wardrobe. Consider colourings and style. Rate each one out of ten and suggest at least three improvements for each.

REMINDER

Have you completed the following exercises?

- Exercise 3.1
- Exercise 3.2
- Exercise 3.3
- Exercise 3.4
- Exercise 3.5
- Exercise 3.6

Tick each box when you have completed the exercises. Then, you can move on to the assignment that follows.

SUMMARY

1. You understand why you would conduct a wardrobe assessment.
2. You understand the steps required before conducting the wardrobe assessment.
3. You can identify different types of items you may find in a wardrobe.
4. You know how to locate the main items worn regularly.
5. You understand how to build a basic wardrobe.
6. You understand how to develop a basic wardrobe in order to reflect individual style.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Find a friend or relative's wardrobe, or even your own if suitable. Consider how you would go about the wardrobe assessment from start to finish.

Write the final report you would present to your client. This should include the steps taken to reach all your conclusions.

Your final report includes four parts.

- A written description of what you did in preparation for the assessment.
- What you discovered as part of the assessment.
- The basic wardrobe you have built from the wardrobe.
- Items you have added (or suggested should be added) to the basic wardrobe and how they fit in with the desired style and lifestyle of your client.

When you have completed this assignment, send it to your tutor for marking. If you email your assignment, make sure you include your name and assignment number at the top of your work.

If you send the assignment by post, attach the cover sheet, which is on the following page.

Well, that's the end of the extract. If you want to know more, you'll have to register!

We look forward to welcoming you on to the course, and helping you become a professional image consultant.